



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Felix Ellis MP

Wednesday 19 November 2025

MEMBERS

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Chair)

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC

Hon Mike Gaffney MLC

Hon Casey Hiscutt MLC

Hon Meg Webb MLC

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. FELIX ELLIS MP

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Minister for Skills and Jobs, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Ministerial Office representatives

Adam Foster

Chief of Staff

Rachael Murray

Senior Adviser, Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Edith Bevan

Senior Adviser, Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Mitchell Haigh

Senior Adviser, Business, Industry and Resources

Anne Fidock

Senior Adviser, Business, Industry and Resources

Jessica Jackson

Senior Adviser, Skills and Jobs

Police Fire and Emergency Management Portfolio

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Donna Adams

Commissioner of Police/Secretary, DPFEM/State Controller

Jonathan Higgins

Deputy Commissioner of Police

Adrian Bodnar

Assistant Commissioner Operations

Robert Blackwood

Assistant Commissioner Specialist Support

Doug Oosterloo

Assistant Commissioner Capability

Ross Hinkley

A/Deputy Secretary

Scott Wilson-Haffenden

A/Executive Director, People & Business Services

Mandy Denby (observer only)

Director, Office of the Commissioner/Secretary

State Fire Commission

Jeremy Smith

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner

Matt Lowe

Deputy Chief Officer - Operations

Andrea Heath

Executive Director, Strategy and Capability

Mick Lowe

Executive Director, SES and Volunteers

Brad Menzies

A/Chair, State Fire Commission

Business, Industry and Resources Portfolio

Department of State Growth

Craig Limkin

Secretary, Department of State Growth

Anthony Reid

Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Housing, Infrastructure and Planning

Michael Mogridge

Deputy Secretary, Economic Development

Katherine Booth

Acting Executive Director, Business, Industry and Investment\

Andrew Johnson

Director, Office of the Secretary

Angela Conway

Deputy Secretary, Business Services

Vanessa Pinto

Deputy Secretary, ReCFIT and Resources

Sarah Russell

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Tom Byrne

Assistant Director Forest Policy

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Anne Chuter

Chief Forest Practices Officer, Forest Practices Authority

Mineral Resources Tasmania

Ben Waining

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Alastair Morton

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Michael Mogridge

Deputy Secretary, Economic Development

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General Manager, Skills and Workforce

Stuart Hollingsworth

Executive Director, Economy and Jobs Strategy

Peta Sugden

Senior Director, Industry Insights and Workforce

Angela Conway

Deputy Secretary, Business Services

TasTAFE

Tim Gardner

Chair, TasTAFE

Will McShane

Interim Chief Executive Officer

Colleen Sheehan

Executive Director, Governance and Corporate Affairs

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

CHAIR - Welcome, everyone, to our third day of Budget Estimates. I will introduce the members of Committee Estimates B at the table. We have the honourable member for Mersey, Michael Gaffney; I'm Rosemary Armitage, member for Launceston; the Honourable Casey Hiscutt, member for Montgomery; the Honourable Meg Webb, member for Nelson. We do have the Honourable Luke Edmunds, member for Pembroke. He's just running a little late. He will be here shortly. This is our team at the table, minister, and we'd like you to introduce your team.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. At the table, we've got Donna Adams, Commissioner of Police; Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police; Ross Hinkley, Acting Deputy Secretary; Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Acting Executive Director, People and Business Services; Adrian Bodnar, Assistant Commissioner Operations; Robert Blackwood, Assistant Commissioner Specialist Support; Doug Oosterloo, Assistant Commissioner Capability; and my chief of staff, Adam Foster, who won't be taking questions.

CHAIR - Thank you. We also have assisting us our secretarial support. We have James and Julie, who'll be here shortly, and we have Gaye from Hansard.

If you wish to take some questions on notice, the committee will consolidate the outstanding responses to these questions and provide them for a written response. If you could provide a brief opening statement, and the committee will then have some short questions on the overview, and we'll proceed to questions. Thank you, minister.

DIVISION 9

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I first start by acknowledging the hard work, dedication and sacrifice of our police, fire and state emergency service personnel. The government recognises the importance of funding, staffing and equipping our emergency responders to give them the powers and tools that they need to do their jobs in protecting Tasmanians. Since we came to government in 2014, we've taken police numbers from 1120 to a record high of 1454. That's 334 extra police officers on the ground, keeping Tasmanians safe.

Our government is committed to providing access to coordinated and collaborative trauma informed support for people who've experienced sexual harm. The interim Budget delivers funding for the critical recommendations of the commission of inquiry, a statewide rollout of our Arch Centres for victim-survivors. The funding will see a new centre opened in Burnie with specialised counselling and support services, working alongside police under one roof to offer the best trauma informed outcomes for victim-survivors.

We're delivering key pieces of equipment that Tasmania Police need, tools that will not only keep the community safer but protect our officers as well: additional investment in new ballistic vests that are more comfortable and, more importantly, safer for police; the taser rollout, giving police in high-risk situations options in their use of force; and the rollout of

hand-held metal detector wands, honouring our commitment to Reid's Law and taking knives and other deadly weapons off the street.

Investment in police shows the Tasmanian government isn't just talking tough on crime; we're acting on it. The safety of our communities, our considerable natural assets and our infrastructure is heavily reliant on the dedication of our more than 5000 Tasmanian Fire Service (TFS) and SES volunteers, and this is a budget which recognises their service. The government's committing an additional \$2.5 million for a reinvigorated volunteer infrastructure investment fund, providing support to both the Tasmanian Fire Service and SES. The \$10 million that we've already provided to the fund is making a real difference to volunteer stations and units right across the state, with new sheds, improved facilities, equipment and storage.

The government's investment is making a meaningful impact on people's engagement with the idea of serving with the TFS and SES, and that includes attracting more women and more young people to volunteer. It's also about improving the safety of our volunteers with high-quality personal protective clothing and ongoing training opportunities.

We're continuing to fund and support opportunities for these two organisations to work even more closely together through our Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Services Reform, further boosting Tasmania's emergency response and enhancing community safety.

I now welcome your questions to provide more detail on how our government and police, fire and emergency services are supporting the work to keep the community safe.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any questions, members, on the overview before we go into the first line?

Ms WEBB - I wanted to ask some questions about complaints and the professional standards complaints and outcomes statement. Is that best done in a line item in particular, or where would you like to take those ones?

CHAIR - Up to you, minister. Would you prefer -

Mr ELLIS - I'm easy. In the committee's hands as to whatever works for you.

CHAIR - If you'd like to ask it now, that's fine.

Ms WEBB - We've got the annual report from the department, and then we've got separately published a professional standards, complaints and outcomes summary statement. I'm wondering why there isn't some more detail in the annual report, which is where people would generally go for overviews of anything relating to the department, why there isn't more there about complaint data like terminations or stand-down suspensions, criminal prosecutions, and even just some basic data about investigations of complaints and outcomes?

Mr ELLIS - It's a presentational sort of question you're asking?

Ms WEBB - Yes. I'm asking, as well as this separate summary statement, which people might not even realise exists and know to go to, why isn't something included in the broader departmental annual report that speaks to this area?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the Commissioner of Police in terms of the presentation of that.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister, and thank you for the question. In relation to the annual report, we follow the compliance requirements to prepare that document. The actual active disclosure in terms of the professional standards outcomes provides a level of detail that is to provide the community with a reassurance around our investigations of professional standards matters.

We also provide a media release when we provide the professional standards complaints and outcomes statement on an annual basis, and I think you're aware we've done this for the last two years. In terms of the annual report, we follow the compliance requirements for the preparation of that report, and this is in addition as part of an active disclosure.

Ms WEBB - Yes. I'm wondering, though, because there's no commentary or interpretive information in the professional standards complaints and outcomes summary statement and limited data provided in the sense that, when I'm looking at the 2024 snapshot, which I think is the most recent one available, there are some pie charts to show numbers of complaints received and finalised and internally raised matters received and finalised. Then there's just tables that present outcomes, which is great to have.

I'm not criticising the presence of that there, but then there isn't in a data-based way information provided about the outcomes of complaints and of internally raised matters, and there isn't any commentary about interpretation of that and things like identification of systemic issues, or how repeat offenders might be dealt with, or any of those sorts of things we might like to see to actually explain to us more about how the department is dealing with these things. I'm wondering why that sort of information isn't presented here, and is it because that's not prepared?

Mr ELLIS - The report summarises the number and types of complaints and the findings and the outcomes of level 2 and level 3 complaints made against police. I'm happy to pass to the commissioner.

Comm ADAMS - I'll ask the deputy.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Yes, thank you. Through you, minister. The information we provided in the calendar years is the information that we're able to disclose in the tables you were talking about there. The pie charts have the level 1, 2 and 3s and the numbers, whereas the breakdown has the level 2s and 3s from either internally or complaints. The level of detail that's in there is de-identified because it's not information that we're actually able to disclose any further than what we've actually done to that point. As far as explanation goes for each one, there is a table above that does the definitions of what the terms mean.

Ms WEBB - I'm not asking for more information on each individual instance. Obviously, that's not appropriate. What I'm commenting on is that while we can see in a very broad sense how many complaints were made, how many were finalised, how many internal matters were raised, how many were finalised. We don't actually get to see what the outcomes in a data-based way - for example, there's nowhere presented here - I would have to go through this table and say, 'Okay, no breach, no breach, dismissed, dismissed', and figure out for myself what proportion of the level 2 complaints raised resulted in a no breach, what proportion of the level 2 complaints resulted in a complaint dismissed, what proportion, et cetera, et cetera.

There's not that level of data granularity presented, which would be meaningful to have collated and presented rather than a reader having to go through themselves to try to do the stats on that.

There's no commentary, not on specific instances but in a broad sense, on what we might think this means or what the police might be doing about this. Are there more breaches identified proportionally this year than last year? Are there consistent issues that are coming up more frequently than we might've expected on previous times? There's no interpretation. I'm just asking is that work done and, if so, why isn't there some annual reporting or some public reporting on it?

Mr ELLIS - On your first question, you're probably not actually asking about granularity. You're actually asking more about summarisation, but I'm happy to look at that if the committee and the public think that that's a valuable summarisation for us to do.

We've done significant work in terms of data collection and the presentation of it, far exceeding what's happened in the past, and we're always looking to improve and make sure that data is useful for the public and members of parliament and other people that have an interest in those things. So open to that, open to putting more commentary in.

Sometimes there's, I suppose, discussions within the community about whether they want commentary or whether they want things just presented as the facts, but, in terms of the presentational approach for these documents we've got an open mind. The data is there and available. If there's a way that we can help to summarise it for people that take a close interest.

Ms WEBB - More about interpreting, minister, is what I'm asking about. For example, what is done to identify systemic issues that might be indicated by the data, the information collected from the complaints and the internal matters raised, and then what action is taken when systemic matters are identified? For example, when I do a cursory look through here at the internal matters raised, I notice that many of the ones that resulted in a breach being identified related to people having unauthorised access to information or failing to maintain confidentiality. Now, if that's cropping up again and again, I think that's of interest to have some interpretation around that. If it has been identified as a systemic issue, what action is being taken? Can you tell me now about how systemic matters are identified?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, for sure. I'll pass to the commissioner. One of the things I will say in terms of interpretation, and you mentioned internal reports, is how encouraging it is to see the strong growth of internal reporting.

Ms WEBB - Yes, agreed.

Mr ELLIS - The blue team's process has been really effective. I also pay tribute to our commissioner who has really led the way in this in her time at a number of different ranks, and I think that's been noted publicly, but yes, I'll pass to the commissioner.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you again, minister. In terms of the broad question around the improvement to the report, it's a report we've done for two years. This is the first time we've had some feedback about how we might improve that report, and I am more than happy to take that on board.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

Comm ADAMS - It is about ensuring that the community feels confident in the transparency in the accountability of the service. Absolutely happy to take that feedback on board.

In terms of unlawful access of information, you may not be aware that the Integrity Commission actually did a specific audit in relation to matters where there had been breaches and looked at Tasmania Police in a broader sense around access to information, and they've published a report in relation to that, and we've taken on board some of the feedback and recommendations from that report. But in terms of -

Ms WEBB - Again, if I may just interrupt you for a moment.

Comm ADAMS - Sure.

Ms WEBB - For example, because this isn't mentioned in the broader annual report for the department in a general sense, some information about complaints and internal matters raised, and then there's no cross-referencing to say, 'And the Integrity Commission have done this investigation, and here's the link to the report'.

Putting that information into your annual report is probably pretty useful for the public to be able to more fully have confidence in what's happening and what's being done, but apart from that, my question was around the identification of systemic issues.

Comm ADAMS - If we believe that there's a trend or an issue that's starting to emerge, the deputy commissioner has the lead in relation to professional standards and misconduct, and he takes a very active and proactive approach in terms of ensuring our training, education and awareness is responsive to the complaints that we may have.

Again, in relation to accessing information, we've just been through a process of reminding staff, making sure that they understand the requirements about when they can access information. We have the ability to audit our systems to ensure that our staff are accessing information when they should, and so we do have checks and balances in place to ensure that people are complying with our policies and the commissioner's directions.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. It's good to have that description put on the record here, but my interest in asking the questions is more about how would we publicly, from an outside perspective, whether we're members of parliament or members of the public, understand some of this, not at a completely detailed level, but in terms of your process? We do look for systemic issues. Here's how we respond when we identify one. Here's what we've done this year in that space'. That kind of information in an annual report, I think, would be really quite confidence inspiring. That's just a comment, but thank you for the information.

OUTPUT GROUP 1

Public Safety

1.1 Support to the Community

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you. If we have no other questions on the overview, we will move to 1.1, support to the community.

Before I start, I acknowledge the new commander, or the commander in the northern district, Marco Ghedini, who's been doing an amazing job, and I think it's worth putting on the record when you have a commander that's been there a short time, and certainly we'll welcome them to the northern community, and we thank TasPol very much for Marco's presence.

I might start with Taskforce Raven, if that's right. Can you please provide an update on the successes and the challenges that have been experienced during the implementation of Taskforce Raven? What feedback from the community have you received on Taskforce Raven, minister? Is there scope to have a permanent visible police presence in our CBDs to facilitate public safety and discourage antisocial behaviour?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I appreciate your interest in this and also the positive feedback about Commander Ghedini who's certainly doing an excellent job.

In terms of Taskforce Raven, it was established in February 2025. It's targeting recidivist offenders and youth crime across the northern district, specifically in the areas in terms of offences of crime, retail theft and antisocial behaviour. The taskforce supports uniformed police with high-visibility patrols and proactive intervention strategies, and we can report that since inception, there has been a downward trend in crime across the district. That's encouraging, and we'll continue to work with the team at Taskforce Raven.

More broadly, we want to be doing consistent high visibility police patrols, particularly in areas where people are congregating and gathering. So that's Raven in the north, and, of course, we see a range of different taskforces operating in some of our larger metro areas to ensure that we can instil confidence in the community that these are safe places to go and also ensure that any offenders are held to account. With that, I'll pass to the Commissioner of Police to talk through more.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. Again, I'll just make a few opening comments, and I'll hand to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar. An important piece of feedback from our community survey was our community wants to see police highly visible and engaging with the community. They see highly visible police as a reassurance measure and make them feel safe when they're going about their business, when they're interacting with shop owners, and as a result of that, we've had a specific focus on ensuring that we've got highly-visible police out in the community and responding to the key issues that they've identified.

Assistant Commissioner Bodnar can give you a bit more detail about Taskforce Raven.

CHAIR - Thank you.

A/Comm BODNAR - Thank you, commissioner. Through the minister. Taskforce Raven has certainly performed exceptionally well since they were established in February this year, as the minister said, and some of those results I can talk about. Excuse me.

They've charged over 230 people since February this year, with over 1100 different offences. They've recovered in the vicinity of \$135,000 worth of stolen property in that time, which is quite exceptional, and they've managed to clear over 350 offence reports. An offence

report, for the benefit of the community, is a report that we take when a member of the community makes a complaint about an assault or shoplifting or damage to property. The fact that they've been able to clear 350 of those reports is quite exceptional. We have had some good, positive feedback from the community, and I take that from my conversations with Commander Ghedini, and I thank you for your comments as well, Chair.

The taskforce is a district-wide taskforce. We'll utilise that taskforce where we need to. We do have a heavy concentration in the Launceston CBD, but from time to time, we will also assist our investigators in the northern district, particularly through our criminal investigation area, and also northern drugs and firearms. In addition to that, they have recovered some firearms in the community and also recovered some drugs. We're quite pleased with how they're going, and we intend on running this taskforce indefinitely at this point in time.

CHAIR - Thank you. If I could continue on the youth crime area. Minister, I've been told that what's happening in Victoria usually hits Tasmania around 12 to 18 months later. If that's the case, what are we actually doing about youth crime and the possibilities of more violent crime? I think we've all seen what's happening in Victoria now and obviously don't want it to come here. Has TasPolice, through you, looked at what's happening in Victoria and got any strategies in place to prevent that further escalation of crime that they're now seeing in Victoria?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. Victoria is very concerning. Queensland was in a similar boat and the Northern Territory as well. Broadly speaking, Tasmania is a safe place to live. We know that total crime rates in Tasmania are significantly lower than the early 2000s, for example. Unfortunately, we also know that Tasmania is currently experiencing an increase in youth crime. Youth crime charges have increased in each of the last four calendar years, including 17 per cent in 2024.

While not all youth offenders are repeat offenders, we also know that in 2024, 57 individuals accounted for 50 per cent of the total youth crime charges. Any criminal behaviour by these youths is entirely unacceptable. No business owner or member of the Tasmanian community should be assaulted or live in fear.

Tasmania Police is working closely with the Department of Education, Children and Young People to consider the complex issues facing this group of youth offenders. This included the commissioner recently briefing the DECYP Executive on the role played and challenges faced by Tasmania Police.

Tasmania Police is a key partner in major reforms for child and youth wellbeing that have been recommended by the commission of inquiry, of course, into the Tasmanian government's response to child sexual abuse in institutional settings and implementation of the recommendations also needs to appropriately consider the ongoing need to address youth crime.

In line with the principles of the *Youth Justice Act 1997*, Tasmania Police diverts youth from the court system where it is appropriate. These diversions can include informal cautions, formal cautions and community conferences. However, for the intentional recidivist offenders, they become ineligible for diversion and Tasmania Police progresses their matters through the Youth Justice Court. Of course, we continue to undertake high visibility patrols in some of the hotspot crime areas you mentioned before, and particularly targeting locations where youths are known to congregate at specific times.

We've spoken before about the taskforces and I'll pass to the commissioner to add to my answer.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister and thank you, Chair. It's a complex issue.

CHAIR - It's the balance between community safety and youth justice.

Comm ADAMS - Yes, a really complex issue. What we've done is taken some deliberate steps to understand the issues faced by DECYP, our Department of Education, Children and Young People. We had our deputy commissioner who did a three-month secondment over with the department to understand the issues they see in working with children and young people who have complex needs and who are involved in crime. The assistant commissioner of Operations can talk a little bit around the 57 individuals we have identified who have committed half of the youth crime offending in 2024.

Some of the proactive things that we've done will set Tasmania up really well is the proactive introduction of the knife crime legislation. That's an important step and an important piece of legislation for us. What we would also like to see is that our approach is around trying to divert young people from crime in the first instance. It's very challenging at the moment because a key critical component of us being able to divert a young person, they have to admit the crime, they have to acknowledge their offending, and what we've found is an increasing trend where the young people are not admitting their offence and then that closes the door on diversionary options.

We think that that's a simple change, that where there is a simple offence, that we want to see those diversionary pathways still open to us, notwithstanding the fact that they haven't admitted the offence. If I ask the assistant commissioner to provide you some information around the 57 who have committed 50 per cent of the crime in 2024, you'll get an understanding of the work that has been done.

A/Comm BODNAR - Thank you, commissioner, and through the minister. Certainly, when we consider what's going on in Victoria and we compare that here, there's certainly a lot of differences because when we look at the total youth crime charges for the calendar year of 2024, by far and away, the largest number of charges there related to stealing. There are over 2300 stealing charges in amongst that 5780, followed by burglary, a little over 600, destroy property just under 600 and then assault. When we look at the trends in Victoria, a lot of their challenges are around robberies, with increasing robberies, aggravated burglaries and car theft.

Disappointingly, when we look at, I suppose, the cohort of offenders that committed 50 per cent of the crime last year, we also see, unfortunately, that a number of those are continuing to offend in 2025. Some data I was recently provided with shows that about 93 per cent of that 57 have committed further crimes in 2025. That's not only a challenge for us, it's also a challenge for the community.

As the commissioner has spoken about, we're doing some work with DECYP at the moment to see what could change because what we find is when youths are not engaged in the education system, that creates more issues for us as well and that's a really complex type issue as well. We know that there's, I suppose, a range of factors that contribute to the youths committing crimes in the community, and it's a really challenging space for us, Chair. We're

doing what we can, and the commissioner raises a very good point about the current legislative requirements around diverting youths from the criminal justice system.

Our primary goal is to divert wherever we can. Certainly, anecdotally, we understand that youths are making the decision not to, I suppose in simple terms, own up to their offending, which makes it then impossible for us to go through a formal cautioning process or through a community conference segue. That in itself encourages conversation for the future because if there's sufficient admissible evidence to be able to substantiate that a youth has committed a simple offence, why not let's try to divert them? Okay?

This is about rehabilitation into the future and then hopefully we can get them back on track. I think we all acknowledge at times some youths in the community will go off track and it's important we're doing everything we can to try to rehabilitate and turn that offending around.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. I have a follow-up question first from Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. I'm interested to understand the relationship between the police and the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. If there's an incident that happens there, is there a police presence 24/7 at Ashley? There's not, is there? If there's an incident at Ashley, do the police get called in? There has been one in recent times that got a bit of publicity with the fire and that sort of thing. I'm wondering, in the last six months, for example, how many times have police been called to Ashley for assistance there because of whatever incident that might have occurred there?

Comm ADAMS - Do you want to talk to that, Jonathan?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Perhaps not the last six months, in my head. It's over the last 18 months, I think there have been 71 occasions that we've been there, for all sorts of things including more serious incidents, I suppose. Look, I've got to be careful; my three months ended at DECYP. I was working for DECYP, so I was doing a different role there, but there are some observations there.

To answer the first part, the police that get called there, they come from Central North Division, so it's the country division. There will be two people on from Longford, well, from Campbell Town through to Deloraine, and if they're called there, they're not being able to respond to anything else in the community. Then we have to supplement from Launceston otherwise.

One of the more recent incidents there, there were upwards of 18 staff who had to attend on a Saturday, all majority called in in specialist groups, so actually negotiators and so forth, to deal with them. They were there for eight hours before it was safely resolved without further incident or harm to any of the young detainees or the police or the youth workers involved. It's very complex attendance there. We are developing, and we're in the final stages of developing, a letter of understanding on our engagement with the centre and what we'll go to.

I think it's not unreasonable to say that we go to things that we shouldn't be going to. There should be capacity within the centre to do that, outside police. The police, we're there for - it's not for the community safety if we're going to attend to a detention centre in that sense. It is a complex environment, and I have a much greater understanding of the environment.

PUBLIC

I went there, in three months, half a dozen times - I think it was more times in that three months than I had for the 15 years I was in Launceston. But I was there for a different reason, of course. I was doing reviews and so forth and talking to staff and the members doing the review committees. But it's an environment that is complex. It's complex for police to navigate as well, because the staff that do attend there are our general duties constables. We have raised the level of engagement there as far as when we will go to the detention centre and for what it might be. That's been lifted to the duty commissioner, so one of the assistant commissioners, one of the three will be a duty commissioner for the week, to ensure that the appropriate response and the appropriate attendance, I guess, for what, to be more accurate, is actually being followed.

There are all sorts of general inquiries that might happen to see the detainees and that happens as normal business. This is more when an incident happens, so it's very complicated.

CHAIR - No, thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - I have a quick follow-up on those 57 individuals. What sort of - obviously youth - what sort of age group is that predominantly? Is there a breakdown of that or just a theme?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Hiscutt. I'll pass to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar for the breakdown. In 2024-25, though, we did have 769 charges for 10- to 13-year-olds and 4904 for 14- to 17-year-olds, but I'll pass to Mr Bodnar - assistant commissioner.

Comm HIGGINS - Minister, if I can jump in very quickly and correct something. I was incorrect by one. There are 72 incidents. I knew that if I pulled it out of my head, it may not be exact. That was between 2024-25.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, I was going to question about that.

Comm HIGGINS - Seventy-two incidents over that financial year.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Comm HIGGINS - Sorry.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, thank you. Through the minister. Whilst I don't have the full particulars of the 57 with me, they certainly range in age through to 17. What I can inform the committee is that 35 of those youths reside in the southern part of the state, 13 in the northern part of the state, and eight in the western part of the state. They are from across the state.

What we did learn is the number of offences were quite extraordinarily high, particularly from, I suppose, if I use the term the most, or the top 30 prolific offenders. They ranged in crimes from 50 crimes committed in 2024 up to 100. When you think about that, on the scale of it, when I look at our -

Mr HISCUTT - That's one every three days.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, it's pretty frightening, to be honest with you. Again, whilst we want to abide by the principles of youth justice and divert youths whenever we can, we've

got an obligation to keep the community safe as well. Hence, you know, this cohort is going to court.

Mr HISCUTT - I guess my theme is that the reason for the question was, are they predominantly maybe 14-year-olds who have at least four more years until they are adults, or are they predominantly 17-year-olds who may next year - I know you don't have the exact figure, but just a feel would be fine.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, I'd say more of a mixture.

Mr HISCUTT - So all across the board.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, certainly, as the minister alluded to, youths in the lower age bracket, we don't have as many issues with. If you're looking at say 10, 11, 12, 13 year olds, nowhere near as many issues. Once you get to 14, we do see a bit of an escalation.

Mr HISCUTT - Thanks for the answer.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I'd just like to follow up on a couple of those things. In the first instance, it sounds really positive having this secondment across to DECYP for that period of time. A very good way to make sure the linkage is there across in this youth justice space. One of the things I wanted to pick up on from what you described about call-outs to AYDC and the commissioner level now having a responsibility to decide what the response will be. When did that begin as a new arrangement? Sorry, minister.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Through you, minister. That's very recent. We did lift to inspector level before that and then commander and we've made a decision to lift it, and honestly, that's largely based off - I went to South Australia in September and had visited South Australian police facilities and asked questions about their engagement. There, they've only got one youth detention centre as well. Their engagement there and that was at commissioner level as well.

Ms WEBB - Great.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - That's why. It's not to dictate the resources that will go necessarily and task them and so forth, but to ensure that we have that high-level oversight to ensure that we're sending police to the right incidents where we should be involved to assist the staff for the detention centre as opposed to being the fallback.

Ms WEBB - Yes, sounds positive.

Comm ADAMS - If I can add one extra thing to that. That's a draft letter of understanding (LOU) between us and the DECYP executive. The DECYP executive has the draft and we're due to meet with them either next week or the following week to work through that they're comfortable and they understand the practicalities around what the letter of understanding actually means. That's to ensure that Tasmania Police are only attending the Ashley Youth Detention Centre when there is a critical emergency or we're there to take a crime report, of course.

Ms WEBB - There's an MOU, isn't there, between police and Ashley Youth Detention Centre, essentially, but I presume senior management -

Comm ADAMS - There is, and the LOU is aimed at replacing that. What we've done, and as the deputy has just alluded to, we've looked at some of the arrangements that other youth detention facilities have across the country, in particular South Australia and Northern Territory. Yes, we want to make sure that we've got the right settings in place and we're really clear for our staff who actually get deployed to that facility as to what is their scope of responsibility so that it's really clear because I have work health and safety obligations from my own staff as well and it needs to be clear.

Ms WEBB - Absolutely. Thank you. I also wanted to follow up on what you'd mentioned about the fact that it could be valuable to be considering legislative change in order to allow for diversion to be used more effectively, and whether that's been something that's part of formal discussions with DECYP. Is there an appetite in favour of that, and is it actively being considered as part of upcoming legislation which is being prepared to implement other commission of inquiry recommendations coming through?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I've spoken in the past about this area. We believe that there's a good opportunity for legislative reform there, including as part of broader work with the *Youth Justice Act*, which we've committed to. I think young people make mistakes, that's a fact. We've all been there, we've all been young before. One of those mistakes can actually be listening to the advice of your lawyer that you should plead not guilty even when you know that you did it. Supporting those young people to get back on track through a diversionary process is important. Working with DECYP, Tasmania Police, DECYP through the Youth Justice Blueprint and the *Youth Justice Act*, as I mentioned before, we're working through the opportunities for reform there. Certainly, it was written in 1997. The landscape has changed significantly for young people and those youth offenders, unfortunately.

That'll be an important part of the work. It's in that getting the balance right. There are opportunities for us to help get young people back on track in a way that is, I suppose, supports them in a diversionary process. There are, of course, those repeat violent youth offenders where that's a different case, but there's certainly some good opportunities there. I'll pass to the commissioner if there's anything to add.

Comm ADAMS - The only thing I'd add is it's part of the government's Youth Justice Blueprint. It is a body of work that I understand DECYP has prioritised. I would expect that is something that we should see some movement on, surely.

Ms WEBB - Another follow-up question then in relation to the interactions between Tas Police and DECYP around the Youth Justice Blueprint. Obviously, we do have those recommendations and implementation of them coming down the track, but we're not there yet. In the meantime, there are various initiatives that are stood up in relation to youth crime responses. I'm wondering, is there a formal way any new initiatives or new approaches to youth crime response from Tas Pol are assessed against or checked for compliance with the Youth Justice Blueprint and the direction of where that's heading?

Is there a formal way that that's required, that if you were to stand up a new taskforce of some sort in this space, or have a new initiative that you intended to roll out, does it need to be checked against the blueprint?

Comm ADAMS - Through you, minister. No, there isn't anything that would guide a reference check back to the blueprint, but from the close collaboration that we've had with DECYP over the last 12 months, we've really invested significant effort and as we've said with the deputy secondment, to understand their issues through their eyes, so that we are policing in a way that is going to be conducive to diverting as many young people from the youth justice criminal justice system as we can, and that's the intent.

As the assistant commissioner has talked about in terms of the needing to admit an offence, we've identified what the impact of that legislative change would have in terms of youth crime. It's that close collaboration, it's working together from a whole-of-government perspective on an issue such as this, which is complex and actually intersects with a number of other government agencies.

Ms WEBB - Hundred per cent it does. Would it be fair to say then, that while there's not a formal requirement that there's that sort of alignment documented and checked, there's an intention there for efforts made to be in alignment with the Youth Justice Blueprint if you were to be standing something up in the meantime in this space?

Comm ADAMS - Yes, that is true. We will always make - our frontline staff will always make decisions based on community safety. That will be the first approach that they will take. We are very cognisant of the need to divert young people where we can, and our staff are aware of that.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. One last thing, and it's just a brief one, Chair, if I may, because it relates to the 57 identified young people. I think it's useful for us to have a clear understanding of that cohort and the challenges that they're presenting and are experiencing themselves. Have we got clarity on what proportion of those young people are in state care?

A/Comm BODNAR - Through the minister, no, we don't at this stage, I'm sorry. I'm not saying DECYP doesn't, but I don't.

Ms WEBB - It would be very interesting for us to have a clear understanding of that from one side or the other.

Comm ADAMS - I can say that they do, and probably the DCOP will provide some information there. I briefed the executive on the 57, and they went away and actually did a significant amount of work in understanding every interaction as soon as that young person entered into the criminal justice system. There is a whole range of complexities with each of them. Not every one of those 57 are in state care. I'm not sure whether the deputy wants to add anything further.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Through you, minister. Whilst it's probably not for us to say the exact numbers and so forth, I'm aware that when the commissioner came to brief the executive leadership team, which I was part of in DECYP at that time, so I was able to actually value add - I then connected Youth Justice, or Peter Whitcombe the Dep Sec in DECYP for Youth Justice and Child Safety, with Adrian and Operations, and they were able to work through each individual young person, all 57.

Then DECYP had a clear understanding about who the people are, because it's all well and good for us to say they're 57, but unless DECYP know the 57, they're able to then input

plans in and work how they can actually better - probably serve is not the right word, but better engage with the young people and their families to understand the complexities of their lives and what they're facing there. That was an important piece of work.

One observation from my time in DECYP is that I didn't have full appreciation until I went there about things we do, whether it's the taskforce, in policing and the impact that has on DECYP if we don't tell them we're about to do it and what it means and where it will be. That can have a profound effect on their workload or something they're doing in the community already with families or with individuals that might change the trajectory as well. It may not be a good trajectory that they change to for our actions.

That's been something I've been able to bring back to our leadership group as well and to speak to the districts and through Adrian too. We have a better grasp about things that we do and the trickle effect into other agencies and how that - whilst we're doing our part in community safety, unless we're aligned with DECYP, it doesn't necessarily have great outcomes.

Ms WEBB - That's really positive to hear. I will follow up then with DECYP around the 57 young people and the proportion in state care because it's a pretty key consideration for us as a state to understand we are responsible for these young people if they're in state care and so not just individuals.

CHAIR - Thank you. We have the Education minister tomorrow and we have a follow-up, that's right, Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - I'm worried this may not be an answerable question but has there been any work done on monetarily what that has cost the state, obviously looking at a budget situation that we're in, what those 57 individuals have cost the state in policing and in everything?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, obviously there's a huge impact of crime. For example, the victimisation that happens when someone loses their life as a result of crime and the flow-on effects that that trauma can have is enormous. Obviously, incarceration, policing, a whole range of different things. It's certainly an interesting area to look at and I know that work has been done in different jurisdictions around how you would quantify some of those things. Some of them are really hard to quantify. How do you quantify trauma? How do you quantify the loss of human life on the basis of crime committed? Those sorts of things. But yes, it's definitely a worthy task and certainly for every crime that we're able to prevent, it does have a massive flow-on effect.

It's part of the reason why we think investing in police is a really good investment, because you can prevent so much downstream trauma because of strong policing. I'll pass it to the commissioner.

Comm ADAMS - I was going to go back and give you the age group of the 57, if you'd like the age group.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, thank you.

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Comm ADAMS - So 13 to 14, there are six; 15 to 16, there are 14; and 17, there are 12. Obviously we've got some of those who have moved into 18, which now there's 25 of those. Just to reinforce the minister's comments, it's a complex issue and to try to quantify a cost is very, very difficult. So we're not able to provide that detail for you.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, perhaps even in just a resourcing cost. I guess the alternative of spending that money there, whereas at the front end might be an interesting process to do.

CHAIR - Perhaps the minister could take that on notice?

Mr HISCUTT - If answerable - it may not be answerable - but I'm happy to -

Mr ELLIS - I'm not sure what we can specifically provide.

Mr HISCUTT - I'm happy for that -

Mr ELLIS - In speaking generally, I think it's an interesting body of work. It's probably one more for academic research to look in and how you quantify that. As I mentioned before, there'll be a range of different ways that you would account for some of those things. Some of them are very hard to account for, but yes, I think it's definitely one that's worthwhile considering.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. Through you, Chair, I'm satisfied with the answer. I don't need it taken - thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. If I could ask you, minister, the fatigue management policy. I know that's been on foot for quite a while and the key priorities, obviously managing and reducing workplace fatigue, operational effectiveness and the health of officers. Can I get an update on how that's proceeding and the effectiveness of it?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. The new fatigue management framework has recently been finalised following an internal consultation process. The framework changes recommended by the Wise, Lord and Ferguson review. Following extensive consultation, the fatigue management framework was finalised in October and has commenced. The primary purpose of the framework is to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of our people. An online training package has also been developed to assist supervisors, managers, and staff in understanding and implementing the new framework. I'll pass it to the commissioner to add anything further.

CHAIR - Yes, some evidence would be good of how it's actually working and helping officers.

Comm ADAMS - I pass to our Assistant Commissioner Oosterloo, he's the lead on this.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Thank you. Through you, minister. While it's commenced, the online training packages have just been rolled out, and our members are commencing that training now. We're giving them a period of time to commence the training before we expect the actual framework to be adhered to and followed. We've set a date of 5 January for that commencement of that framework.

Through this year we've been backwards and forwards on consultation on developing the framework. It was ready earlier in the year. We went out to final consultation and got a little bit more feedback around clarifying some terms and some of the processes that were outlined, and we've addressed all that feedback and incorporated it into the final document. The final version is being completed and, as I say, the online training package was then something we developed.

Initially, we didn't have a training package. We thought it was a framework that could be implemented fairly easily with some simple supervision associated, but the feedback we got was, no, this is something quite significant. We need to develop some training. We took the time to develop that training package with our education and training command. We consulted on that training package, bearing in mind how important an issue like this is and making sure we get it right. We've now, as I say, just rolled out that training package which all members are expected to complete before that official commencement date of early January.

CHAIR - Through you, minister, so that's something they actually need to complete unlike the other courses or the other online packages you had to do with mental health whereby it was voluntary, if you felt the need. So this is something that officers must complete?

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Through you, minister, yes, we've made that mandatory training. We have a number of online learning modules and training packages that we've determined to be mandatory. We obviously try to limit that to really important training that affects the health and safety of our members and really important parts of our organisation, parts of our business that are absolutely critical because there is a lot of training. This is mandatory training, absolutely, and we take the fatigue management and the health and safety of our members quite seriously.

CHAIR - Thank you. That does lead on to questions I have asked in the past with regard to mental health. Obviously, workers' compensation, mental health is quite a factor in the serious job of policing. I think we all appreciate the scenes that police come across and the stress on police. What is Tas Police actually doing to prevent mental health issues and how are officers assisted?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. The government knows emergency service responders experience situations that most of the general public cannot imagine. Emergency service workers run towards the danger, and they're exposed to violence and other distressing situations as part of the job. We're committed to supporting the physical and mental health of our emergency service responders. That's both career and volunteer.

In 2018, the government introduced a program of support for the health and wellbeing of emergency services responders. Our 2024 election commitment of \$1 million per annum over four years has seen our commitment of \$3 million a year increase to \$4 million a year. We supported groundbreaking health and wellbeing program that provides a mix of proactive, preventative and intervention measures 24/7 to our police officers, fire service, SES and Ambulance Tasmania and State Service personnel. The government has also introduced national-leading presumptive PTSD legislation, removed step-down for workers' compensation provisions for police officers, and expanded the presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters. I'm happy to speak more about that.

These initiatives provide invaluable support to emergency service workers when they need it most. We're grateful for their service. By making support increasingly accessible, it's reasonable that we have experience also in increased workers' compensation claims and in the workers' compensation premium. The wellbeing support program really is nation-leading. It's been described by many academics, including at Edith Cowan, as the gold standard for the country. That's encouraging, but of course we know there's more that we need to do so that we can support our frontline people. I'll pass to the commissioner to add further.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. I guess to reiterate that we did engage Edith Cowan University to have a look at our wellbeing services and what we provide to our staff, because the health and wellbeing of our staff is the number one priority. We can't do our job unless we support our staff.

CHAIR - Including the State Service staff as well, yes.

Comm ADAMS - Absolutely, yes. Professor Farr-Wharton did describe it as a gold standard program. It does have a focus on proactive and supportive services. We actually look at the support program from a perspective of what is the life cycle of a police officer, and extrapolate what is the trajectory of someone's career, and where should we have proactive interventions to try to assist those officers to prevent cumulative effects of stress? That's how we've tailored our program. There are multiple interventions. There are multiple proactive services that sit alongside our wellbeing program.

You may have heard us talk about MyPulse, which is a mental health and physical health screening. We've got health coaching. Those officers who work in areas of high risk, they're subject to mandatory wellbeing checks. We've got critical incident stress program. If a person attends a critical incident, it's important that they're debriefed in a timely manner. We do track the number of critical incidents that our officers attend, and where we may need to have an intervention we obviously will do that. Wellbeing is the critical key to retaining our staff and ensuring our staff are mentally and physically fit to be able to perform what is a challenging job at times.

CHAIR - Thank you. Are you able to give me the workers' compensation figures? How many officers and State Service staff would be on workers' compensation? I'm happy to take it on notice, as well as what is the longest period of absence from the workplace?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, happy to follow up on that specifically.

CHAIR - As I said, I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr ELLIS - No, that's okay. The information that we can provide, Chair, is 268 workers' compensation claims submitted in 2024-25, up from 240 the previous financial year: 26 per cent of claims relate to mental health, 70 per cent relate to physical health, and four were for cancer. 2024-25: 227 claims were closed, up from 161 in the previous year. Of the claims closed, 170 were for physical health, 52 were for mental health, and five were for cancer. I'll pass to the commissioner if there's anything further to add.

CHAIR - Thank you.

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Comm ADAMS - I think you've covered the statistics there, unless you have an additional question just in relation to workers' comp. It is certainly a priority for us because we need to ensure that we've got the right size service to be able to provide a level of responsive service to the community when they call for assistance.

Then, as we said, with our wellbeing services it's about supporting those officers who are off on long-term workers' comp. We aim to work with those individuals to get them back to best health where we can. We've recently introduced a new policy where we have, I guess, a focus on ensuring that we're supporting those individuals who are off on long-term workers' comp, but also ensuring that we've got a resourcing model that supports those work areas that maybe have a reduced workforce as a result of someone being off on a long-term injury.

CHAIR - And the longest period was?

Comm ADAMS - It's very difficult to say the long-term because some of the actual claims that we have, we've got members who have left the service who still have an open claim. It's actually very difficult to give you -

CHAIR - Significant though? There are some with significant -

Comm ADAMS - Absolutely, there are some with significant periods of time, yes. I mean, the legislation prevents us from settling a workers' comp claim inside two years. From my perspective, that's a piece of legislation that is in urgent need of reform. If we can't settle a claim inside two years, we're not providing support to people who want to exit with dignity from the service.

CHAIR - Thank you. Minister, you might need to look at an amendment.

Mr ELLIS - Certainly the legislative framework for workers' compensation is something that we've been quite active in, and as a government more broadly. Certainly we note interstate experiences of some jurisdictions that have been looking at reform to workers' compensation. Tasmania's experience is not in isolation. I think I saw figures recently in New South Wales. Their workers' compensation premium is up around \$570 million.

CHAIR - Perhaps a discussion with the commissioner with regard to assist our officers to finalise their workers' compensation.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we discuss regularly workers' compensation. Work health and safety is the top of the agenda for every meeting, and this is a regular topic of discussion.

CHAIR - Yes, I accept that. With respect, minister, just from the comment from the commissioner, that maybe there needs to be a more urgent conversation with regard to help our officers settle their claims.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I appreciate the feedback, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you.

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Mr ELLIS - Certainly it'll be a legislative matter, and it'll be something that we'll need to work through as a parliament, but we think there are some important opportunities for reform to the way that we support our people.

CHAIR - I will remind you, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely, and I appreciate it.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb?

Ms WEBB - No, there's a follow-up from -

CHAIR - Okay, Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Just a follow-up question from that. Are there records kept of how many people leave the force after one year or two years, to know what the effect of the force may be having on people? We always talk about how many new officers are enrolled each year, but I wanted to know how many, after one or two years, have left the force, if there is -

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and worth noting that people leave for a whole range of different reasons, of course.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, absolutely. And you can't make assumptions on that, but I am wondering if we could -

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and our people are highly skilled, highly trained. There's a huge demand for police officers from a range of different public and private sector areas. So happy to speak either broadly or specifically, whichever would work.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, broadly.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the commissioner to talk through some of the data, but certainly retention is a key area that we work on. Tasmania Police is widely regarded as an excellent employer and we don't have some of the same challenges or to the same scale that we see in other jurisdictions. Of course, there's always more that we need to do. Policing is a tough job and supporting our people through that is core business for us. I'll pass it to the commissioner.

Comm ADAMS - I think we have that data, but I don't think I've got it with me.

Mr HISCUTT - Happy to take that on notice, yes.

Comm ADAMS - What I can give you is the breakdown of the separations over the last 12 months. We've had 27 retirements. We've had 67 resignations. We've had two terminations. And we've had four members transfer to the State Service. What is interesting, when we look at those who have resigned, 11 of those were trainees because we've doubled our recruitment process at the moment. We normally find somebody's not suited. So 11 are trainees. We've had 22 workers' comp settlements of those that had resigned. And we've had four who have left pending disciplinary outcomes. We've had 30 who've actually moved to alternate employment. So that's around 2.8 per cent of our organisation actually leave for another job, which we think is pretty good.

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What we'd like to do is to keep those who we invest in. We see that's the priority for us; we want our staff to stay with us. We think it's a good job. We think the community value what they do, and we value what they do.

So that is a focus for us over the next 12 months, to ensure we've got the right settings and retention strategies, and to actually engage our staff on those retention strategies as to what they see is missing or what we can do some additional work on to help retain officers.

Mr HISCUTT - That's great information.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Following on from Mr Hiscutt, was there agreement to take on notice some data relating to one-year retention of new recruits?

Mr HISCUTT - I didn't, but if you'd like -

Ms WEBB - Yes, I think that would be good to have. Can you give us the last three years, maybe, of the retention rate at one year?

CHAIR - Take that on notice.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, happy to see what's available.

Comm ADAMS - For years of service, we're after? For how long they've been -

Dep Comm HIGGINS - People who've left after one year, people who've left after two years -

Comm ADAMS - Yes, okay.

Mr ELLIS - There are some incredible people who are leaving after 40 years and that sort of stuff at the moment, which is wonderful to see. I tell you what, the commitment that we see among a range of people across Tasmania Police is quite extraordinary.

Mr HISCUTT - I think we may have something to add.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Yes. Through you, minister. I don't have the three years' data, but I can certainly give you the last year's - as in 2024-25 - average length of tenure for the officers leaving. Obviously, as the commissioner said, 11 trainees left in that period. Those people are within their first six months of service. That's a fair number.

Just on that point, that is a natural part of our recruiting and training process. We will have people who we will recruit. We do our best to make sure that we get people in the door, that we've done all the testing and assessment to work out that we're right for them and they're right for us, but there will be people who will drop off in the academy process for a number of reasons. Either the job's not for them or they struggle to keep up with the training program. Other things can intervene. We've got 11 of those.

Other than that, the people within their first year, there were three others during the 2024-25 period who left who were in their first year of service. They are people that've just graduated from the academy, haven't quite finished their 12 months. That's a relatively small number. Certainly, we can take on notice the previous years and get those numbers, but an indication I'd give you is it's about that. It's a low number of people leaving in their first year.

If you look at all separations, the average length of service is about 20 to 25 years, but that includes retirements. When you look just at resignations, you're looking at between 10 and 15 years as the average length of tenure for members separating in terms of resigning from Tasmania Police. I'm happy to give you the numbers, but it is a small number of people in their first year, particularly when you take out trainees who leave while they're in training.

Mr HISCUTT - Clearly doing some form of exit interview to know what those statistics are. That's good to know as well.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Through you, minister. We keep really good records. This is something we're really paying attention to at the moment. We're developing some strategies around how we can best retain our people. We're really looking closely at the reasons people are leaving - whether they're trainees, whether they're 10 to 15 years - and trying to work out ways that we can make sure we keep our best people.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - I'm not sure if this is the right line item to ask it in. You can redirect me if you pick it up later. I'm interested in the key deliverables table on page 186 of Budget paper 2, number 1. You've got the Weiss recommendations with some funding allocated. Half a million dollars in this financial year, and then 2026-27 has \$300,000. Can I ask questions about that on this line item? Do you mind?

Mr ELLIS - Happy to, yes.

Ms WEBB - Great. It's great that the Weiss recommendations are being implemented, obviously. Can you explain in detail a little bit how that money is being put towards the implementation of the recommendations? I'm particularly interested in the description. It talks about the dedicated victim management team. Is that something that's being specifically funded out of this allocation, or is that coming from within the department's regular appropriation allocation?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Ms Webb. First, can I express our deep sympathy and condolences for the victim-survivors of Paul Reynolds and thank them for their courage and bravery in this very difficult process. I thank Ms Weiss as well for her excellent work. The initiative will provide funding to implement, in part 3, recommendations arising from the Weiss review. The review recommended allocations to the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management.

There are other recommendations that sit with other departments, but those recommendations are to establish a restorative engagement framework for people who've experienced grooming and/or sexual abuse by Tasmania Police officers; to strengthen community engagement; and build trust between Tasmania Police and Tasmanian sporting organisations for the purpose of preventing, identifying and reporting grooming, sexual abuse

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and unacceptable sexualised conduct in sport, including the establishment of a dedicated community engagement command - they are doing some quite extraordinary work, and we might go into that in some more detail - and for Tasmania Police to establish a dedicated victim management team which operates separately from the Professional Standards Unit to support victims of reported police offending or misconduct. I'll pass to the commissioner.

Ms WEBB - I can read that in the papers here. I'm particularly interested to understand about how the money's allocated and where that's going.

Comm ADAMS - I can provide you with a bit of additional information in addition to what is in the Budget chapter, which has the \$500,000 and the \$300,000. DPAC actually reallocated a million dollars from the commission of inquiry funds that they had available to them to our department. Then with negotiation with Justice, we've transferred three of the recommendations to Justice, and they'll take the lead for those.

One of those is the restorative engagement framework, and it makes sense that, if they're providing the expertise and guidance over the redress-type scheme or a restorative engagement framework scheme, we're doing it once across government, we're doing it as best as we can, and we've got the right experts informing. Justice will take the lead. They have had some of the million dollars from DPAC allocated to them to help them support them deliver on that recommendation.

Ms WEBB - That's not in these amounts here in this paper.

Comm ADAMS - No, it's not. It's in addition. We've got these amounts, plus we've -

Ms WEBB - It's confusing, because it's listed here as something attached to this funding that's indicated in the table.

Comm ADAMS - Yes. What is in the table is for our two recommendations that we have the lead on.

Ms WEBB - Which are the other two in the dot points?

Comm ADAMS - Yes, which is the community engagement and the establishment of the community engagement command and the dedicated victim management team. The command is established and is doing some brilliant work. The feedback from our communities has been outstanding. You may have seen a feature of the command being Poli, which is the community engagement van which has been deployed at a range of sporting events, rural areas. It's been a tremendous tool to bring communities together and have our staff engaging with our communities in a less formal way. We're in the current process of scoping the dedicated victim management team to ensure that we consult appropriately in the development of that particular capability.

You would also be aware that the Independent Monitor will oversight our implementation of these recommendations. We have regular meetings with him to ensure that what we are doing is meeting the expectations of him and the community. The work is well advanced in regards to the two recommendations that we are implementing.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. That's really positive. The community engagement command in place and operating is good. The victim management team is coming along. How does that track across to the actual amounts there? Given that there's nothing in forward Estimates, are the amounts there not representing actually the funding for those things? I'm presuming that they're funded through core funding. What's this amount relating to?

Comm ADAMS - What we've done in terms of the allocation is, if in the course of implementing the recommendations we identify that we need additional funding support, then we will provide a budget submission through the budget process. That's how we'll manage that. At the moment, we're content with the allocation. We believe that we can implement the recommendations within that funding envelope.

Ms WEBB - In relation to the Weiss review into Paul Reynolds, what resources have been dedicated to the seven referrals from former and serving police officers by that review, and have those outstanding matters been finalised? Have they been oversights by the Integrity Commission? There's no public update on that in any form, I don't believe. Why hasn't there been?

Comm ADAMS - Some of the matters have been subject to investigation. Some of those victims also haven't wished to pursue further investigation or further police action in relation to those. We've provided the report to the Integrity Commission, and that's the way in which we've acquitted the work that Regina has done in regard to that review.

Ms WEBB - Where is it to be publicly reported on, in your understanding, closing the loop on that? It's quite clear from the Weiss review that those referrals have been made. How will the public know, other than this discussion here, but in a more formal, definite way? That's my question.

Comm ADAMS - We will take a trauma-informed approach in relation to dealing with each of those individuals. They all have specific expectations about their engagement with the Weiss review and recommendations. I've personally provided an apology to a victim-survivor through this process, and once the restorative engagement framework is in place, I expect that they would engage those who want to engage in that process - will engage in that process.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. That's good to hear, that in terms of the specific individuals, but I was speaking more about, broadly, public accountability about this process, closing the loop and being reported on. Not specifically to the individuals involved and not in detail in terms of exposing anything that's identifying about them, but broadly. It's not in your annual report to say these matters from the Weiss review have been concluded, broadly, and this is what we've now done, it's sitting with the Integrity Commission or whatever - you know, some sort of public statement - so that the members of the public can understand that that process has continued and been brought to a conclusion.

Comm ADAMS - I can only reiterate that we've managed the interaction with each of the victims that came forward in the Weiss review in a trauma-informed way. Some of those, I don't actually know who they are.

Ms WEBB - Yes, so it's not about the individuals, it's about, broadly - maybe it's more of a political question, actually, commissioner. To the minister: you commissioned the Weiss review. Good piece of work. Came up with clear recommendations. Also talked about

particular actions that had been taken by Regina Weiss in terms of referring matters to the police. Public accountability - to close that loop on actions taken as a result of the review - would be clear, that some sort of public statement, even whether it's in the department's annual report or through you or whatever it might be, here's how that's concluded, that work.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. From a political point of view, those key matters are the recommendations that Ms Weiss made. She made five recommendations. We've accepted all of those, and we're working through the implementation, and the Budget funds some of those. In terms of police investigations, obviously the commissioners put on the record around the importance of making sure that we're trauma-informed in some of those responses.

There is a range of disclosures. Some relate to complaints about Paul Reynolds and others general information that have been made since. Sorry, in terms of disclosures from further disclosures in relation to Paul Reynolds.

Ms WEBB - There were seven referrals of former and serving police officers by the review, is what was reported in the review, I believe.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and as I mentioned, there have been six further disclosures in relation to the behaviour of Paul Reynolds specifically. As I mentioned, some relate to complaints and others are general information. The commissioner has spoken about - in terms of investigations and those kinds of things - the importance for that to go through the appropriate channels and the police process. You asked about political response. Of course, the response from government is about the recommendations that Ms Weiss made, and we've accepted all those, and we're working through the implementation.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. I have a follow-up from Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - No, a new question.

CHAIR - A new question from Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - The question is in relation to a growing rise of non-conformance, sovereign citizens and the like. We've got a lovely bunch in Central Coast, but I know some other areas have a lot more trouble with police call-outs to council chambers and things like that. I wanted to know what the police response to that growing concern is, obviously with national and international concerns that we've had recently.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Hiscutt. I might talk broadly about our work around counterterrorism and violent extremism, which these people and these groups can fall within, and I'll pass to the team from Tasmania Police. Broadly speaking, we're part of a national approach to counterterrorism and violent extremism, which involves Commonwealth government security, intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Tasmania Police continues to ensure Tasmania's counterterrorism preparedness arrangements are well developed and nationally aligned, in participating in national exercises, workshops and courses. We work with partner agencies to ensure our legislation is contemporary and consistent with other legislative frameworks nationally.

PUBLIC

Increasingly, preventing counterterrorism and violent extremism involves collaboration with non-traditional partner agencies, including justice, health and education. Tasmania Police maintains specialist counterterrorism capabilities developed and supported through the Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee.

We also have made significant investments in making our Police Special Operations Group full-time as part of the growth in police numbers, and we work very closely, as I mentioned before, with Commonwealth partner agencies. The Department of Home Affairs funds positions and activities in Tasmania Police, Emergency Management Special Response Command to counter violent extremism, grievance-fuelled violence and fixation threats as part of a nationwide network. The EMSR proactively engages with government and private sector entities, including owners and operators of crowded places and critical infrastructure, to build resilience and support counterterrorism preparedness. I'll pass to the commissioner to add further.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. In terms of operational policing, we have intelligence holdings that are relevant for our operational police in their engagement with the like individuals. That also includes warnings or flags for our staff to be aware when they're engaging with these members of the community.

Mr HISCUTT - I guess from a legislative framework, is there anything required, or are you working on anything for not the extreme end but the nuisance end of that, how it's affecting, as I said, councils, and do we need any legislation to say, 'What you're talking about is, in your mind, obviously valid, but in the eyes of the law is not.'?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Hiscutt. In terms of nuisance and speech matters, it's probably more a question for the Attorney-General. That wouldn't be something that police would necessarily be the law enforcement body for. In terms of our focus, that's on the kind of violent extremism, and it's important to make sure that we're prepared, that we're monitoring individuals of interest. I think the commissioner spoke about that in terms of specific police operations.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. If we have no more burning questions, I thought we can move on.

Ms WEBB - I've got more, but they might fit in other areas.

CHAIR - We can always come back as well, just so that we get through our line items. If you've got an urgent question you'd like to ask, in a sense.

Ms WEBB - Well, one I would like to ask, because it's for consistency, I followed it up on with other ministers in their areas - Closing the Gap and the responsibilities on that that sit in this department. In our Tasmanian plan - Tasmania's plan for Closing the Gap - we've got outcome 10, action 46 that I think is in your responsibility, minister. We know that there are those ongoing concerns about overrepresentation of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in our criminal justice system. Can you detail what progress you're making on the Closing the Gap key action 46, under our plan for Closing the Gap 2025-2028, which I think DPFEM and Department of Justice are to explore the establishment of a formal dual custody notification scheme. Where's that at?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. The Tasmanian government is, of course, a signatory to the national agreement on the Closing the Gap. The national agreement identifies four priority reform areas aimed at changing the way that governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The four priority reform areas are: formal partnerships and shared decision-making; building the community-controlled sector; transforming government organisations; and shared access to data and information at a regional level.

DPFEM is working closely with other Tasmanian government agencies in seeking to develop improved outcomes for Aboriginal people. The previous Closing the Gap Tasmanian Implementation Plan has expired. However, as set out under the plan, Tasmania Police is implementing or continuing with three identified action, that is: continue to notify the Aboriginal legal service provider when an Aboriginal person is detained and/or interviewed; work in partnership with Aboriginal people to review and update its policies; and continue work to divert Aboriginal young people from the criminal justice system.

A new Tasmanian Closing the Gap plan is currently under development, which will be complemented by DPFEM Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. We spoke before about the community engagement strategy. As part of this new strategy, there will be a targeted Aboriginal engagement plan, and the plan will be developed with the Aboriginal community. I'll pass to the commissioner shortly.

Of course, in terms of offenders, that is very important. It's also really important that we are working to reduce the victimisation rate of Aboriginal people as well as. Nationally, there have been some very harrowing stories of - particularly Aboriginal women - as it relates to family violence, and we're committed to not just making sure that those measures regarding recidivism are looked at, but also that we are protecting victims, because, sadly, the rate of victimisation for Aboriginal women is also far too high. I'll pass to the commissioner to see if there's anything further to add.

Ms WEBB - Before you do - and I would like to hear from the commissioner - may I check on something? I think you said that we're developing a new Tasmanian Closing the Gap Plan. The current one is 2025-28. Are we not in the first year of a new one?

Mr ELLIS - No, there's a couple of different matters that you're conflating there, Ms Webb, but I'll pass to the commissioner to talk through.

Comm ADAMS - Assistant Commissioner Blackwood.

A/Comm BLACKWOOD - Through you, minister, in terms of that plan which the minister was referring to was really more at action plan level which our community engagement plan will work with the community on to work with how the Aboriginal -

Ms WEBB - Just within this department?

A/Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Sorry, department level.

A/Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes. So this would be a Tasmania Police specific, so not even department, just police specific for that plan. That's something the new command is

working on at the moment and already developing some really good relationship with the TAC in particular.

In terms of dual notification, we're working with TAC on that. At the moment when a person comes into custody who is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, we'll contact the Aboriginal Legal Service, which is funded for that service, and they will provide relevant legal advice to the person in custody. What the TAC have been looking at and working out there and how they can do it is more a wellbeing check for that person. That's what dual notification is. There would be the legal one and then the one for the TAC. At the moment, the TAC isn't in a position to be able to take those calls and notifications. So that's what we're working through with them at the moment.

In terms of other activities we're doing, Closing the Gap data is a real key one for us, and in particular, when it comes to family violence, making sure that our frontline officers are asking all the right questions. So, therefore, when a family violence report does go in, it notifies the TAC that's the appropriate area to be done.

In terms of early intervention, and it goes back to some of what was talked about earlier about wanting to divert the youth rather than going to court, and we're talking with the TAC about that. What we're doing, when files are coming through to our early intervention officers, if a young person does identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, we're providing those details really early onto the TAC to see how they might be able to engage with that person as well.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, I appreciate those details.

CHAIR - Thank you. We might just go to 2.2 Fishery Security, just to give Mr Edmunds a minute to get organised there. You're fine, Ms Webb, for the first question? We're not doing investigation of crime? Luke's just arrived. So just to give him a moment to get settled.

Ms WEBB - I've got some questions in that.

CHAIR - We will be going back to that.

Mr EDMUNDS - If you want to lead off on 2.1, that's fine with me.

Ms WEBB - Actually, I'll have to just re-jig my notes. I'm not ready either.

CHAIR - We can go to fisheries and come back, if that's easier, just to give him a chance.

OUTPUT GROUP 2

Crime

2.1 Investigation of Crime

Ms WEBB - One of the broad things I've got as a question under the 2.1, the investigation of crime line item, is around, in a general sense, why is there no stated strategy of crime prevention in the Budget papers or in terms of the department. Page 192, I think, of the Budget papers refers to the detection and apprehension of offenders, which is understandable, but I'm

wondering about if there is any explicit way that there is specified allocation or investment or a strategy relating to prevention?

Mr ELLIS - Of course, I'll pass to the commissioner to talk specifically around some of the - I mean, we talked before about intelligence holding and the important work of making sure that we're proactive in that space, monitoring a range of other things. More broadly, though, I suppose, if it's a question about the root causes of crime, Ms Webb, then that's a whole-of-government piece of work.

There are elements in my skills and training space that are really important in terms of crime prevention because we'd much rather a young person is in an apprenticeship than Ashley, and ditto in terms of education. That's part of the reason why Youth Justice now resides with the Department of Education, Children and Young People because some of the biggest pieces of work that we can do to prevent crime are actually whole-of-government and have less to do with law enforcement.

Law enforcement has an important role in crime prevention in an intelligence area and also in making sure that we're targeting repeat offenders so they can't continue to offend, but, more broadly, there's a range of work on crime prevention that sits across government and also serves a range of different important functions.

We educate our children for a whole range of different reasons. Of course, human flourishing, the key among them, but one of the impacts of that is crime prevention. I'll pass to the commissioner to talk specifically about Tasmania Police.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister, and through you, any Budget allocation for crime prevention is across each of the output groups. Crime prevention is a key part of the activities that we do provide. Also a key feature of our five-year strategy is to embed and, in fact, increase strategies to prevent crime in the first instance.

We've talked a little bit around the Community Engagement Command, and that is a key feature of our crime prevention approach, and they have the lead in a number of strategies that we are working towards in terms of crime prevention. We've also talked about Poli, the community engagement van, which we deploy to rural areas, sporting events again to engage and provide advice to communities in the actions and steps that they can take to make them more resilient from being a victim of crime.

We also dedicate considerable amount of time in relation to bail checks. Bail checks is a crime prevention strategy to ensure that people who have been charged with crime are complying with their bail responsibilities. There is a range of activities that we do in the crime prevention space. I'm not sure if you're aware of the ThinkUKnow program, which is a national program around educating young people to prevent online child sexual exploitation.

We've also got our PCYCs. We work with Neighbourhood Watch. We have direct liaison with a lot of local groups in local areas with a focus on prevention to ensure that our communities are taking steps to ensure that they're not going to be a victim of crime.

I'm not sure whether there's a specific strategy that you want to discuss.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - No. Thank you for the detail. I appreciate you running through those things. It's an interesting thing that the word doesn't appear anywhere, or a highlighting of activity in that space in a cohesive way doesn't appear in the reporting, when I would have thought that's quite a positive thing to be reporting on in a clear way.

Mr ELLIS - I'll certainly pay tribute to the commissioner with the work that she does with Neighbourhood Watch groups. It's not every jurisdiction where you'll have a couple with a cop event where the commissioner and police will turn up, and I think that's a credit to our commissioner and the leadership team that we have here in Tasmania. It's part of the reason why Tasmania Police is the most trusted policing organisation in the country because of some of that deep and consistent engagement with the community.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - I was going to follow up. Last year, we were talking about public place assaults, and the data was up. I was wondering how that's tracking for the 2024-25.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar.

A/Comm BODNAR - Thanks, minister, and through you, thanks for the question, Mr Edmunds. When we analyse the data for public place assaults for 2024-25 and we compare it to the previous years, we're finding some, I suppose, similar consistencies in there, and, effectively, when we look at a Friday night into a Saturday morning till about 4 am, and a Saturday night into a Sunday morning about 4 am, we do see some assaults.

For the last financial year, Saturday morning, it was 61, and Sunday morning, it was 92 assaults, but consistently what we find is during the week between the hours of, effectively, midday till 8 pm is when we're getting the majority of our assaults committed, public place assaults. As an example, on a Monday afternoon between the hours of midday and 4 pm, we had 57 assaults throughout 2024-25. Between the hours of 4 pm and 8 pm, there were 38 assaults. So that's on a Monday. On a Tuesday between midday and 4 pm, 38 assaults, and between 4 pm and 8 pm, 50 assaults.

As we work down through the days of the week, there was a lot of consistency between 2023-24, as I say, and 2024-25 with the assaults. We're disappointed when we look at our target for our five-year average and we didn't achieve it, but we were pleased with a slight reduction across the board for public place assaults, and pleasingly, when I looked at Launceston, Launceston was where we saw the biggest fall of public place assaults for the last financial year. So that was great.

CHAIR - Commander Ghedini.

A/Comm BODNAR - There's an argument there, chief.

Mr ELLIS - It might have been the member for Launceston with her -

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes. As we work our way through it, patterns are somewhat similar, and we see the majority of those public place assaults are occurring on the streets. When I look at a lot of them, there's just over 200 assaults where a partner is involved, there's about 25 where another family member, and just over 330 occasions where the victim and the

offender are known to each other. So, at some stage, there's been some sort of relationship, acquaintance, knowledge of each other. Then there's a percentage of where people are not known to each other.

Mr EDMUNDS - What's that percentage, if you don't -

A/Comm BODNAR - Sorry, when I say percentage, it's about 590 in numerical terms. It's going to be around that 50 per cent mark, effectively, somewhere around there, give or take a little bit.

Mr ELLIS - Probably in terms of the data as well, the other side of things, from a policing sense is the offences against the person clearance rate - so, effectively, the solve rate, which is up this year, up to 85 per cent, which is very encouraging. We've seen some of the highest clearance rates or solve rates in decades from Tasmania Police this year, which is a real credit to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar and the whole team.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr EDMUNDS - Could I follow up on that? Clearly your strategy to tackle assaults at 2 in the afternoon is going to have to be different to 2 in the morning on Sunday. Could you talk through how you approach that?

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, through the minister, we go back to a lot of the taskforce activities we've run and unfortunately, as you were late, you missed out on a little bit.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, sorry about that.

A/Comm BODNAR - No, that's fine. We've spoken about our taskforce activity through Launceston with Taskforce Raven. We've got Saturate, which has been operating successfully down here in the southern part of the state for a long time, and also Scelus through the northern part of the state. In addition to those taskforce activities, it's about having our people in the right place at the right time. Again, we can't be everywhere across the state, unfortunately.

In addition to that, we do have shorter-term taskforces as well that we operate across the state when we need to. An example from your area in Clarence is Taskforce Accountable. That's being run over there at the moment. That's only been up and running for a short time, but it has had some good results. If we move through to Glenorchy, we've had Taskforce Respect operating for a while, which fell out of some issues around youth crime in Glenorchy as well, and public place and anti-social behaviour.

When we look at those assaults in the early hours of the morning, Mr Edmunds, it's about - down around some of those, I suppose, licenced premises areas and precincts, let's say down around the waterfront in Hobart in the early hours of the morning. It's about being out, it's about being visible, but it's also through using our licensing police as well, going into the establishments, talking with the licensees, talking with the security controllers, the security guards, just to find out what's happening in these venues as well.

I suppose there's a range of different options that are available to us. Quite often our licensing people will be in plainclothes, so they're not identifiable as police. So there's different ways that we can approach this. As I say, the assaults and the patterns are pretty consistent.

PUBLIC

When we reflect over the last three financial years, it is, I suppose, fair to say the numbers are somewhat consistent, but we're working as hard as we can to reduce those. The minister spoke about clearances as well, so our clearances across the state are pretty good.

Mr EDMUNDS - Is that being aided by better technology or better process? What do you think is leading to that?

A/Comm BODNAR - Part of it is about seeking information from the public when we need to, and the public engaging with us and providing information. Certainly, where we can take swift action, we take that action. If there's sufficient grounds to effect an arrest at the time, that's what we'll do. So we want to clear these as quickly as we can.

Mr EDMUNDS - Appreciate it. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb, you have a question.

Ms WEBB - Yes, I've got one more question. I wanted to ask about implementation of the Bugg review recommendations. I don't think there has been an update on that - I might have missed it. If there has been, you could point me to it. We know that there were 11 recommendations. Have they been fully implemented? I'm interested in what the cost has been of implementing any thus far. Particularly, what was the cost of developing and rolling out the specialised training package that was to be included on all investigative training courses from June 2024, which was one of the recommendations.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. I note your considerable interest, of course, in this. I'll pass it to Tasmania Police shortly. Broadly speaking, the Bugg independent review of the use of surveillance devices in prison was released publicly by Tasmania Police on 21 May 2024. The review examined the period from 1 January 2012 to 1 January 2024, during which 19 surveillance device warrants were issued in Tasmanian prisons.

Mr Damian Bugg KC, determined that only minor administrative issues were identified in the process of Tasmania Police applying for warrants. Legal professional privilege was not compromised. Mr Bugg was satisfied that Tasmania Police did not monitor or download privileged conversations between lawyers and clients, which were irrelevant to the particular investigation for which there was a warrant.

The surveillance devices were wiped clean when they were retrieved from the prison without playback. Tasmania Police has taken steps immediately following Justice Brett's decision to implement a suite of reforms, which were either implemented or underway. Mr Bugg identified that there were opportunities for improved compliance in relation to the Ombudsman's function.

As a result, Tasmania Police conducted an internal audit of a further 40 warrants. The audit, which was overseen by Mr Bugg, was conducted for the purpose of developing a training model for Tasmania Police. This model's been included on all investigative training courses from June 2024, and additional training will be provided to current detectives to ensure legislative compliance, and covert powers, led by the Assistant Commissioner of Specialist Support, has also been established. I'll pass to the assistant commissioner now.

PUBLIC

A/Comm BLACKWOOD - Thank you. Through you, minister, I can say all the recommendations have been implemented, including the training on all investigated courses now. The officers who are taking up these warrants are our detectives, and in all their training courses now it includes that.

There wasn't any cost involved in the implementation of these recommendations. All are borne internally through course development with our existing staff. I think the key change that we've seen is that covert powers committee now that we have - which means when an investigator wants to take out one of these surveillance device warrants, they do all the work and all the lead-up work to it, and then it's reviewed by our legal services. Then there is a final committee that I chair that determines whether we actually seek that application to be authorised, which gives us that level of assurance.

Ms WEBB - Thank you for that. I appreciate the update. It's interesting to note that it wasn't reported on publicly that the implementation of those recommendations had occurred successfully and were in place now. Can I suggest that when there's those sorts of matters relating to the department, it's a really important closing of the loop for public accountability to report on progress made against implementation.

CHAIR - Thank you, member. Do you have any further questions?

Ms WEBB - Yes, I did want to have another one.

CHAIR - You can ask one more question, then we'll move to Fisheries Security. Just so we stay to time. We could always come back.

Ms WEBB - We've got another hour after our break as well.

CHAIR - We can always come back.

Ms WEBB - Yes. It's connected in a way in relation to covert powers. I'm wondering why there's no public reporting on the use of covert and other basic powers by police, and I'm not meaning, obviously, in a specific sense, in terms of identifying that, but just in a data sense. Why does that not occur currently?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the commissioner to talk through more broadly. There is a range of different reports to table in parliament, but I'm happy to pass to the commissioner.

Comm ADAMS - That was going to be my answer, minister. There are requirements to make reports through the parliament in relation to our covert powers and that is where the reporting on the use of those powers is made.

Ms WEBB - Including search warrants and things like that, or just covert - like, use of -

Comm ADAMS - Just covert powers.

Ms WEBB - What are they tabled as? What's the title or the form of the report?

Comm ADAMS - I can't tell you off the top of my head. They're definitely provided to both Houses of parliament.

Ms WEBB - On an annual -

Mr ELLIS - They're fairly long. We'll find the names for you, Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - On an annual basis?

Comm ADAMS -Yes, on an annual - there is a requirement.

Ms WEBB - Why aren't they attached to the annual report of the department?

Comm ADAMS - Again, we follow a compliance approach to the annual report and that's how we prepare the report.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Thank you. I did have some others on the file.

CHAIR - Did you have another urgent question? We can come back if we have time at the end. I'd just like to get through all the line items.

Ms WEBB - Sure.

CHAIR - Is there something pressing you'd like to ask first?

Ms WEBB - We can come back to it at the end, sure.

2.2 Fisheries Security

CHAIR - Let's move on to 2.2 Fisheries Security. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. This one shouldn't take us too long I wouldn't have thought. Now I just need to find my spot.

I'm wondering, when I look at the data reported on marine offences, there's a pretty consistent tracking of that number across the years. I'm interested in a bit of a breakdown of our latest year's data on the different sorts of offences that breakdown out of that overall figure, particularly so we can see what might relate to things like abalone poaching; offences relating to fishing, either by commercial or rec fishers; safety offences or whatnot. Are you able to provide some data on that?

Mr ELLIS - Delighted to, Ms Webb. Marine and safety offenders for this calendar year, 639; fisheries offenders, 464; abalone offenders, 21; fisheries rules offenders, 18; inland fishing offenders, one; processing and handling offenders, two; rock lobster offenders, 170; scale fish offenders, 205; scallop offenders, 25; and other fisheries offenders, 36. I'm not sure if there's other data that might be helpful to provide.

Ms WEBB - Can I just clarify, you said 'this calendar year'. We've not completed -

Mr ELLIS - Sorry. The 2024-25 year.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. The most recent complete calendar year?

Mr ELLIS - Financial year.

Ms WEBB - Financial year?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Okay. 2024-25. Appreciate that. Are those numbers generally consistent? The overall number looks generally consistent. Is there anything that's been strikingly different about the different categories of offences in the most recent year?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to Tasmania Police.

Comm ADAMS - Just looking back at the table over the last five years, the only one that is slightly different is the rock lobster offenders. The previous financial year, we had 274, and this financial year was 170. The other categories are very similar.

Ms WEBB - Given that consistency that seems to be there in the numbers, are we accepting that that's a normal sort of rate, or is it something that we can put attention to, to look at reducing, noting that other crime statistics have gone down in various ways?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. There's obviously an element of police successfully enforcing those rules as well, and this can be a challenging area to enforce, given the nature of the offending. I'll pass to Tasmania Police.

Comm ADAMS - Thanks, minister, and through you. Our marine policing area has the majority of responsibility in terms of marine offenders. They also have a broad base of priorities. Recreational and commercial fishing and the compliance in those industries or for the commercial fishing sector is obviously important, but they also have marine safety and search and rescue responsibilities. It's always a balancing act to ensure that we're using our marine policing where the demand and requirement is. That's how we balance the deployment of those specialist resources.

Ms WEBB - I had imagined, when I was looking at the figures, that partly there might be consistency there because we've got a certain resource we devote to this, and most of this is about detecting when you're out and about that something is occurring. It's not as much about somebody reporting a crime and then a response to that. Can you give me a breakdown of whether there are - do you keep data about whether this is in response to reports or whether it's just encountered, offences when the teams are out and about?

Comm ADAMS - I don't believe we keep data in regards to whether there's been information provided that would lead to an operation. I can say I am aware of one occasion where, last year, we had information around an incident on the west coast, and we did organise a multiagency response in relation to that particular piece of information.

Our marine team do work with other agencies in relation to their marine activities. At times, the weather is not conducive to some of those activities, and so sometimes things are planned and we're not able to then deliver on an operation due to the weather. It's a balance. Our staff have multiple responsibilities within the marine division, and fisheries enforcement is one of those many issues that they have responsibility for.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - I was going to ask about the staffing levels. Is it a consistent staffing level, or have there been changes made in terms of the resource?

Comm ADAMS - Very consistent. It's a very popular place to go, marine.

Ms WEBB - I bet it is. Maybe workers' comp rates would be a little bit lower in that space, I would potentially suggest.

Comm ADAMS - They may well be. The resourcing's kept very consistent.

CHAIR - I do have a follow-up on that question with resourcing and staffing obviously in that area. The police boat, PV *Van Diemen*, the new offshore vessel, that, I believe, is located at Beauty Point. My understanding is it's three hours from Hobart to Beauty Point. Three hours and two minutes, actually, when I just looked online. I understand you take search-rescue, marine safety, fisheries enforcement, patrolling, that it covers many areas.

Can you tell me how many officers there are for PV *Van Diemen*, where they are located, and where it operates? If they are located in Hobart, are there any plans to have officers in Launceston, because if you have an issue that requires the PV *Van Diemen*, for three hours to actually get officers on board compared to 30 minutes or 35 minutes from Launceston is a considerable difference. If you could provide me with information, because I believe it's been quite some time that Hobart officers have actually manned the boats located at Beauty Point.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I'll pass to Tasmania Police shortly. What I will say, though, that the large vessel replacement program has been a huge success for Tasmania. We've invested \$24.6 million in the program. Since coming to government, all phases of the program are complete, with the successful construction-commissioning of the police vessel or PV *Cape Wickham* in 2017, PV *Dauntless* in 2021, and the PV *Van Diemen* in 2024. The PV *Van Diemen* in particular is state-of-the-art, 24-metre offshore police -

CHAIR - That's great, having that information, but we are a bit short on time. My question really is around manning of the PV *Van Diemen*. I appreciate the comments, but -

Mr ELLIS - Thank you for that, Chair. I was just going to mention it's actually a much safer working environment for our police officers in marine response. I'll pass to Tasmania Police to talk about staffing.

CHAIR - Thank you. I'm sure some of our Launceston officers would love to be involved.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Thanks. Through you, minister. For a bit of context, we have the two larger vessels. We've got the *Cape Wickham* and the more recently commissioned *Van Diemen*, both similar size with similar capability. The *Van Diemen*, obviously being the newer vessel, has a few extra elements of technology and a bit more capability than the *Wickham*, but effectively provides a similar service.

What we try to do with both vessels is rotate them through the north and through the south. For six months of the year, the *Van Diemen* is based in the south and the *Wickham*'s in the north, and then we switch them round. Each of those vessels is under the responsibility of a skipper, and we will historically have had skipper with responsibility for the vessel. It gives

some advantages around making sure there's responsibility for maintaining and keeping the vessel ready operationally.

A side note around that is that, where that's proven to be effective is in our maintenance and upkeep of the old *Van Diemen*, which we procured back in 1995, recently sold 30 years later and got quite a nice price for it. The purchasers, which were the AFP, who handed it on to Papua New Guinea, were able to say -

CHAIR - Crewing is my issue and the fact that time is always of the essence. My understanding with Tas Police, when you're called for whatever reason, three hours for staff to come - is it that staff don't want to relocate to Launceston? Is it that there's no one in Launceston who can actually receive their Master 5 or whatever they actually might need to crew? I want to know the reason we don't have a northern-based crew which cuts the response time down from over three hours to around 30 minutes.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - At the moment, to cut to the chase, the *Van Diemen* is situated in Launceston. The skipper is Hobart-based and travels up, but we do utilise local Launceston members as crew as part of that deployment, and that occurs with the other vessels. Arguably, there would be a basis for having more crew situated in Launceston.

CHAIR - A three-hour delay waiting for the skipper.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - However, just in terms of logistics and the resource management, it's much easier to maintain a staffing complement in the south. There's no reason why we can't use members in the north, and we do. We have four marine officers nearby in Launceston.

We'll crew the *Van Diemen*, and we'll crew the *Wickham*, but maintaining a permanent full complement of staff with taking into account leave and all those sorts of arrangements is a challenge. I guess in direct answer to your question, there isn't any reason why we couldn't have a skipper who was based in Launceston. If ones were to apply, get the training and the qualifications, we obviously maintain other positions that - sorry, we support remote positions in other areas of our organisation. We allow members to work who are attached to a southern command, might be attached to working up in the north. So there isn't any real reason why not, other than it simply hasn't happened to date, and it is, from a resource management perspective, much easier to maintain in the south.

Comm ADAMS - If I could just add just a couple of extra things. Normally, when the *Van Diemen*'s deployed, it is on a planned operation. So it's an operation that's planned. That includes, obviously, the planning around deploying the resources. If we've got an emergency situation that requires a search and rescue response, helicopter is always going to be the first response that we will rely on.

CHAIR - So *Van Diemen*'s not used very often for emergencies.

Comm ADAMS - It will absolutely be part of search and rescue operations, but the helicopter is a far quicker deployment than the boat.

CHAIR - I would have thought, you know, could you not use both? That's all. It just says - through you, minister - will you commit to at least finding out if there are any offices in

the north that would be happy to do a Master 5 to look - you know, for those occasions when you can cut the response time from three hours to 30 minutes because no one's going to apply unless there's a request put out.

Mr ELLIS - Look, I think the team at Tasmania Police spoke about how there are Launceston-based members that operate the boats and that sort of thing.

CHAIR - If they apply, but you can't apply unless there's a request put out.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure. I think they've covered it. I don't know if there's anything further to add.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - I think as the commissioner said there, I didn't answer the search and rescue element of it, but absolutely, if there's a response to a search and rescue, we get the nearest available resource in the quickest amount of time, and that's always the helicopter, or invariably the helicopter, and we haven't experience any issues with a response time from one of our vessels. We've always been able to really quickly respond to those emergency incidents.

2.3 Support to Judicial Services

CHAIR - Thank you. Any further questions on marine? If we could actually move to support to digital services, Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. Thank you. It was interesting. This line item didn't seem to get much play last year. I couldn't find a *Hansard* document or script, but my questions are fairly specific in the fact that the funding is reasonably steady.

It does explain that the jump in 2026-27 is because of the 27th pay day, which is fine. It is an area that has quite a lot of responsibility, the prosecution of offenders, provision of diversionary programs, bail and warrant processing, victim support services and investigation, and clerical investigation services on behalf of the coroner.

In addition, the department has a lead role in the reduction and management of family violence in Tasmania. The reason I'm saying that loud is so that people listening can understand what this line item is about.

My question would be, of the funding you have, how do you break up that funding to cover those services? Do you allocate a certain amount of funding to each of the line, or is it on a staffing to cover a lot of it? Do you understand what I'm - so from a person listening, they might say, well, how much does it cost to cover the prosecution of offenders, or is it ebbs and flows? I'd like that to put on the record.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Gaffney. It's an important part of our work. Some of those matters that you described, there is, I suppose, crossover. So accounting for them and specifically splitting them up when individual members may actually be doing a range of that work as part of their role can be challenging. I'll pass to the commissioner if there's anything you want to add.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. I think it is important to understand that police officers, as in terms of the salaries for police officers are normally held against output 1, and our officers can provide a delivery of a service across multiple outputs, and that's always been a real challenge to actually have people understand that you might look at what the allocation is, and you might think that that's an under-representation of the effort that's required. It's because the police salaries sit really within output 1.

The amount there, it is described in the Budget chapter in terms of what the finance or the allocation is dedicated to. There's not a specific amount against each of those. It's just viewed from a holistic perspective, and we obviously respond to demand as we need.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. That's fine. I think Meg might have had a follow-up.

Ms WEBB - Not a follow-up, necessarily, but on this area, I think. I don't know whether it fits here, but I'm not sure exactly where it does fit. The Forensic Services Tasmania, can I ask a question on that in this line item? Is that all right with you, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Anything you like, Ms Webb. We're happy to accommodate.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Noting that FSST is an independent agency, but it does sort of sit closely with the department, with the TasPolice. A couple of things about that. I'm wondering about the FSST accreditation. It's got, I understand, a fairly basic accreditation with NATA, but it's not accredited to Australian forensic standards, which other jurisdictions would be. I'm wondering what's the intention to have our FSST accredited to that more generally-acceptable standard, and what resources would be required to achieve that?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Ms Webb. So FSST provides a range of chemical toxicology and biological forensic science services to the Tasmanian justice system. It's Tasmania's only - National Association of Testing Authorities, or NATA as you mentioned - accredited forensic science laboratory providing analytical services. It's obviously operationally independent of Tasmania Police, but do work extremely closely including receiving a little over 24,000 forensic test requests over the 2024-25 financial year. I'll pass to Tasmania Police if there's anything to contribute specifically about the accreditation process.

Comm ADAMS - Yes. Thank you, minister and through you. We have a standing seat on the National Institute of Forensic Science which is, I guess, a subset of ANZPAA. I'm not sure if you're familiar with the ANZPAA acronym, but Australian New Zealand Police Advisory Agency. There is national guidance for all police forensic bodies and our FSST, as we know it, complies with those standards. We obviously keep abreast of changes that come from reviews across the country to ensure that we're making the necessary changes to our practice guidance, should it be required, and the NATA accreditation has been the accreditation process that we have had in place for quite a long time.

Ms WEBB - But against those Australian forensic standards, we're not accredited against those standards. Is that correct?

Comm ADAMS - We follow the national guidance that NIFS provides, and we also adhere to the NATA accreditation.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - That accreditation is relating to the lab side of it, the biology and chemistry and toxicology side of it, but what about our forensic sciences services for crime scene investigation and police forensic investigative activities? Is that an area that's accredited differently or separately?

Comm ADAMS - That area is not accredited. There is a significant infrastructure uplift that we would require. We've certainly looked at it before, and, ideally, a greenfield site and bringing our FSST and our forensic areas together would be fantastic and not wanting to put any of the - and it certainly wasn't on my minister's watch.

We have put forward a Budget submission a very long time ago in relation to how we might bring those areas together. Absolutely, it's something that we would continue to look at, but the actual lab, as you describe it, FSST, is the national accredited laboratory under the NATA standards, but our forensics, which is police officers that do forensic work at crime scenes, they're not accredited.

Ms WEBB - Minister, is there any forward-looking plan, even over a longer term, to look at the resources and the facilities that would be required? Clearly it can't be achieved in our current facilities, so it needs to be resourced. Is that something that you've got on your radar?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb, and our first priority has been about the Forensic Science Technology uplift project for FSST. That was a \$3.67 million allocation over four years, basically investing in critical scientific instrumentation, lab infrastructure. The funding's provided FSST with newer generations of technology and instruments for our scientists, including ensuring quality evidence-in-court recording.

The funding will also increase the evidence storage capacity, which is important, including sexual assault evidence kits. That means that victims and survivors of sexual violence can have forensic samples taken, knowing that evidence will be kept until they feel ready to report. So the upgrades have been significant. A range of new technology, and of course, we're always looking at how we can do things better in the future with our facilities. Happy to pass to the Commissioner of Police to add further.

Comm ADAMS - I'll hand over to our acting deputy secretary, Ross Hinkley, who's got some additional information on some work that we are doing as part of a review process.

Mr HINKLEY - Through you, minister.

Ms WEBB - You might want to move your microphone down. Yes.

Mr HINKLEY - Through you, minister. Just adding to what was shared by the commissioner. We've also got \$250,000 through the SIIRP process to look at our infrastructure arrangements for forensics. So we started that process, and that'll deliver a business case for us in terms of what we need in the forensic space moving forward. We started that. It's around about a 12-month process to do that business case.

Ms WEBB - Yes, and is that funded in this Budget - the production of that business case?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, through the SIIRP process.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - Great. Thank you for that update.

CHAIR - Do you have many more questions? We can have a break and come back.

Ms WEBB - I've got another one in this line if that's - because we're not due till 11. It's 11. Okay, it's 11 o'clock. Sure. We can come back.

CHAIR - On that note, we will take a break now for 15 minutes and return at 11.15. If you could stop the broadcast, please.

The Committee suspended from 11.02 a.m. to 11.16 a.m.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, and Ms Webb, continuing questions.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. Again, not sure if this is where it fits in terms of support to judicial services, but I want to ask a question about follow-up investigations to the coronial project that was going on and referrals made to Tas Police.

Minister, in correspondence to me dated 3 November, and in subsequent public statements, the Attorney-General announced that he had requested Tasmania Police to investigate and consider any matters arising from the coronial project and the coroner's findings. My questions are, are you able to confirm that that work is under way, and if not complete already, whether there's an expected completion timeframe.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Ms Webb. I'll pass to Deputy Commissioner Higgins.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Through you, minister, I can answer that. Yes, we did get a letter from the Attorney-General, but it wasn't requesting us to investigate. It was just letting us know that the record of investigation by the coroner had been done, and to have a look at it, as far as that goes, in simple terms. So we did look. We did assess it.

There were no recommendations from the coroner that were applicable at all. In fact, there were no recommendations. There were no criminal matters or charges that were recommended or identified by the coroner. I have written back to the Attorney-General saying that Tasmania Police won't be taking any further action. I'm aware that the coronial section has been liaising for some time with the families, and that will continue.

Ms WEBB - That's very interesting. So even though identified in that coroner's report at the end of that coronial project process, you're saying that in that report there's no - it doesn't indicate at least the need to investigate whether any laws were broken -

Dep Comm HIGGINS - That's correct.

Ms WEBB - when body parts were taken without consent and put into a museum. Right, so there were no breaches of the law described in that report?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - No, there weren't, and the actions were between 1966 and 1991.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, I'm aware that the commissioner has some data that we took on notice as well.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Comm ADAMS - Just to come back to Mr Hiscutt's question before around separation, for 2024-25 in the first year of someone's service, we had 17 people leave Tasmania Police. After one year, we had six. After two years, we had four. After three years, we had one.

CHAIR - Thank you. I have one quick question in this line. Are police still responding to court? Do they still attend court, or has that now been taken over permanently by security officers?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass that to the commissioner, thank you.

Comm ADAMS - In terms of security of the court facilities, that's done -

CHAIR - You'll recall that officers used to attend court. I know particularly in the north and in the -

Comm ADAMS - Yes. So court security is within the Department of Justice. They have responsibility for their security. What we do in the north-west of the state is we still do some transfers of prisoners back through to Launceston. In terms of court security, that's a matter for the Department of Justice.

CHAIR - So you're not actually attending court any more? No? That's good news. Thank you.

3.1 Traffic Policing

CHAIR - If there are no further questions in 2.3, we'll move to 3.1, Traffic Policing. Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. First, just a financial question on that. On page 189 and 190 of the Budget paper 2, volume 1, I notice the appropriations steadily rise, which is as it probably should be. But in the expense column, table 2.3, there's a steady rise of about just over a million each year until the final year, where it drops down to only about \$800,000, and nothing noted to imply why that would not be - the 27th pay day, I believe, comes into effect - sorry, I'm hearing whispers - comes into effect, I think, in the 2025-26 Budget, but this is actually in between the 2028-29 Budget. I didn't think that accounted for it, but maybe I'm misreading it. So happy to be corrected if that is the case.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Hiscutt. I'll pass to Tasmania Police.

Mr HISCUTT - Or happy for it to be taken on notice as well.

PUBLIC

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. The 27th pay has an impact on that expense column in 2026-27, and the additional \$1 million, I think we would look to our finance expert, but we may have to take that on notice.

Mr HISCUTT - A reduction in the increase in the final year. Happy for it to be -

Mr ELLIS - A reduction in the increase?

Mr HISCUTT - As in as a -

Comm ADAMS - As an expense? Or the out -

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, as an expense. There was a steady increase each year and in the final year it drops by about \$300,000. It doesn't drop; the increase is less by \$300,000 than the previous years, which are all steady.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Yes, the only things impacting upon that line item are the indexation. There is no initiatives or removal of funding associated with that, so I think it does just fluctuate based on what Treasury's estimate of the indexation to be applied built into it.

Mr HISCUTT - No specific reasons for that change?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - There are no specific items, yes.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you for that. On to other matters, can I have an understanding of if there's been an increase in drug driving charges and when are we meeting targets in that regard?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Hiscutt. I'll pass to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar shortly. It is very interesting, though, with the statistics. Certainly, we're seeing a much higher percentage of our traffic offenders drug drivers rather than drink drivers. That of course means different enforcement techniques that are required compared to the standard booze bus that you see. I'll pass to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar.

A/Comm BODNAR - Thank you, minister, and through you. We do have an annual target we set for our members of 4000. That was the target we set. So that's drink driving and drug driving offenders combined. For the last financial year, we were slightly under our target. Our target was 4000 drink and drug driving offenders. and our actual rate achieved was 3869. Now, in amongst that, we do set a target of the number of oral fluid tests we wish to conduct, and that's 5500. We were about 260 above the target that we'd set ourselves.

As the minister's saying, what we're finding over time is we're detecting fewer drink drivers and more drug drivers. I think part of the thing we take into consideration there nowadays is potentially drink driving is no longer socially acceptable as what it used to be years ago, because in years gone by it would be predominantly drink driving.

So we do see an increase in drug driving offenders. When I look at the 2024-25 financial year compared to the previous year, we actually had an additional 500 drivers detected with methylamphetamine. So effectively it's about a 40 per cent increase on the previous year. As

for the figures for drug driving offenders, there were 2380-odd drug driving offenders and compared to the previous year, it's an increase of over 520.

Mr HISCUTT - Wow.

A/Comm BODNAR - So it is an issue in the community, the level of people we're detecting drug driving at the moment.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. Minister, you mentioned potentially changing tactics to deal with that. Has there been any work into what that may look like?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, Assistant Commissioner Bodnar mentioned that it's more of an oral fluid test rather than, say, your random breath test. Now, that's just the nature of the way that you detect other forms of drugs as opposed to alcohol and hence why it's been really important that we meet and exceed that target of 5500 oral fluid tests, so it does present challenges but, of course, Tasmania police are very active and engaged in this space.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - I don't know if there's anything further you wanted to add on that?

A/Comm BODNAR - Only thing I could add, minister, is part of this now is around intelligence-led policing as well, so whilst we can do our large-scale, high-visibility operations, which we need to do, and there's certainly an expectation from the community that we do it, we've got to get the balance right between those larger scale operations and the mobile interceptions as well, based on intelligence that we may be in possession of. What we do find from time to time is that with those larger scale operations, we won't get as many detections as what we do when we're mobile, if that makes sense.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes. Thank you.

A/Comm BODNAR - So it's about the approach to it. You know, we want the high visibility operations and that's what the community told us. If I reflect back on the community survey that we concluded in the latter part of 2023, I think we had about 35 per cent of respondents said we want to see the police more visible. So we're doing that in this space and also in other public spaces as well, but it's that balance that we've got to work on.

Mr HISCUTT - Just a follow-on question, through you, minister. I imagine drink driving would often be the late nights and the 2 a.m. and the things like that, that we would catch people. It is -

Mr ELLIS - You'd be surprised, though.

Mr HISCUTT - Well, true, thank you. I was going to say, as the demographic or the time changes with drug driving, is that less - is that any time? Are there peaks as well similar to weekends and things like that? Or is it more across the board, people using throughout the weeks?

A/Comm BODNAR - Through the minister, I think the times are across the board. Specifically when I reflect on your comments there about drink driving, 'Is it late at night,' and

things like that, we do get drink drivers the following morning, like after 9 a.m. We certainly would have examples from across the state where we've done some work and picked up - I use the term picked up - detected drink drivers after 9 a.m., 10 a.m., midday. Some of the readings we see are extraordinary. I remember one that was in the vicinity of 0.360, seven times the legal limit.

Mr ELLIS - Was he lucky to be alive.

A/Comm BODNAR - Why on earth somebody would want to get behind the controls of a motor vehicle in that condition is beyond me. I'm absolutely astounded with some of the readings we do see across the state.

Mr HISCUTT - Crazy. Thank you for the answer to that. I had some other questions, but happy if someone else wants to.

CHAIR - Thank you. I might ask a question with regard to the dedicated traffic enforcement structure. I'm assuming that's still operational, particularly with the highway patrol? And just wondered how many officers are actually involved in that now?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, thank you, Chair. The new road policing model has been developed. It's been a big success. It's enabled Tasmania Police to achieve one of the highest ratios of traffic policing in the country. That's particularly important for Tasmanians. When we think about our priorities - safe homes, safe roads, safe communities - it's right up there in the top three. Members are equipped with new, highly visible highway patrol vehicles, specifically designed to have an impact on driving behaviour on our main highways and arterial roads. I'll pass to Tasmania Police to talk through some of the specifics.

CHAIR - Thank you, and the number of officers, I think it used to be 68. Is it still 68?

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, and through the minister, if I may. We've got 68 allocated positions from road policing services across the state. We have a road policing service in southern, northern and western. We spoke earlier about workers' compensation, and unfortunately we are impacted across our road policing services with some members that are absent from the workforce. What we have done in recent times, in the last 18 months, is actually drawn upon a greater effort from our uniformed policing members as well across the state. What we've seen is a significant increase in our outputs. When I say our outputs, our total traffic detections across the board.

So whilst you could reflect on the data that's on page 39 in output group 3, if I look at it more holistically over the last financial year, we had just over 40,850 motorists that were infringed for traffic-related offences. If I compare that number to the previous year, it was just over 33,200. So the last 12 months, we've effectively charged 7,600 more motorists across the state for traffic offending. So our outputs have improved.

What we're disappointed in is the trauma that we continue to see on our roads. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts and continued efforts, we're seeing an increase in fatalities at the moment across the state.

When we reflect on what's going on across the other Australian policing jurisdictions, we're not on our own there, because some of the work we've done is around having a look at

the current year, the calendar year of 2025, and we've looked at data available between January and September for the other jurisdictions. We compare that to the same period in 2024. There are five other jurisdictions like us that have seen an increase in fatal crashes where people are sadly being killed on Australian roads. Unfortunately, when we look at the data across Australia, we see an increase over the last four or five years of about 4 per cent each year in fatalities.

CHAIR - Do you believe it's faster cars? Is there any one thing that you think it might be? Obviously, speed is one of the main components, so do you think that people have newer cars, faster cars?

Mr ELLIS - There is a range of different things. Can I just also acknowledge your strong interest in this, Chair, and the work that you've done in this place over many, many years. It is very much appreciated, including by our first responders, some of whom have spoken to me personally about their gratitude for your work.

There's obviously the fatal five, so that's five different behaviours that typically cause the vast majority of those crashes. Drug and drink driving is one. Distraction is another, of course; fatigue. Speeding is another key component to that. So there's a range of different things. Some of that unfortunately is driver behaviour, because you can get behind the wheel of the safest car in Australia and if you are on methamphetamines, that's not going to be a good outcome for that person and the community.

I'll pass to Assistant Commissioner Bodmar to talk through some of the different causal areas for fatal crashes.

A/Comm BODNAR - Thank you, minister, and through you. You're right in what you're saying. It's the fatal five that we continue to concentrate on because they are the contributing factors to fatal and serious crashes, not only here in Tasmania but also across Australia. It is the drink and drug driving. It's people who are speeding. They're not paying attention. Those people who aren't wearing their seatbelts in motor vehicles are more likely to suffer serious injuries, and we know that's occurred.

Across Australia, with the national body that I sit on through the Australian Road Policing Network, we're all working particularly hard to try to turn this trend around, particularly when we look at that Vision Zero for 2050. So we're looking at what we're doing from an enforcement perspective. We're looking at what we're doing from a media perspective.

Just in Tasmania, for this calendar year alone, we've put out over 940 media releases and rounds on the topic of road safety, crashes, road policing operations; 300 of those are specific releases around our operations and our results. So it's almost like one a day, effectively, we're putting out social media posts, over 750 social media posts as well through the different forums. We're doing as much as we can in the enforcement space. We're highlighting what we're doing and we're doing it regularly because we want people to know that if you're doing the wrong thing, there's a high probability you're going to be detected.

I think the piece that's missing is around that cultural piece and it's around that culture of compliance, I feel, where we need a culture where people understand that you have to adhere to the road rules. It's got to be normalised and it has to be accepted, and I think that's a challenge

we're having. Chair, I reflect back to your select committee inquiry back probably five or six years.

CHAIR - On road safety, yes.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, and again what we take out of that is that there's no silver bullet. We've got to try all these different mediums. We have to try all these different tactics. We have to be in different places at different times. We've got to be agile and flexible. I spoke about those high-vis operations. Word gets around very quickly where we set up. So again, what can we do with a drone to put it up to see who's turning before a site? What do we do about smaller traffic operations in different locations for shorter periods of time? We're trying all these different strategies but, fair to say, we're frustrated that at this stage we haven't seen that reduction in trauma on our roads.

CHAIR - There are apps as well, like Waze, that people put on when they see a mobile police camera, which comes up on their screen.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, while we are in between questions, I think the commissioner's got some further information to provide on FSST accreditation.

CHAIR - Yes, thank you.

Comm ADAMS - For you, Ms Webb, FSST is accredited to the ISO 17025, which is an international standard that sets general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration of laboratories. That standard is in most laboratories across the world which they need to be accredited to, including Australian jurisdictions.

A new standard, ISO 21043, was released in around July this year from an international perspective. Australia hasn't adopted that standard as yet, but all jurisdictions are considering the impact of that change in standard. And NIFS, which was the body I spoke about before, will take a lead role in the coordination of how the jurisdictions would respond to that.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - My question is to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar, and I'm interested - from a personal point of view, but from a community point of view - some of us here can remember when it went from 0.08 to 0.05, and I'm thinking that sometime we'll go to 0.02. It may continue to go down, it's been suggested. I'm interested, with illegal drugs, as soon as that's found on the person or the person's tested, it's illegal because of the drug. It's not about the capacity of the person driving, do you know what I mean? Like, if a person -

CHAIR - It's not about impairment.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, it's not about impairment, it's about - because of the drug. Is there any place, or are you aware of any work being done in that for a reading where the person is - it's illegal or is it just because you've got a drug in your system that's an illegal drug that you

are deemed to be incapable or you shouldn't be on the roads? I'm asking out of interest, I suppose.

A/Comm BODNAR - Certainly, if I can, through the minister. I suppose, effectively, the legislation talks about driving with an illicit drug in your system. It doesn't necessarily provide a reading at that time the police make the detection. It's about the driving. Ms Webb was quite right about the level of impairment, because there's a specific charge in the *Road Safety, Alcohol and Drugs Act*, which is commonly referred to as DUI, or driving under the influence. So, if you're impaired to such a degree that you don't have proper control of your motor vehicle on a public street in Tasmania, that in itself is a separate offence to driving with an illicit drug present in your system. Does that answer your question?

Mr GAFFNEY - It does because illicit drugs can stay within the person's system for quite a period of time. Therefore, a person may have taken something two or three days ago and it shows up in the readings. The person may not be impaired from taking that. So I'm pleased to see there's some degree of understanding from the police when they're doing that sort of assessment.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, certainly. Through the minister, again, whether it be drugs or alcohol, if you're incapable to such a degree, whether by alcohol or drugs, that you can't have proper control of your motor vehicle, that's a concern to us and you can be arrested.

Mr ELLIS - There are, of course, Mr Gaffney, drugs that are legal or that have kind of a medicinal approval that can also impair, even though they're not illegal drugs. So yes, there's a range of different sort of categories in which they can sort of fall under.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

CHAIR - Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - I wanted to drill down on 4 per cent increase year-on-year on fatalities, I believe it was. Obviously, a reduction is where we would like to be heading towards, but is that actually measured in real numbers or is that in a percentage of population? I wonder whether the numbers are actually going up or do we just have more people on the roads?

A/Comm BODNAR - The data that I've looked at relates to people that are killed on Australian roads. When I talk about a full percentage increase, that's across Australia.

Mr HISCUTT - So that's a -

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, across Australia. So if we went back to 1970 as an example, it was effectively 3800 people who were killed on Australian roads, just under. As you come forward to the 2000s, between 2000 and 2008 across Australia, it's in the vicinity of 1640. So we see it come down. When we get to 2020 in Australia, we're around about the 1100 mark for fatalities. Then every year from there, for the next four years, we see this increase. Last year it was in the vicinity of 1330. So we're trending the wrong way across Australia. Unfortunately what we're seeing here, whilst we're disappointed, it's not inconsistent with what's happening in Australia.

Mr HISCUTT - I guess my question is though, there's obviously not a reduction at all, but is it actually just that our population has increased and there's more people on the road and therefore the percentage of actual fatalities per population is the same? Or has any work been done to find out if that is the case, or is it a real increase in fatalities per 100,000 headed population or something like that? Has there been any statistics on that side of it?

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Sports and the Arts through the Commonwealth government, they have done some work around it. I aim to have all that data with me, Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you.

A/Comm BODNAR - But you're quite right in what you're suggesting with an increase in population throughout Australia and an increase in vehicles on the roadway, that is one contributing factor that you would say, well, that's the reason for the increase. On the flip side, vehicles are supposed to be safer now, so there's different sides of the coin that we've got to consider. I suppose the concern is we're trending the wrong way. That's the challenge.

Mr HISCUTT - I accept that. Thank you very much.

A/Comm BODNAR - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Through you, minister, do we have any records kept just on the serious injury and fatalities? And we know that serious injuries can affect the community in a massive way, as much as fatalities and sometimes more with ongoing treatments required. Do we have any records of age groups that are involved in those? Do we take out the ones that are caused by medical issues?

Then do we have something that shows speed was a factor, or this was a drug and alcohol. Do we actually have records that indicate numbers or percentages of the serious crashes and fatalities of what they were caused by? Were those fatalities caused because they weren't wearing a seatbelt or were those fatalities caused because the driver obviously had alcohol or drugs in his system or were a certain amount of these, I'm assuming, would still be medical issues because they died on the road if they've had a heart attack and they've crashed? Through you, minister, too, if that's all right to Mr Bodnar.

A/Comm BODNAR - Yes, through the minister. With some of those cases, Chair, it will be up to the coroner to determine effectively the cause, and if it is medical conditions, my understanding is generally that would come off our fatalities. If I could answer the question, minister, in relation to the -

CHAIR - If you keep statistics with regard to those.

A/Comm BODNAR - State Growth is generally the gatekeeper of all the statistics for us, a lot of the statistics, and they certainly have data ranging back over the years around the age groups that are affected. We know those under 25 figure predominantly as well in some fatal and serious crashes. Whilst I don't have that data available with me at the moment, there are certainly some records available through State Growth.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - They would also be able to indicate the majority of crashes, whether they were because of speed or substance abuse? It's an interesting observation to see what's actually causing the crashes. Obviously, speed, if you're on speed, and drug or alcohol and your speeding as well, I guess things like that are going to cause more crashes. So thank you.

A/Comm BODNAR - No, that is all right.

CHAIR - Minister, you had something you wanted to say, no?

Mr ELLIS - No, if it helps that the high-level numbers in terms of the trend for fatal and serious injury crashes, 2021-22, 247; 2022-23, 312; 2023-24, 278; and then 2024-25, 298. Yes, happy to drill down and provide some further information if it's available to us and work with State Growth on that.

CHAIR - No, that's fine. Thank you very much for that. Do we have any further questions? Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Regarding the static speed mobile phone cameras, I'm not sure if it's allowed to be public information. How many of those are in operation across the state?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, they're actually operated by State Growth. We will take that on notice, and happy to refer you to State Growth on that one.

Mr HISCUTT - I will scratch the seven questions I have.

Mr ELLIS - No, that's all right. What we probably would say, though, is that they are a very helpful tool, working in conjunction with police. Obviously, you and I are of a certain generation, Mr Hiscutt, and it is mind-boggling to me, and I think a lot of our peers, that there are people driving without seatbelts these days.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, really.

Mr ELLIS - Like, it is just insane. One of the good things about these high technology cameras is their ability to detect things like people driving without seatbelts. It's scary how often it does happen, but hopefully that'll finalise - we talked culturally before. Obviously, culture among younger people, I think it's much more ingrained, but trying to, through enforcement also, really work on that cultural piece of wearing seatbelts for all members of our community. But yes, I have to refer that one to State Growth.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, that what I was asking.

Mr GAFFNEY - I actually think we heard from the Attorney-General on Monday saying it went from 9,000 to 14,000 with infringements. We were quite amazed at that.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, they're really effective tools. I think they've even had an overall positive impact in reducing the speed across the network in general, which is an interesting thing to measure. But State Growth will be able to provide more information.

Mr EDMUNDS - Just on that, I'm not sure if this is a State Growth or you, minister, but he wouldn't touch it. But just about whether the point-to-point speed enforcement would come in, is that State Growth as well?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, State Growth.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thanks.

CHAIR - They do make you afraid and think you're doing the wrong thing, even when you're doing the right thing when you see one of them on the -

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER - There's one and you still slow down.

Mr ELLIS - It is a voluntary tax, Chair.

CHAIR - You do tend to slow down regardless.

Mr ELLIS - That's the thing, we all need to keep out our daily lives safe.

CHAIR - No, that's -

Mr HISCUTT - The rest of my questions were related to that.

OUTPUT GROUP 3

4.2, State Security and Rescue Operations

CHAIR - If we have no further questions on this output, if we move to 4.2, State Security and Rescue Operations. Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. Minister, perhaps the first question would be there is some obvious increases in the Budget between 2024, 2025 and beyond. There is an explanation there, but perhaps you could further expand on that one for me?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Gaffney. I suppose first at a higher level, our terrain here in Tasmania, of course, it is spectacular, it's rugged in many parts and remote. It's a tourist drawcard, it attracts bushwalkers and adventurers from across the globe which boosts our local economy, but that landscape presents risks to the community, and necessitates the maintenance of an effective and versatile search and rescue capability. Tasmania Police is the primary agency responsible for search and rescue under the Tasmanian emergency management arrangements. Tasmania Police and the marine and rescue services maintain and deploy helicopter assets, marine fleet resources and land-based personnel to effectively respond to calls for assistance on land, inland, coastal and other waters.

Tasmania Police patrol vessels respond to incidents in waters up to 200 nautical miles from the Tasmanian coastline, and we also work with volunteer groups and other agencies such as Surf Life Saving Tasmania, which maintains assets and volunteers in coastal areas as well as swift water rescue capability. There's a variety of vessels inshore and offshore capable: jet skis, remote-piloted aircraft or drones, and volunteer marine rescue units. The search and rescue

team are obviously highly trained and actively involved in responding to incidents, including a whole range of different matters in remote areas.

Before I pass to police, I also pay tribute to the incredible work of our team, which has been highlighted across the globe: the multi-agency response to the Franklin River rescue. We, as a small state, have some quite extraordinary people and capability, often driven by the way that we work together in these kind of incidents. It should be a source of great pride for Tasmanians about the capability that we have. I'll pass to the commissioner to talk further.

Mr GAFFNEY - Perhaps, commissioner, if you could touch on the helicopter contract, too, because that created quite a bit of media and some questions from the community. It would be good to put on the record about the helicopter contract as well.

Comm ADAMS - Yes, absolutely. The actual change in the appropriation in the revenue and expense line item that you've seen actually directly relates to the funding profile for the helicopter contract. That is the significant reason for that change, with a minor bit of indexation.

Mr GAFFNEY - That's between 2024-25 and 2025-26, then there's significant increase again between 2025-26 and the forward Estimates. I'm wondering what that expense or that budget increase is for.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Through you, minister. Thanks, Mr Gaffney. Essentially, the department did have funding across the next four years for the helicopter contract. That funding was at the level of \$5.6 million. The additional funding in 2025-26 brought it up to what was required as we understand.

Noting that Health administers the new contract, what would be required to fund the contract this year, that again increases in 2026-27 for the full-year impact. That's consistent across 2026-27 and 2027-28. In 2028-29, that fixed-term funding that we had of \$5.6 million dropped out, and so now that's been supplemented by the full amount for the helicopter contract.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay, thank you.

Comm ADAMS - In relation to the helicopter and the contract, that actually sits with the Department of Health. They actually are the lead in relation to the contract. We are just a partner in terms of the provision of the capability.

Mr GAFFNEY - I'll be asking that question of Health, I'm sure. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Just a question, minister: when we're talking about helicopters, do police still run and staff a search and rescue helicopter?

Comm ADAMS - That's the helicopter we're talking about. We actually have a partnership with Health now, where their aeromedical helicopter and our search and rescue helicopter is fitted out, in essence, to be able to provide a response to both needs, whether it be a medical emergency or a search and rescue.

Our deployment model actually has a police officer and a paramedic as part of any deployment on the helicopter, in particular for search and rescue, which sits within our remit.

PUBLIC

It makes sense, given obviously helicopters are an expensive asset, to be able to come together with Health and fit out a helicopter and provide a provision of a service that meets dual needs.

CHAIR - The question was raised with me whether it needed to be a police officer staffing regularly the helicopter, or will it just be trained people who are not police, allowing more police in other areas?

Comm ADAMS - I'll throw it to Assistant Commissioner Oosterloo.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Thank you. Through you, minister. The reason that a police officer - under the search and rescue arrangements, including the TEMA and our responsibilities under marine safety legislation, we're required to maintain a search and rescue capability. Part of the role of a police officer on a helicopter is to make sure that we are responsible for providing that search and rescue capability. The police role is effectively that.

The helicopter also provides an aerial law enforcement capability on top of the search and rescue. It's predominantly search and rescue, but the police officers that are attached to the rescue helicopter service can provide both roles. Effectively, what we have is two helicopters, a service that's run jointly by Ambulance Tasmania and Tasmania Police, that provide an aeromedical response, a search and rescue response, an aerial law enforcement response, whatever the response is required depending on the priority of the mission.

That continues into the next contract and the next iteration of service, which commences in January of next year, involving a higher-capacity capability aircraft that meet all those needs.

CHAIR - Search and rescue is not predominantly run on the ground, which was my advice?

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Through you, minister. Of the 476 search and rescue incidents we had last financial year, 193 of those involved the use of a helicopter. Most certainly, it's a really critical asset in terms of our search and rescue response.

The nature of Tasmania's terrain means that often it's very difficult to get people on the ground to the person in distress. You may have seen the media today, yesterday. Monday night was a recent example of that, where two people were stranded on Mount Anne. The helicopter wasn't able to deploy initially to that incident because of cloud and high winds. We sent a ground crew. In fact, the helicopter was able to drop a paramedic nearby. A paramedic tried to get to the people on the night but was forced back and had to take shelter in a hut due to the heavy snowfall and winds. We dropped a search and rescue crew in on foot, again attempting to get to the couple who we'd lost contact with, and that crew were forced to take shelter in the hut just because of the weather. Thankfully, the helicopter was able to be deployed and get closer to the crew on the early hours of Tuesday morning and rescue them.

That's just one example of many of the way our search and rescue response works. In every search and rescue operation, the first thing that happens is a search and rescue coordinator is identified as being responsible for the overall operation, and the helicopter is simply an asset that is used to respond to the search and rescue incident if and as needed. Invariably, in most cases, the best response is that helicopter because of how fast it can get to the person, but it's not the only asset.

CHAIR - No, thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Interestingly, Chair, in some of the search space, Tasmania Police really forward-leaning in adoption of new technologies is really assisting with providing new capability as well. I don't know if the commissioner and the team want to talk through the use of drones and infrared technology in terms of the search for people who are missing and lost, because there have been some really good examples of the deployment of that technology which can be funded through the budget.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. If there's any information, we're always happy to have it.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. We have 47 drones across the state, and we use them in a wide variety of deployment modes. They can assist our road policing services in identifying hooning vehicles. They can also provide valuable assistance to our forensic services team in mapping crime scenes, including crash investigation for serious fatalities, where we also need to ensure that we work through a crime scene and provide valuable information to our coroners. They've been used in marine and rescue deployments, and we've also used them with specialist and other tactical groups.

They're a great resource for us. They provide a level of safety for our staff. We don't necessarily have to deploy staff in an area or in a risky situation, and they can provide the ability to track, as I said, whether it's a vehicle or a person without putting a police officer into a position of harm. They've been a fantastic resource for us. We've got some accredited pilots, and we operate the drones in accordance with the CASA regulations, and they've been highly effective for us.

CHAIR - No, thank you. I do have one further question in this area, but I'll put it on notice in view of the time, and it's regarding the cost of a number of search and rescue operations. I notice that we're up to 473 and, obviously, climbing with the amount of people that do get lost, particularly in the rugged coast of Tasmania with tourists. As I said, I don't need it now, but it would be interesting to see the cost to particularly Tas Pol of undertaking these search and rescue. When we look at back in 2021-22, it was 390, then it went to 362, and since then it's climbed, 446 and now 473. Is that something I'm able to take on notice, to get on notice, and actually have some response to?

Mr ELLIS - Happy to. Yes.

CHAIR - 'Happy to', as in happy take it on notice for the figures?

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Yes, through you, minister. There are some challenges in actually giving you an accurate figure around that, just because of the use of -

CHAIR - Ballpark's fine.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - Yes.

CHAIR - Just to get an indication of what it's actually costing Tas Pol particularly, and the resources that are required. If we put something together mainly with resources and an indication of cost, it gives an indication of how it's affecting the community, because obviously it's a free service for people, but it's a cost certainly to Tas Pol and the community.

A/Comm OOSTERLOO - That's all right.

4.1 Fire and Emergency Services

CHAIR - Thank you. Any other questions in this area? Otherwise, we move to 4.1 Fire and Emergency Services. Oh, sorry, you need some changeover?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, if that works for you.

CHAIR - Yes, that's fine. If we stop the broadcast for a moment, please.

Ms WEBB - I did have a follow-up I wanted to -

Mr ELLIS - Perhaps just in general, if there are any further questions for the Tasmania Police members, it might be helpful if we can - I'm not sure what the output order's looking like - but yes, if we can address that in a group.

CHAIR - If you'd just like me to - the output is, we have fire and emergency services next, and then capital investment, and then we go into state fire. So, basically, after Ms Webb's question, we can let Tas Pol get back to their work, if that suits you, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. And just thinking, capital investment; that may be best to -

CHAIR - Yes, I'm not sure whether we -

Mr ELLIS - Do you want to do this in capital investment and then we can move to fire.

CHAIR - Well, we certainly can, if any members have anything in capital investment.

Mr ELLIS - I think Ms Webb had -

Ms WEBB - No, I don't have any on capital investment, but I wanted to do a follow-up question, if I might, to the discussion we had earlier about the coronial project and the letter from the Attorney-General to Tas Police.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Through you, minister, if I can direct my question to Mr Higgins, again. Inspector? No.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Deputy Commissioner.

Ms WEBB - Deputy Commissioner. Sorry about that.

Comm ADAMS - You've demoted him.

Ms WEBB - I'm so sorry.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Inspector a long time ago.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - You're off the Christmas list.

Ms WEBB - I'm so terribly sorry. It should be on your badge, I can't quite see. It's just shiny.

Mr ELLIS - Just call him 'Jonno'.

Ms WEBB - No, I would never do such a thing.

The reason I'm following up is because my office has been dealing with a lot of families in relation to this matter who will appreciate a little bit more detail, I think. Can I clarify with you in relation to the answer you gave me earlier, about the look that Tasmania Police had at this situation and whether there had been any laws broken.

Can you clarify, do you mean that there were no contemporary laws at the time that the actions occurred, of body parts being removed without consent from an autopsy and given to a museum. There were no contemporary laws at that time that prevented that, made that illegal? You also talked about the fact that it was in the past. Is it that there may have been laws broken, but the statute of limitations means we can't now investigate them? Can you clarify that a bit further for me.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Through you, minister. No, I wasn't talking about statute.

Ms WEBB - Right.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - So the coroner stated the retention of human remains without family or coronial approval or even knowledge is an historic practice out of keeping with and offensive to contemporary standards and values, and there were no criminal allegations that have been suggested by the coroner, and Tasmania Police has assessed the record investigation and will not be conducting any further investigation.

Ms WEBB - So the coroner's report does point to a number of acts - a number of statutes - that weren't complied with. I haven't done the research to see whether there were penalties involved in a lack of compliance with those statutes. Is that something that was done, then, as part of Tas Police looking at this?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - No, this was done as part of the coronial with Coroner Cooper and we've looked at the record there. We haven't gone through all the files.

Ms WEBB - Yes, so in the sense that his report - brief though it is - very clearly talks about acts that have been not complied with. Has there been an investigation as to whether that's a criminal matter?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - No, because the coroner hasn't recommended any criminal allegations be investigated.

Ms WEBB - So other than the coroner, the Attorney-General has written to you and asked you to look at this.

PUBLIC

Dep Comm HIGGINS - No, the Attorney-General didn't ask us to look at it. He's referred it to us and made very clear that he's not directing us to take any action.

Comm ADAMS - I think it's fair to say the Attorney-General asked us to - he considered it appropriate that the decision be drawn to our attention. That's the specifics of that correspondence.

Ms WEBB - Would the coroner, in this report identifying a potential criminal matter, have been the only way to trigger Tas Police then to look at whether laws had been broken? Or, for example, if family members brought it to Tasmania Police and requested that it was investigated, would that be sufficient to actually have it looked at?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Through you, minister. Police have been involved in the coronial investigation. So whilst I do appreciate the angst that families do have in this, they really need to speak to the coronial family liaisons to get information.

Ms WEBB - Yes.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - But Tasmania Police aren't conducting any criminal investigations in relation to it.

Ms WEBB - So at the moment there's absolutely no further information that the coroner's office can give those families. In fact, the coroner's office is now directing them to my office.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Oh, okay.

Ms WEBB - Right. Unofficially, which is unacceptable in the first instance.

CHAIR - I think the police have answered the question, though.

Ms WEBB - So if somebody, at the moment - if it came to light right now, someone brought it to you that body parts had been taken from autopsies being conducted without consent and put somewhere else, would that be a crime?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - I'm not sure about it being a crime, but if it was something outside this, certainly Tasmania Police would look at it.

Ms WEBB - So if these families bring it to Tasmania Police now and request that it's investigated, will they be turned away on the basis that the coroner in this matter didn't recommend that it be looked at?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Tasmania Police will not be conducting any further investigations into these matters between 1966 and 1991.

Ms WEBB - Can you categorically say that there's no law that was broken at the time?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - No, no, I'm not saying that.

Ms WEBB - So the families will be left -

PUBLIC

CHAIR - The police have answered the question.

Ms WEBB - Completely unanswered in terms of whether laws were broken and whether anyone could be held responsible?

CHAIR - Thank you. The police have answered the question. Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Are we on to CI, capital investment program? Is that what where we -

CHAIR - I believe so, if we've finished. Yes.

Capital Investment Program

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, thank you. I've just got one question regarding police protective equipment and safety enhancements. Noticing that there was a significant sum in 2025-26 and a smaller amount in 2026-27, nothing in the forward Estimates after that. So how does that work? Because protective equipment will continue to be needed and used for new recruits and whatever, and are there enough wands? That's what I'm sort of alluding to, and that's given the reason for that funding.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Gaffney. Yes, that's quite common when it comes to capital investment, because of course it is a process where we buy physical equipment or build stations, and that's the key cost. In terms of the initiative, it will provide funding for Multi-Use Integrated Protection Vest, the Multi-use Integrated Protection Vest replacement project, tactical handheld metal detection project - which, of course, are our wands - and the use of force options trial. The MIPVs are a mandatory part of Tasmanian Police uniform and provide officers with protection from firearms and anti-weapons while maintaining a visible street police presence. The use of a wand will improve officer safety when searching for metal detection or metallic objects and other dangerous implements, in accordance with the recent amendments to the *Police Offences Act 1935* - known more commonly as Reid's Law.

Additionally, the use of force options trial for frontline officers will bring Tasmania in line with other Australian jurisdictions on the use of tasers. I'll pass to the commissioner to talk through the nature of that funding.

Mr GAFFNEY - Perhaps, commissioner, you might let me and other people understand - so when a police officer clocks on, they pick up their taser, they pick up a wand and their protective equipment - and they go to work. Or do they have their own wand and taser? Does each officer have their own equipment, or is it just - this is what's there for the day and you go and get it? I'm interested to know how that works.

Comm ADAMS - It's a bit of a combination of what you've identified just then. There are certain items of police protective equipment which are issued personally. A protective vest is an example of that, where it's issued on a personal basis, needs to be fitted to ensure that it's going to provide the maximum protection to a police officer. In terms of a firearm, that is not allocated on an individual basis. With the tasers, we're only going into a pilot in the next 12 months with tasers, and we'll only look to purchase 50. We want to evaluate the effectiveness of tasers and whether it actually addresses a gap that's been identified through a couple of reviews that we've got. So at the moment, the Budget is to accommodate 50 tasers.

PUBLIC

In terms of the wands, they won't be personally allocated. We would see the wands being deployed more often in our 24/7 stations, and that would be allocated at a time a person starts their shift, and we look to buy 300 of the wands. So someone would be allocated those at the time that they start their shift in a similar way to their firearm.

Mr GAFFNEY - And, obviously, with the 50, that's a pilot program. With the 300, that will cover the state adequately for the wands?

Comm ADAMS - Yes, we believe that it will, and should we have any breakages or a need to replace those, we think that 300 is around what we need to ensure we've got a capability that's going to allow us to do the job.

Mr GAFFNEY - A really quick question. Are there different types and standards and brands of tasers and wands? Who looks into that and says, 'We can get this for X amount of dollars, but we can get this one over here, which is a better effective wand than this one.'? How does that work?

Comm ADAMS - Yes, absolutely. We're lucky in a sense that we are the last jurisdiction to consider tasers, and so our counterparts have all been through the research and development and trial, and we can get the benefit of the work that they've done. There is a particular model that is a new generation model that we will look to procure.

At the moment, what we want to do - and, obviously, there's some challenges in state-based procurement processes. What I'd love to do is to look at being able to procure some of the equipment that we need from other contracts from other jurisdictions, but we do have, obviously, challenges in relation to procurement. So, in the first instance, we'll have to go through a process, but we'll be able to use the work other jurisdictions have done in selecting the right one.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any further questions on - we're looking at capital investment program.

Ms WEBB - No. I don't have capital, but I have -

Mr EDMUNDS - I've got a quick one.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Only brief. What is it, about \$6 million for upgrades at the academy? It's probably more a broad question about the academy, about its life, I suppose. How long do we feel like the academy can continue to fulfill what's required of it by the force?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Edmunds, and, certainly, it's been off the back of record recruiting for Tasmania Police. That's including some of our - well, the largest ever recruitment program. So that's encouraging, and the academy upgrades have been part of that. \$4.1 million across 2023-24, and 2024-25. Invests in the work, significantly improve the auditorium and upgrades to the main switchboard. Other improvements include toilet and change room

upgrades to comply with current standards, driver training, track resurfacing, roofing repairs, the education wing and the redevelopment of the formerly obsolete media room.

So there are some really interesting opportunities there. It is an amazing site for us as Tasmania Police and the capability that it provides, but important that we're continuing to build and upgrade on it so we can cater for more members and also new technology coming online. I'll pass to the commissioner to talk further.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. I would like to think that we never move away from the current site. It's a fantastic facility and allows us to undertake a range of training, whether it be for our specialist units or for our recruits or those coming back for important leadership programs.

It is a facility that was built in the 1970s so it does require a continual amount of investment to keep it in the state that it should be, especially given the focus on our recruitment. It's the entry path for our new recruits. We want it to be a good experience and to provide them with the level of facilities that we need.

We have been lucky over the last 10 years with investment and upgrades for the academy, and I would suspect that that would need to continue. We do assessments of our facilities as part of our infrastructure planning, and that will continue. We'll continue to identify the areas where we need to have an investment.

As I said, we've been lucky enough to be able to address some of the concerns that we have at the moment through the most recent funding, but it's my aim to keep that as the primary training facility for Tasmania Police because it's such a great site, and the facilities available to our officers are fantastic.

Mr ELLIS - Great grounds with water views are not all that common around the country. So yes, it's a beautiful place.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. It was more around the fact you mentioned it's not 1970s and just -

Comm ADAMS - Yes. Chair, do you mind if I just correct one thing?

CHAIR - No, that's fine.

Comm ADAMS - I've just been advised we ordered 200 wands, not 300. So sorry. I need to correct that.

CHAIR - No, thank you.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yours is much worse than his.

CHAIR - A very quick question before we let Tas Police go bearing in mind we will be finishing at 12.15. We have three minutes for answer and question.

Ms WEBB - Yes. Thank you. I wanted to check in about the PACER, the Mental Health Emergency Response Service, and ask a couple of quick questions about that. So no description

PUBLIC

of the service is necessary in the answer. In terms of the PACER service with the three services there responding together, the police, the paramedics, and a mental health clinician, in terms of the police part of that, are the officers provided with specific trauma-informed training to be part of that team?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Happy to pass to the commissioner.

Comm ADAMS - Thank you, minister. Our officers actually do undertake training before they are deemed to be suitable to go into the PACER, well, multidisciplinary team. The training has a component provided by mental health services. Obviously, we need to understand the roles of the multidisciplinary team so that the paramedics and our mental health clinicians understand our roles. To answer your question, yes.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Then is it expected that in any of those call-outs for those teams that the police body-worn cameras would be activated throughout attendance to those incidences?

Comm ADAMS - Body-worn camera would be activated, yes.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. In terms of those callouts and the three services they're attending together, who has the ultimate decision-making responsibility amongst that makeup?

Comm ADAMS - It's difficult to say that that's a decision of one service over another. It depends on the circumstances. I mean, what we're doing to provide a valuable support in the community for someone who may be suffering from mental health-related illness, each of the three services have different responsibilities in terms of someone's care. It's certainly not going to be a police officer that's going to be making a decision around someone's care.

Ms WEBB - But in terms of if there's a decision made, for example, to enter a property and to physically remove somebody, and that would be the police officer doing that, that would be the police officer's decision in that circumstance to do that?

Comm ADAMS - If we're going to enter a property without consent, the PACER model - the majority of occasions, we've had a member of the community, and most likely a family member, that's asked for support and assistance. So we have consent to actually work with a -

Ms WEBB - Yes, I'm thinking of times when there's definitely not consent, and the person is maintaining that they do not require the assistance, but are taken out of a property against their will.

Comm ADAMS - It's very difficult to answer a hypothetical. Yes. I'd need to have some details on what the scenario would be to be able to answer that.

Ms WEBB - We don't have time for me to go into that with you now, by the sound of it. I'll be moved on if I try.

CHAIR - No, thank you. So, minister, we now go on to 4.1, foreign emergency services. I'm not sure that you need - do you need officers here?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We'll do a changeover, if that works for you, Chair.

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CHAIR - If you could just stop the broadcast, please. Thank you, everyone. Much appreciated. Thanks for your time.

The Committee suspended from 12.15 p.m. to 12.17 p.m.

STATE FIRE COMMISSION

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, and you might like to just introduce the team you have at the table now that we are into Fire Services.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. At the table we've got Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner, Jeremy Smith; Deputy Chief Officer Operations, Matt Lowe; Executive Director Strategy and Capability, Andrea Heath; and Executive Director SES and Volunteers, Mick Lowe. The other people have been introduced.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. If I could start the questioning with regard to foreign emergency services. The budget papers state on page 191 that the variation across the 2025-26 Budget and forward Estimates reflects the profile of expenditure of Australian Government funding, including for the Disaster Risk Reduction program. Can you provide some detail on the specific projects funded under the DRR program?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. This is an area of crossover between my role as Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management and the Premier's role effectively as the minister for recovery. It's one of the strengths of Tasmania's recovery arrangements that we do really take a whole-of-government approach to it. I'll pass to the team from DPFEM to go through some of the specifics.

Comm SMITH - Thank you for the question. I might throw to Mick Lowe to start the discussion, minister, through you, minister.

Mr LOWE - Thank you. Is there an aspect of the disaster risk reduction program that you'd like to focus on?

CHAIR - No, just generally. Some of the projects that are funded under that.

Mr LOWE - I'll take this one on notice if I can. Thanks.

CHAIR - No, that's fine, thank you. A further question, minister. Is Tasmania required to match Commonwealth funding for these programs? If so, how has this been budgeted?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass to the team from Tasmania or DPFEM to provide an update. We have significant investments that we're making in this space as well. It's a good partnership; Tasmania has actually been disproportionately successful in achieving funding through this program, which is good, which is what we want. We want to get the best deal out of the Commonwealth. I'll pass to the team from TFS to add further.

Comm SMITH - Thank you, minister, and through the Chair, we'll have to again take that one on notice. We haven't prepared that information.

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CHAIR - No, that's fine. Are there any geographical areas being prioritised under this program, such as rural and regional areas? If so, which areas are receiving specific support?

Mr ELLIS - We're happy to follow up and provide further information. Obviously, we want to make sure that we're investing where the risk is and also where some of the good opportunities to reduce the risk in our community. Unless there's anything further to add from the commissioner?

Comm SMITH - No.

Mr ELLIS - No.

CHAIR - I can put these questions on notice? That's not a problem.

Mr ELLIS - The Department of Premier and Cabinet is also the key agency when it comes to the kind of recovery side of things as well.

CHAIR - That's fine. You had a question, Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, thank you. I was going to ask about how the program for fuel reduction burns was going. Particularly in my region there has been a lot of concern about what a fire in that region might mean, and generally across the state as well. If you could elaborate on that program and how it is going.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. I was with the volunteers at the Penguin Fire Station yesterday, Mr Hiscutt. They are an amazing team. Luke Griffin and the whole crew there, they've actually been -

Mr HISCUTT - An old schoolmate of mine.

Mr ELLIS - Really? Very good. Excellent. No, he's just a classic volunteer. He's got a small business and he's still going above and beyond to make sure that he's supporting his community. And certainly the Penguin Fire Station was raised by the team there. We've actually supported them through some significant investments in our Volunteer Infrastructure Investment Fund, which no doubt we'll touch on today, and that's been an important program for supporting our volunteers around the state.

In terms of the fuel reduction program, Tasmania's is actually a nation-leading program. It's tenure-blind, it's strategic and risk-based in its approach to fuel reduction. TFS, who we've got here, is one of the three main organisations partnering in the delivery of the fuel reduction program, along with Parks and Wildlife 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 may be reduced, making them easier and safer for firefighters to control.

In February this year, we saw how recent fuel reduction burns assisted the control of the bushfire on the outskirts of Zeehan. Similarly, the recent fuel reduction burns slowed the progress of the Mount Donaldson bushfire in the Norfolk Range, which was part of the big

west coast complex of bushfires. A fuel reduction burn reduced our bushfire intensity at Pieman Heads, which is a very remote community.

So far, 2025-26 season: 17 fuel reduction burns have been completed, totalling 3127 hectares. In the full financial year 2024-25, 106 fuel reduction burns were completed, encompassing 24,567 hectares. I'll pass to the commissioner to add further as far as this an important program.

Comm SMITH - Thank you, minister, and thank you for the question. It's important to note that the fuel reduction program regularly risk analyses right across the state using data that is available through a number of datasets. It's also worth noting that the risk assessment is through a process with the fire management area committees. There are 10 committees throughout the state that feed their local knowledge into the risks posed by bushfire.

Those fire management area committees are overseen by the State Fire Management Council and the State Fire Management Council regularly reviews those plans to help adopt priorities within the program. The fuel reduction program itself, the steering committee, sees those proposed burns and where the risks are and assists with adopting the priorities.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you very much for the answer.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any further questions on Fire and Emergency Services? If we don't, if we could move now to State Fire Commission.

DIVISION 26

State Fire Commission

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management

State Fire Commission

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you, Chair. I was just really on that.

CHAIR - No, that's fine. In the State Fire Commission, and we all know that fire volunteers are the lifeblood of our community. Without them, where would we be? Can I get some answers on how many fire volunteers we actually have in the state? Can you give me an indication of their regionality, north, north-west and south, please?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I couldn't agree more. I pay tribute to our incredible fire service volunteers. About nine in every 10 firefighters who get on a truck in Tasmania are volunteers. We've got about 360 career firefighters and approximately 5000 volunteers across TFS and SES. It's a key part of our response in basically every region and every corner of Tasmania. I'll look to the commissioner and the team in terms of a regional breakdown of the specific numbers.

CHAIR - That'd be good. Thank you.

Comm SMITH - Thank you, minister. Through you, minister, yes, the number of volunteers does fluctuate across the state. We have predominantly approximately 4500 volunteers and, as I said, that number does fluctuate across the state. The majority of the

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volunteers are around the urban environment where there's a greater population, so around the greater Hobart area, the greater Launceston area and the north-west coast as such. I'll go back through my records to get the numbers about the regional aspects.

CHAIR - That would be great.

Comm SMITH - Bear with me for a second. It doesn't look like I've got the access, Chair, through our numbers, but certainly the number of volunteers from the Tasmanian Fire Service point of view, our last stat is 4456 in total.

CHAIR - I might put that question on notice if that's all right. A further question that I have is an age range of volunteers, whether our volunteers are getting older? We all know that it's very difficult for people time-wise, people are time poor, whether younger people are able to volunteer still. I'm not sure whether you can answer now or not. Just an indication, not definite numbers, but an indication of age ranges and also male to female, if that's possible.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. This certainly has been a key area of focus for us because it is the core of our workforce.

CHAIR - It has decreased in numbers, in my understanding, from when we've asked previously when it's been closer to 5000.

Mr ELLIS - It depends, because obviously there's active volunteers as well. Some of the work that we've been doing in recent years has included components of mandatory training that are very important for our volunteers, including with the Tasmanian Government Radio Network.

There were some volunteers who were on the books but not active, and for them, the training was - they weren't willing to undergo the training because they weren't really volunteering anymore. It's probably a truer number now in terms of the volunteers that we have, but certainly our volunteer support unit has been exceptionally helpful in supporting our volunteers building that capability.

It's very important, I think, for young people to be volunteering for our fire service. I think if you're young and able-bodied and live in a rural area, if you want the fire truck to come, you should consider volunteering for the TFS or the SES or Ambulance Tasmania. It's something that I do, and I really value the work of our volunteers.

In terms of gender split, 21 per cent of TFS volunteers are female, 79 per cent are male, and we're having some recent success of increasing the representation of female firefighters in particular. SES has very strong numbers. 34 per cent of SES volunteers are female, 65 per cent, 1 per cent unspecified, and that's encouraging. We know that we've got more work to do. Firefighting around the world in days gone by has been very blokey, and we've been missing out on too many firefighters because of that cultural perception and also the internal need to make sure that we're more accommodating.

A big part of our volunteer infrastructure investment fund, which I spoke about the Penguin context, more broadly is about making sure that our facilities are more appropriate for our growing cohort of female volunteers, particularly amenities and things like that. I'll pass to the commissioner.

CHAIR - While you're on that, you've done the SES and the volunteers. You might as well let us know if you've got for the career firefighters our male-to-female, if that's all right as well.

Comm SMITH - Through you, Chair. The career side of the organisation has traditionally not had a good growth in female numbers, but I can inform the committee that over the last three years, the numbers of female firefighters on each recruit course has increased. In fact, only this week, I signed off on the selection report for next year's recruit course, and that will have seven firefighters that are female at 24, which is the same number as the previous year.

CHAIR - Good number.

Comm SMITH - We are ensuring that we're not targeting numbers or anything. We're getting our recruitment processes right in making it a safe workplace so all our people feel as though they are wanted and engage with the workplace. We are actively ensuring that we have the right environment for all our people to thrive.

CHAIR - Thank you. Much appreciated.

Ms WEBB - I've got some good follow-ups on that, actually.

CHAIR - Follow-up, yes.

Ms WEBB - It flows on from it, which is good, which is about exactly what you've just been describing about workplace culture. I note that the State Fire Commission annual report for 2024-25 states that the commission instituted an independent review of workplace culture across TFS and SES. The review was conducted by EB & Co Consultants and you got the report on 31 March of this year. The annual report says that the commission's accepted all the recommendations contained in the report and is investing heavily in long-term commitments to cultural change, which is really pleasing to hear.

I've got a couple of questions about that. Noting the report presents actions as key priorities across three phases, can I clarify that, when the annual report states, 'All recommendations are accepted and refers to implementation', it's of those key priorities across the three phases as it's described there in the annual report?

Comm SMITH - Through you, minister. The review itself was endorsed and adopted by the State Fire Commission. The 26 recommendations were accepted. Subsequently, from the priorities for the next steps being consulted currently, we have a consultation plan out to our organisation for feedback from our people.

The executive, who sit before you this morning, all went on a listening tour around the state. We went to 40-plus sites around the state to listen to our people and get direct feedback so that can inform part of the implementation plan. Certainly, we believe this is going to be an important investment for the State Fire Commission and the Tasmanian Fire Service and SES about building on the good culture that is definitely within both organisations, but there are areas that have been identified that we need to certainly improve in.

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Ms WEBB - Those key priorities across the three phases, that incorporates all 26 recommendations, giving effect to those?

Comm SMITH - Certainly.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. There doesn't seem to be specific funding allocations around implementing the recommendations that I can discern. Perhaps you could speak to what that looks like. Is it expected to be done within current funding, or will there need to be purpose funding for it?

Comm SMITH - Through you, minister. Certainly, the culture review was identified as a priority for the commission. This current corporate plan has identified \$1 million in funding as seed funding to implement and engage with our workforce about the next steps. As we're still seeking that feedback, we still haven't landed on what we believe is going to be required ongoing.

Programs like the leadership we need to invest in; the systems and work processes; additional staff to help us, both SES and TFS, still needs to be worked through, but certainly the commission has made a commitment to provide sufficient or adequate funding to address what the priorities are and the ongoing plan. We don't believe this'll be fixed overnight, but it'll be certainly a program of works over a number of years to continue to build on the good culture and fix where we need to as has been identified through that implementation plan.

Ms WEBB - Sure. That sounds really positive, and you're right. Culture change doesn't happen overnight and will take time to build up. In terms of the listening that you're doing and the consulting on how to tangibly move it forward, are you expecting to have that done so that when you put in a bid for next May's Budget? For example, if there are funding requirements, that you'll be able to put that into your budget bid.

Comm SMITH - Certainly, we are already considering now. We have to develop a corporate plan that gets signed off by the minister through the commission in approximately March. The work has to start now to get into next year's financial planning arrangements in the corporate plan. Once we get a better understanding of exactly what we need to do, the timelines and the program of works will determine what we go back to the commission with through that corporate planning process.

Mr ELLIS - Worth probably just clarifying as well that because the State Fire Commission has a lot of own-source revenue through the three different levies that it collects, there are many things that are funded that are not, say, through the appropriation of the Budget.

Ms WEBB - I'm sure it's a conversation we'll have in the Budget Estimates post the May Budget next year. Then the other side of it, you mentioned about the recruitment numbers and seven female applicants being approved for next year as part of a cohort. You said you don't have targets. That's fine. I accept that you might not need to set targets, but do you then purposefully look to reach out through your recruitment efforts in ways that will be more likely to bring the opportunities to the attention of women who might be interested and appropriate for recruitment?

Comm SMITH - Through you, minister. Certainly, our recruitment processes and practices currently do do that. We go out to workplaces and sporting clubs and so forth where

they predominantly are female. We don't have any issues with males applying, so we don't target those areas, but we certainly look at those opportunities to go out to sporting clubs and work groups, et cetera, where we can let people know what the TFS is all about, what they need to do to get into the organisation, and what it looks like if they come and work with is.

Ms WEBB - Are you able to gauge the effectiveness of that by tracking, since we've been making these efforts, female applicants have gone up, not necessarily people who've gone through to actually do the training, but at least at that application stage that you're attracting a bigger pool of female applicants?

Comm SMITH - Through you, minister. I might refer to Andrea Heath, who looks after our workplace planning, but anecdotally, the messages I get back is around that investment at those local sporting clubs and work areas is paying dividends. As we build the cohort and their number of people that are actually career firefighters, we believe that word of mouth and having good experiences within the TFS will continue to build that good message. Andrea.

Ms HEATH - I'm not able to provide any specific data in relation to any increases at the moment, so I can take that on notice. Probably one of the things that I would like to highlight is one of the initiatives that we've just started through the Respect 360, the cultural review, is a gender equity network. It's not just about recruiting women, but it's about training them. It's giving women and people who identify as another gender an opportunity to highlight their issues so that they've got direct access to the executive and the State Fire Commission so that we can actually consider what could assist them to do their job and for us to keep them. It's about recruitment, but it's also about retention. I'll get the figures for you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. That sounds like a really interesting and positive model. Did you take that model from somewhere else that you'd observed it being used effectively?

Ms HEATH - It was some of the feedback we got through the EB&Co report. Women told us that this is what they wanted. So we went to other jurisdictions and looked what was done. Primarily it's actually being designed by the women. What we're doing is working with them to hear what they want and they're co-designing that. We have our third meeting tonight because it covers both career and volunteer women.

Ms WEBB - Apart from the recruitment side of things to look for that gender equity in your cohorts. Just from the brief look I've had at the report that was done for you by EB&Co, what's come through is that there might be some attitudinal issues to deal with within your existing cohorts of volunteers and staff. Is that work that you're doing internally to assist with some attitude change in that space?

Mr ELLIS - It's really important. The commissioner will probably talk about Respect 360, but some of those training and programs - and as a volunteer, it's really encouraging to see some of these things coming through. This change in culture won't be an overnight job, and it's not even necessarily a funding allocation job. It's something that we need a sustained effort over many years, because culture takes time to build up, and that includes culture that needs to change. So building that cultural change piece will be, yes, an important piece of ongoing work. I'll pass to the commissioner to add further.

Comm SMITH - Thank you, minister. The program itself, and we want to make sure that we don't, as an executive or the steering committee, go out and tell people what to do. We

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want to co-design the solutions. We're only at that first step at the moment, that the co-design and the buy-in from our people is going to be so much to the success of the story, and if we don't do that, we'll leave people behind.

Ms WEBB - It's interesting. It must have been something of a shock, maybe, to read the report when it's come to you this year, but clearly, you're on the front foot responding to it.

Comm SMITH - Can I add something there? Sorry, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Comm SMITH - The executive is quite young for the organisation. The oldest member of the executive had only been there three years, but we're aware of the issues when we've come into these roles, and the commission and myself and others and the executive were open to having this review. We weren't surprised, unfortunately, but we were committed to actually implementing those recommendations.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Really, this review has been self-initiated by the commission and the TFS because we acknowledge there's a need to change. The review is very much about how do we identify the pathway forward to change. Not so much a shock, more as knowing that there's a problem, doing something about it and doing so in a way that I think has shown great initiative from the commission, the commissioner and the leadership team at TFS and SES.

CHAIR - Thank you minister. Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. Changing topic a little bit. Has the government considered incentives to businesses which employ volunteer firefighters? I have seen that throughout my experience with young people having to - rightly so, and do a good thing - run off to help but it does affect businesses that employ them. Is that something that they've considered or would consider?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, it is a challenging space in terms of remuneration around volunteering. We have, for example, in some of our busier volunteer brigades, they were retained brigades, those firefighters receive a payment, small one, but it's effectively a stipend for the kind of above and beyond nature of their volunteering. There's often been debate when we're working through the Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Services Reform and the levy discussion about whether you would even provide, say, a levy carve-out for volunteers.

Interestingly enough, some of the feedback that we had from our volunteers themselves was that they didn't want payment. It is an area where there's a range of different views. Very grateful for the work of our employers provide the opportunities to many of our volunteers. I'm grateful for local government, knowing that that's an area that you've served previously, Mr Hiscutt, for their contribution to allowing their people to come and serve with our emergency services. I'll pass to the commissioner if there's anything you wanted to add specifically.

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Comm SMITH - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister, I might refer to Mick Lowe, who has a responsibility for volunteers to add anything in that question space.

Mr LOWE - The only thing I'd offer here is that we're constantly looking at ways to encourage and enable volunteerism from an emergency service perspective. We are represented on national committees where this is an issue that is being addressed on a national perspective. There is ongoing work that we're doing to try to address those issues, to make volunteering easier, to reduce the friction. A lot of that work that we're doing is looking at what we can do on an employee perspective, noting that, especially in the rural communities, a lot of our volunteers are self-employed. That's one of the issues we do face in that area.

Mr HISCUTT - I just got this idea that if we're more attractive to employ volunteer firefighters and therefore might increase the number of volunteer firefighters if businesses can say - no, that's all right. Thank you for the answers on that.

Mr ELLIS - I just note as well, for any employers out there, really consider employing some of our volunteers because they're quite clearly exceptional people who really want to give back to their community. I think if you've got a TFS or SES volunteer among your ranks, you're doing pretty well.

Mr HISCUTT - I agree with that statement wholeheartedly. Another quick question if I could.

CHAIR - Yes, that's fine.

Mr HISCUTT - A specific one to our local patch. I know the SES in Ulverstone, its facilities are on a main street in the middle of town. I know that often causes a bit of friction there. Is there any update or anything you'd provide in relation to that or any statement?

Mr ELLIS - I know what you mean in terms of location, not quite on the main street but certainly an older facility and an important piece of work. SES is a complicated organisation in terms of who's funding what and who owns what. There's a whole range of different land tenures and the physical buildings which any specific unit is operating on and appreciate the advocacy from the Central Coast Council there as well. I think over time it will be something that will be certainly worth considering. It's a busy unit, being in that part of the coast and near the Bass Highway. I'll pass to the commissioner or the director of SES if they've got anything they want to add specifically.

Mr LOWE - Facilities across the state are something that we are looking at constantly, but in particular at the moment. There is funding that's been provided by the government in this Budget, which is \$1.8 million, which will help us do some refurbishment across our various facilities. Part of this is the conversation we have with council under their obligations under the EMA 2006, the maintenance of a unit and the facility as part of that is one of those requirements that we negotiate with the various councils.

I'm currently engaging the councils across the state, both in having a standardised MOU but then looking at the specifics of their region and the future of facilities. Certainly Central Coast is one of those that we are looking at because it is one of our older facilities across the state.

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Mr HISCUTT - I appreciate the answers. Thank you very much.

CHAIR - Thank you. While we're on volunteers, through you, minister, personal protection equipment: do the volunteers receive the same personal protection equipment as the career firefighters?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of firefighting, there's a range of different tasks that different brigades will undertake. Some of the protective equipment that's required for our career staff may be quite different to volunteers who are bushfire brigade in a rural area. There are differences, but I'll pass to the commissioner and talk through some of those differences.

CHAIR - Yes, to see that it's the same quality that it's just as protective for - we have a lot of volunteers, and we need to look after them.

Comm SMITH - Through you, minister. Certainly, the PPC and equipment for our firefighters, both career and volunteer, does meet Australian or national standards. We are currently going through a procurement process for new bushfire fighting gear that will be made available to both career and volunteer staff. In essence, the tech equipment is exactly the same whether you're a career staff or a volunteer. It may be a bit older in some areas within the state, but certainly it is compliant, and it meets the standards.

CHAIR - We keep it up to date, basically.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We're going through a procurement process now for one certain set of ensemble that will be made available to both career and volunteer staff. In fact, I think the first rollout will be to females to ensure that they've got proper fit-for-purpose sized PPC.

CHAIR - That's for volunteers and career fire personnel.

Mr ELLIS - And career, yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. To ask another question with regard to workers' compensation, if I could. Obviously the presumptive cancer was something that I can remember during my time, particularly for career firefighters, and we brought volunteers in, if I recall, into that as well. I'm wondering if you happen to have the numbers - and if you don't have the numbers, I'm more than happy to put questions on notice, if it's easier to get figures out.

Mr ELLIS - No, it's totally fine. Happy to follow up and, of course, worth also mentioning, Chair, that the parliament has also expanded the list of cancers on the presumptive cancer list. One of the reasons why that's really important is that there is a range of female-only kind of cancers that have now been included, which is important recognition for our female career staff and volunteers. I'll pass to the commissioner and the team in terms of the numbers for presumptive cancer.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Comm SMITH - Thank you, and through you, minister, currently from a cancer reportable open claim point of view, there are 27 cancer claims for Tasmanian Fire Service members.

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CHAIR - Would that be career, or would that include volunteers?

Comm SMITH - Thank you. Fourteen career and 13 volunteer.

CHAIR - Thank you. Through you, minister, other workers' compensation claims? I was wondering how many might be outstanding, probably the length of time, or the highest length of time?

Comm SMITH - Currently there are 86 open claims for workers' comp across TFS and SES.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any questions, Ms Webb? No. Mr Hiscutt? I might ask as we've got a couple of minutes left, and we don't have any other questions coming, with regard to our fleet of air tankers. Bushfire season is almost upon us. Do we have ready access to the large bushfire air tankers? Is it the VLATs, they're called? How do we access them? What type of processes do we have to gain access to those? Are they readily available? Is it something that we need to get in place? Where do they come from?

Comm SMITH - Thank you, and through you, minister, we've got well-established arrangements with the other states and territories and the National Aerial Firefighting Centre, NAFCE, that assists us with both procuring and operating our national sovereign fleet, and also our instate fleet. We have 15 contracted aircraft through those national arrangements, but we also have access to approximately another 130 through the whole-of-country arrangements.

If it's required, and it did happen this year where we got additional aircraft into the state for the fires that occurred on the west coast, the chiefs and the commissioners meet on a regular basis and put our case why we need and should have these aircraft to meet these operational requirements. That occurs regularly, and, in fact, on busy days right across the country, we will stand up that committee and look at moving resources around the country every day.

CHAIR - Thank you for that. One final question on this before I go to Mr Hiscutt. What arrangements do we have with farmers, for example, to get water out of their dams? Is it just something that they have to put up with? Is there an arrangement in place when you actually need the water, so you need the planes to access that water? Is there an arrangement in place with farmers for their dams? I think in the past, there have been some issues.

Comm SMITH - Through you, minister, the *Fire Service Act* allows us to access water for firefighting activities. Where we know we're likely to get fires, we have made contact with water storage areas. We have had instances where we've returned water to a farmer or a landowner where we've taken water out. It's more of a conversation. We're not obligated to do it but, from a good corporate citizen, we do have an opportunity to return water into their dam et cetera. If we think there's rain coming in the near future, probably not actively pursue that, but if they're in drought we'll look at those circumstances and provide water back into those essential farm dams.

CHAIR - Thank you for that. Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. In relation to transmission lines going through forested areas, I've had concerns raised with me from people that that may increase the fire risk in those

areas. I wondered if the commission shared those concerns, or if you'd like to comment on that at all.

Comm SMITH - Through you, minister, certainly where you've got standing vegetation, noting that Tasmania is 97 per cent bushfire prone, there are opportunities for ignitions from a variety of sources, whether they're private power lines. If it is, it's the responsibility of the landowner to make sure that they're kept safe and treat the risk.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes. I'm not sure if it's so much about the ignition of fire, but more the traversing of fire. Does it have negative or positive effects to -

Comm SMITH - Sorry. Through you, minister, the easement where the power lines go gives us an opportunity to use that as a fuel fire break and gives us an opportunity for our firefighting operations to use that as an anchor point, noting that the power lines do pose a risk. It'd be a dynamic risk assessment to make it known if it's suitable for undertaking those operational activities.

Mr HISCUTT - That would have been my expectation as well. I appreciate the confirmation of that answer.

CHAIR - Thank you. If we have no further questions from members?

Mr ELLIS - I think Mr Lowe is -

CHAIR - If there is a comment, yes, certainly.

Mr Matt LOWE - Sorry, just to address the opening question. I take the question was in relation to the National Risk Reduction Grants Program. There was the question regarding national disaster resilience, and that was and is a program that was established as a joint Australian Government/Tasmanian Government initiative. We are in round 5. That's been running since 2020. We are in round 5 of that.

In the last round, the projects that were established were the Remote Area Early Fire Detection Camera Network; Derwent Valley Fire Resilience Project, a fire resilience project within the Tasmanian Fire Service; Tasmania Local Government Emergency Management Recovery Audit; the development of a bushfire risk reduction and prevention plans for nature reserves at east-coast Tasmania; the Tasmania disaster resilience strategy enhanced consultation; bushfire risk reduction project; the Be Ready Bruny project; reducing bushfire risk in the Wellington Park; the Ready, Pet, Go! Ready Wallets; the development of the built environment; a screening for landslide vulnerability; qualifying risk for extreme landslides and debris flows in Poatina and Western Tiers; upgrading Hobart stormwater infrastructure for debris flow protection and improve resilience for Nubeena; NBN; fixed wireless broadband networks.

It is a pretty involved grants program that's executed across the state and fairly collaboratively across the broader whole of government. Obviously, I won't go into the previous approved grant rounds.

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CHAIR - No, that's fine. We are required to match the Commonwealth funding for the programs, or it's purely funded by the Commonwealth? It's all right, if the answer's not available. That's not a problem.

Mr Matt LOWE - I think it's dependent on the individual project, but I'll come back and take that one notice, if I can't.

CHAIR - That's perfectly fine.

Mr ELLIS - I think the other Mr Lowe at the table also had an answer to a previous question.

CHAIR - That's good. Thank you.

Mr Mick LOWE - Yes, Chair. In answer to your question on the breakdown of volunteer numbers, we have 1637 in the north, 949 in the northwest and 2014 in the south.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

Mr ELLIS - I think Andrea also has something to add.

Ms HEATH - Thank you, minister.

CHAIR - We'll have no questions to send you.

Ms HEATH - To respond to your query earlier about recruitment, since 2021, we've had 21 women recruited, which is an increase of 110 per cent. Our strategies are seeing a significant increase in recruitment.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. The focus of my question was about an increase in applicant pool, not just those who make it through the process. I mean, you can make an assumption, but -

Mr ELLIS - Was there anyone else who had an answer to the previous question?

CHAIR - We have three minutes left, if anyone else has something they'd like to add.

Mr ELLIS - Closing statement.

CHAIR - Yes, a closing statement, minister. We've never done one of those before.

Mr ELLIS - I am grateful for all your interest in this very important matter.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, and really appreciate and thank your team, the police and the fire for coming along. Thank you very much. We'll return at 2 o'clock with Tas TAFE. If we could stop the broadcast, please.

The Committee suspended from 12.58 p.m. to 2.01 p.m.

DIVISION 27
TasTAFE

TasTAFE

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister. If you could introduce your team at the table, and we will start with TasTAFE.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. At the table we have Tim Gardner, Chair; Will McShane, acting CEO; Alex Paterson, the director of Skills Tasmania; and Adam Foster, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. Minister, apparently TasTAFE has an industry engagement team which liaises with industry and key stakeholders. I have some questions relating to that in a specific sense. What consultation occurred with TasTAFE, the relevant TasTAFE teachers, and stakeholders in the local industries which employ lab technicians and students before the decision to withdraw subsidies for those lab tech courses occurred?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. A key part of the TasTAFE reforms is about making sure that TasTAFE can look more like the businesses and industries that it serves. A really key part of that is making sure that we are engaging more closely with the industries that are the key employers of many of these learners. We've seen significant success and uplift with the work that we've done across a range of different industries. The work with automotive, for example, in terms of our ability to share coursework makes sure that even the new southern regional training facility is up and running - has been an important part of that effort and that work. There's a range of different areas as well, the school of the visitor economy -

Ms WEBB - I've got a very specific question that I put to you, minister, about lab tech.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, I thought you were asking in general.

Ms WEBB - No, I specifically said in relation to the relevant TasTAFE teachers and students and stakeholders in the local industries which employ lab technicians.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure. Thanks.

Ms WEBB - Before the decision was made to remove subsidies from those courses, what engagement occurred?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll pass to the team from TasTAFE to provide further information.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, minister. TasTAFE has a clear charter around delivering value for the deed funding that we receive, and making sure that we've got our learners absolutely at the centre of what we do. In that process, the most important thing is that we align our courses and the products we deliver with the state skills plan.

We undertook a process internally to assess all our products and to determine the extent to which those products were a priority for the state and state skills requirements, and then, the extent to which vocational education was required, accredited training was required and thirdly, the extent to which TasTAFE needed to deliver that training.

Through that process, an important piece there is that we were well aligned with, and lining up with, the state's requirements for skills, that we then, through that process, ordered and prioritised our products and identified certain training products that didn't meet those requirements or were a lower priority on those requirements. Included in that was the lab, the lab ops and lab technician training.

Ms WEBB - I'm wanting to confirm very clearly: did any consultation occur with the relevant TasTAFE teachers, the students, or the local industries - of which there's a range - that employ lab technicians out of those courses?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose it's important to note that there is a range of different industry providers for lab tech training.

Ms WEBB - Yes, I'd like to talk to that in another question if I might, because I do have questions on that. In this instance, I'm asking about consultation and wanting there to be confirmation: was there or wasn't there consultation with the groups I mentioned?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to TAFE.

Mr GARDNER - Our process is to ensure that what we deliver aligns with the state skills plan, and to ensure that we're getting value for the money that we are receiving and spending. So that our process was basically ensuring that we were aligned with our plan, and that we stick to the priorities for the state. In doing so, we arrived at the decisions around all the courses that we - all the products that we offer.

Ms WEBB - Thank you for that. I can only take that to mean no consultation. If you want to correct me, that's fine - you can do that now - but otherwise I'm going to take that to mean no consultation with students, staff or the relevant industry representative stakeholders.

Mr GARDNER - So our process is, once we engaged with Skills Tasmania, and once we had got to a point of determining an agreement around advice in response to our proposal that those courses would no longer be subsidised, we then undertake a full engagement, as we are required to do, with our workforce, and we work through the processes that are spelled out through our industrial relations process, and we put a proposal to our workforce. We have no final decision ourselves, and we work through with them on testing that proposal to reach a final determination. That's the process that we run through.

Ms WEBB - Sure. That's the consultation after the decision's been made, but informing it, there wasn't any. I'm particularly disturbed, really, to hear that there was no consultation with stakeholders in local industries that employ lab techs prior to making the decision, because surely that's part of assessing how important it is or isn't to continue to support these courses.

Mr GARDNER - Sure.

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Ms WEBB - I don't believe any consultation was had with lab tech - across the range of industries that have these lab tech graduates, no consultation occurred.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, I think you're potentially misrepresenting the process there.

Ms WEBB - Please correct me.

Mr ELLIS - We're working through the decision process, and so the initial announcement was made by TAFE some weeks ago.

Ms WEBB - About six weeks ago.

Mr ELLIS - Then consultation occurred from there. We're obviously working through the process.

Ms WEBB - Yes, I'm talking about consultation that informed the decision, minister, and I'm talking about consultation with industry stakeholders to inform the decision.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we were working through a process around making the decision. It's also, I think, important to note again that there is a range of different providers. The majority of Tasmanian government-funded enrolments in Cert IV Lab Tech are actually provided by non-TAFE RTOs, and so that's the - you know, we work through obviously a process in terms of this, but I think -

Ms WEBB - I'd like to talk about some of those things, for sure.

Mr ELLIS - Great.

Ms WEBB - So the lab tech courses have had strong enrolments, high completion rates and excellent employment outcomes that align with priority areas in the Tasmanian Skills Plan across health, education, and science and technology. Yet in your response to questions that I had in the Chamber, minister, it sounds like you've said that the funding changes were due to TasTAFE data. That's what your answers to me in the parliament implied - enrolment, completion rate, et cetera.

I want to follow that up with you, because you're saying it's based on data. Can you confirm for a start whether it was Skills Tasmania or TasTAFE that made the decision to withdraw funding from the current lab tech courses?

Mr ELLIS - I think in your question, Ms Webb, you mentioned high enrolment numbers.

Ms WEBB - Yes, I'm coming to those.

Mr ELLIS - One of these courses had six enrolments over the calendar year. There's also low completions in some of those numbers. I'll pass to TAFE to talk more broadly, but how it works overall, the skills plan sets out the key agenda when it comes to priority areas of training and strategic areas that will work together, the three key pillars: skills for jobs, supporting learners to succeed, and a stronger, more connected system. From there we work through how we make those priorities work. There are a range of key parts of the test that you consider for whether TAFE would continue those courses.

Firstly, is it a course - or is it an area of skills needed - that's best served by vocational training? Second is, in that event, is it best provided by TAFE? And of course, does it align with the key industry priorities, things like building more homes, caring for our community, sovereign manufacturing capability, renewable energy, and food security? Then TasTAFE will work through a process to identify courses that are not necessarily well aligned with that test and that structure. That's where the 12 have come from. I'll pass to the team at TAFE to talk through around that.

Ms WEBB - I'd like to zero in on the questions that I've asked. For a start, I asked the question about whether it was Skills Tasmania or TasTAFE that made the decision to withdraw the funding from the current lab tech courses.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and that's what we're answering, Ms Webb. I've talked through the -

Ms WEBB - The decision. Where did the decision sit?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm talking through, Ms Webb, about how we make the decisions in that process.

Ms WEBB - Yes. Go on.

Mr ELLIS - So there's obviously the skills plan, which is a document from government.

Ms WEBB - I understand what you've described feeding into the decision. Who made the decision? Where did the decision sit?

CHAIR - Please let the minister finish the answer.

Ms WEBB - I don't want him to repeat the things he's just said.

CHAIR - No, but finish the answer.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, you've asked me a question. I'm happy to help. We're working through. I'm explaining how the process works. I'll pass to TasTAFE to then talk about the operational side of it.

Mr GARDNER - Specifically, Ms Webb, the process was that we assess and review all our products. This is a process that we are undertaking, have been undertaking, for an extensive period to ensure that we deliver the best value for the funding that we receive. That's at the core of what we do. Actually, what's at the core of what we do is the learner at the centre. We have to work through every product we've got and ensure that ultimately TasTAFE is contemporary and relevant, and we continue to be relevant, and we make sure we make the very best use of public money.

We went through all our products and we prioritised all our products, and we made a recommendation to Skills Tas about the products that we recommended in the scheme of all our products, because it's relative. Certain products we recommended for discontinuing those at subsidies so that we could seek to reapply those subsidies into courses that were more aligned, higher job outcomes, and that were dependent on TAFE to deliver and that required

the accredited training. We made the recommendation to Skills Tas, and ultimately Skills Tas advised us that they supported our recommendation, and we have subsequently proceeded.

Ms WEBB - Even though it's still on Skills Tasmania's priority funding list, the lab tech course, Cert IV?

Mr ELLIS - I think we mentioned before, Ms Webb, the question is again part of that test. It certainly meets the question of, 'Is vocational education the right place to get those qualifications?' The second question is, 'Should it be TAFE?' We mentioned before that pillar 3 of the skills plan is a stronger, more connected system. That's about making sure that we're not duplicating effort.

There is a whole range of areas and industries that are a priority for government that are not necessarily delivered by TAFE. If you look at agriculture, for example, basically all training is provided outside of TAFE, and we work closely with those private providers.

I mentioned before that the majority of learners are supported to do their lab tech qualifications by organisations other than TAFE. It's important that, in joining up the system, making sure that we're not duplicating effort. TAFE can't be all things to all people. Where we have excellent specialised training providers that train a higher number of students, potentially have better outcomes as well, then of course it makes sense to be supporting those organisations and have TAFE reprioritise its work in areas that really TAFE is the key driver. I don't know if there's anything further that you wanted to add.

Ms WEBB - I would like to ask more about that, for sure, but I want to clarify for a start, though, the numbers in the courses and your assertion in your answers to me and parliament that it was based on low enrolments and low completions when, in fact, we have to confirm straight off the bat that there's a cap on who can do these courses because only 18 fit in the site in the laboratory. For a start, 18 is the maximum number, and consistently for years, student enrolments have been close to that maximum number.

People coming out of those courses are going into employment at a high percentage, something like close to 80 per cent typically in recent years. Your assertions about low enrolment numbers and low completion numbers and employment numbers seems to be incorrect when the data that's provided by the people who run that course -

CHAIR - Your question is.

Ms WEBB - My question is, can you explain the discrepancy between your numbers that you provided to me and the numbers that've been provided, I believe, also to your office from those who actually do the courses?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll pass to TAFE to provide the exact numbers, but it's important to note that there are two courses as it relates to -

Ms WEBB - Yes. I've got the numbers for both.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As you would've seen for one of those courses, it's about a handful of completions. When we talk about low numbers, that's important to note. In TAFE, we've

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spoken about the low completions, less than one in two in some cases. Some of the courses on the list of 12 have projected completion rates of about 25 per cent. That's clearly unsustainable.

Ms WEBB - Fifteen of 20 this year completed the Cert IV. Five of eight completed the diploma. Seventy-five per cent, 63 per cent respectively.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, Ms Webb, five is low numbers. I'm happy to pass to TAFE to add further about the information that's available.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, minister. As required, I will add anything. We're very confident in our data. I can't comment on the data that you've received. We're very confident in the datasets that we've got. We would not be exiting product that we felt is aligned with the best place for the public money that comes into TasTAFE.

Fundamentally, we're looking to spend the money in the best place possible. We're looking for the greatest outcomes for Tasmanians through our organisation in terms of completions and ultimately jobs. We are very confident in the data that we have that we've used to get to the place that we have around this. One of the key things in this is that we're not the only provider of this service in the state. We're not the only provider of this service, and therefore -

Ms WEBB - You are the only provider in the state.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, and I accept that correction. We're not the only provider of this product.

Ms WEBB - I'd like to ask about that.

Mr GARDNER - Therefore, in the order of priority of all the product we deliver, considering that we cannot continue to deliver everything to everyone, we reached the decision that based on very sound data that these were lower priority.

Ms WEBB - From a student perspective -

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, you've asked about the numbers. I'll pass to Tim for the actual data as well.

Ms WEBB - Perhaps you could table data that you think is accurate if it's different from what you provided in the Chamber when I asked questions in parliament. It doesn't appear that that data lines up with the people who run the course.

Mr ELLIS - This is the data that's been provided by TAFE. This is the official data.

Ms WEBB - If they didn't consult with those teachers of those courses, it's probably not surprising there's a discrepancy in understanding of who actually was in the -

CHAIR - If you could just ask the question and stop with the commentary?

Ms WEBB - Can I go onto the other courses?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to Ms Paterson to talk about completion rates more broadly from a skills perspective.

Ms PATERSON - Thank you, minister. Through you. In terms of the subsidies that have been applied, the minister referred to the Tasmania Skills Plan. At the heart of that plan is a policy to put students first. In assessing TAFE's proposal for ceasing to deliver these courses at the heart of our decision was, 'Are learners going to be well served across the market with other subsidies that the government provides?' We determined that they would be.

We certainly don't dispute that there is some demand there for lab tech. It's an important pathway into meaningful employment. We wanted to ensure that that training continued to be available, and we're confident that it does continue to be available with government subsidies through a number of alternative providers. Those providers have typically higher completion rates than TAFE. If you look at the private market generally, typically the completion rate is 64.9 per cent. For TAFE, it's 52.1.

Ms WEBB - Over how many years are you talking about for that?

Ms PATERSON - This is for 2019, which is the latest NCVER data that we have.

Ms WEBB - Right. Some time back.

Ms PATERSON - There's good reasons for that, obviously. TAFE delivers to a lot of people with -

Ms WEBB - Is that one year's worth of data?

Ms PATERSON - This is data that is produced annually by NCVER.

Ms WEBB - That is, you quoted me one year's data from 2019.

Ms PATERSON - I've quoted you the data from activity in Tasmania in 2019, yes. There is a lag in the NCVER data.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. On the alternative courses, I would like to ask about those, because rather than being a pathway to employment, they actually require employment before you can complete them. This is from private RTOs based on the mainland offering this training to people already employed by them. It's not a pathway. It's certainly not a pathway for school leavers, because a Tasmanian school leaver right now finishing as we speak in year 12 cannot get lab tech training without securing employment first. Of course, that's a vicious circle because they need the training or need experience in order to secure that employment to be trained for the job.

Do you accept, minister, that the TasTAFE option is the only option for school leavers as a pathway to employment into this industry which actually can cross across so many sectors and have a very transferrable skill? Do you accept that, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to talk through that. In general, vocational education and training is often closely associated with on-the-job learning. I'll pass to Tim to speak about that kind of

training and apprenticeship relationship and why that's important as far as the success of learners.

In terms of the providers, the government already funds three private training providers through the Apprenticeship and Trainee Training Fund, as I mentioned before, that close link with -

Ms WEBB - You need a job. You need to be employed.

Mr ELLIS - And you need a job to become a plumbing apprentice and all that sort of stuff.

Ms WEBB - Sorry.

Mr ELLIS - You know, that's the -

Ms WEBB - You can't get the jobs without the training.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, clearly people are - more people are completing through this pathway to deliver the Cert IV in Lab Techniques in 2025. These private RTOs are the Melbourne Institute Pty Ltd, Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd and Alan Bartlett Consulting.

As I mentioned before, 2024, the majority of Tasmanian government-funded enrolments in the Cert IV were actually in private RTOs. Training is delivered through a combination of in-workplace training. That's an important element to note here because there's a lot more flexibility in some of these private training providers and specialised training providers.

The assessment, there's online delivery and, where required, interstate block training that the learner is subsidised to attend. This is a common approach for qualifications where there's limited demand. There's also a number of other private training providers endorsed by Skills Tasmania with laboratory techniques, courses on scope where there's an option to seek funding for delivery to Tasmanian learners. I'll pass to Ms Paterson to talk more about the nature of that, I suppose, on-the-job piece as well for apprentices and trainees.

Ms PATERSON - We certainly support apprenticeships fairly strongly through the skills portfolio. It's a very good pathway to earn while you learn. We find it's often preferred by learners to have that employment arrangement in place. Not only do they get paid whilst they're learning, but they also get an additional level of wraparound support from their employer whilst they're undertaking the training.

Ms WEBB - Let me just jump in there because we've already established that before the decision was made to cut the subsidies to these courses and kill the courses, the industry stakeholders across the range of industries that use lab tech graduates from our TasTAFE course were not consulted about it. How do we know, and to what extent do we understand, that there will be apprenticeships available like this across those different industries that use lab techs?

Mr ELLIS - I mean, we've spoken about how, through the Apprentice and Trainee Training Fund. So it's in the name. That's where we deliver the -

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Ms WEBB - Sure, but will the industries take them?

CHAIR - Let the minister finish.

Mr ELLIS - We've already mentioned that, typically speaking, they have a higher outcome rate, but I'll pass to Ms Paterson to add further.

Ms PATERSON - I'll just note, through you, minister, that the JobSeeker program also funds lab tech as a non-apprenticeship pathway.

Ms WEBB - Sure. So in terms of a large cohort of lab techs end up working for DECYP in schools.

Ms PATERSON - Yes.

Ms WEBB - So will DECYP be paying private RTOs, and will they be hiring people untrained into lab tech roles and then putting them through private training through a mainland RTO henceforth?

Mr ELLIS - I won't speak for individual employers and obviously -

Ms WEBB - Well, this is the government, minister. Surely you've considered it.

Mr ELLIS - I'm not going to speak for individual employees, and the minister for education and training - sorry, education and children and young people I'm sure will be happy to provide evidence further. I suppose, more broadly, though, Ms Paterson's outline, there's the Apprenticeship and Training Trainee Fund, the JobSeeker fund, and we're certainly finding that the apprenticeship and traineeship model was very successful in VET, and it works well, but yes. I don't know if there's anything to add.

Ms WEBB - You've got no evidence to say it's going to work well in this space because you haven't consulted with the industries that are relevant to this space.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, we're already doing this. We know that it works well because it currently operates.

Ms WEBB - But you haven't consulted with these industries for this course.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, we're working through the consultation process.

Ms WEBB - It's highly disturbing that you haven't even gone out to check the people that end up employing people who are graduates of this course, will they actually fit into the other model that you're suggesting works so well.

Mr ELLIS - Well, Ms Webb, Ms Paterson mentioned to you just before, and you clearly haven't listened to the answer, that there's the apprenticeship and traineeship pathway, and there's the JobSeeker pathway. Both pathways exist under this model.

Ms WEBB - Which of them have you consulted on in terms of the industry?

Mr ELLIS - I don't understand your question.

CHAIR - Ms Webb, the minister has answered the question. Perhaps we'll go to another and come back to you.

Ms WEBB - Fine, sure.

CHAIR - Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. I'm not quite sure about my percentage, but this is what I've been - the recent decision to cut subsidies from 12 mainly arts and design courses will no doubt have a chilling effect on the current 450 enrolments and another 50 in the lab tech courses. An average completion rate of 42 per cent across 12 effective courses was cited as reason for the cuts.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, Mr Gaffney. Did you say 12 per cent?

Mr GAFFNEY - Forty-two per cent across 12 effective courses.

Mr ELLIS - Forty-two. Yes. I was going to say I don't think that number sounds right.

Mr GAFFNEY - My question, and you might be able to tell us, what are the completion rates across the current in-demand courses covered by fee-free TAFE funding schemes? That might be something you can table.

Mr ELLIS - When you say in-demand courses, are we talking the list of 12? Are we talking about all courses?

Mr GAFFNEY - No, no, hang on. If the 12 courses that have been, effectively, given the boot, that means the in-demand courses that are fee-free are the ones that are still remaining. What are the current completion rates of those that are still being offered?

Ms WEBB - Ones you're still supporting.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. You cited that 42 per cent was the reason why the arts design courses and the lab techs was not offered. I want to know what are the current completion rates across the in-demand courses still remaining at TAFE for the fee-free TAFE funding scheme?

Ms WEBB - There's a large number of courses that TAFE does and will continue to do. We'd probably have to take on notice about the completion rates.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. If you can take that on notice and table those.

Mr ELLIS - I'm not sure - there's maybe some information that the TAFE team can provide at this stage, but it would be a long list.

Mr GARDNER - Yes, only to note I support the minister's comment, Mr Gaffney, that we'd have to provide that data to you and absolutely, but also to note that the decision is not purely around completions. Completion is a data point, but there is a - in the review of every

product, there is a broader suite of factors that are considered as to whether we continue - whether they are continued to be delivered by TasTAFE.

That is certainly one of the data points, but in the broad, the critical piece for us, our job is to put people into work and into work that is aligned with the core requirements of the state economy. That's what we're chartered to do. We focus on the products that are aligned with the state skills plan and products that need to be accredited and products that should be delivered through TasTAFE. But very happy to your request to provide data on completions for fee-free TAFE courses.

Mr GAFFNEY - We understand that arts and design courses are something that - the skills that people need for, perhaps, in future years down the track when they're looking at that, and so now they can't get that through fee-free TAFE funding. The ones that we're looking at immediately are the builders and the labourers where you can say, 'Yes, we've got 40 people working'. Some of these arts and design courses, they need those skills, and that's so later on in life, they can come back and utilise those skills. In effect, what we're doing is, perhaps, not putting enough onus on the arts and those sorts of things because we're not offering those any more through our TasTAFE - or as many through our TasTAFE curriculum.

Mr GARDNER - Sure. And, if I may, minister, I appreciate that. I think what's very important for us is that we see massive demand for roles in other areas where we have to prioritise. We look at areas like community and care, allied health, where we're seeking to apply more resource and more focus because of the demands in those sectors in an ageing workforce - an ageing population. So we need to be able to bolster our efforts to support those areas.

We're looking at areas where there is a near-term need to bolster capability into renewable energy in the energy transition that's going on. We have to work with a limited resource and put those into the areas of highest priority, and that's where we focus our attention. Our focus is to take people through training and to make them job-ready and put them into a role, support them into jobs.

Mr ELLIS - It's probably worth mentioning as well, Mr Gaffney, about the different reasons why some of those decisions get made. From a TAFE perspective, unsustainably low numbers or unsustainably low completions, but, again, that skills plan, which has been mentioned, some of that is about looking at whether vocational education is actually the right skills pathway to go down. Certainly, the work that's been done by the relevant Jobs and Skills Council at a federal level has identified and highlighted that the industry itself is very much looking more at different kinds of skills pathways rather than, say, traditional Cert III, Cert IV.

On one side, it might be skill sets and it might be short courses, non-accredited training, those kinds of skills to upskill and immediately get into the role. Then on the other side, it's higher education again. So many of the courses are - or I suppose, many of the areas are often better served by university or short courses.

That's what's been identified, certainly by the relevant Jobs and Skills Council at a federal level. The federal government also has a similar focus in terms of the priority areas for vocational education and training uplift, as I mentioned before, about construction, care, renewable energy, food security, and sovereign capability.

It's important that we support the arts, but we do so in a way that supports the specialised institutions that do this well, and many of whom continue to operate in Tasmania, but also work with the creative industries on what they have identified, that standard vocational training is not necessarily meeting the needs of their learners and industry. I'll pass to Ms Paterson to talk more about, I suppose, that element of the skills plan outcomes for learners.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. I guess in terms of the outcomes - sorry, minister, which aspect did you -

Mr ELLIS - In terms of, sometimes it's not necessarily the standard VET training that -

Ms PATERSON - Oh yes, thank you. Yes, so certainly there's a range of qualifications that people can gain to enter roles, and not all of those are VET qualifications. VET is really well placed to deliver qualifications, in particular where there's a licencing requirement, there's a really obvious and direct connection to the VET system. The extent to which that's the case where there's not a licencing requirement varies as to the sector.

Particularly for the arts sector, which is one that is being disrupted quite significantly by technology, the VET system tends to be a bit slow to keep up in terms of the national training packages and the way those qualifications are delivered. The sector is finding that it is lagging a bit in its ability to keep up with the skills that are required for a contemporary arts occupation. So in that sense, often a non-VET pathway or a non-accredited pathway can be a more agile and fit-for-purpose response for a sector.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you very much. That's a good.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. A financial question on page 96 of Budget paper 2, volume 2. It mentions the cash and deposits reducing significantly from \$30 million to \$0.5 million. It's explained in the variations as 'primarily reflects timings of asset purchases and planned capital projects'. But I would have expected to see then a reflection of that in the non-financial assets in the subsequent years, but that also goes down by some \$30 million. Is that a level of depreciation, or can that be explained? I'll let you explain that first and then follow up on it.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Hiscutt. There is a range of different areas where TAFE is investing, but the key one there is the student management system. This is a foundational software investment that will really set TAFE up for the future. It's more than a \$20 million investment. We're working through that process at the moment. It's going to really transform the way that learners engage with TAFE, that teachers engage with learners, and make sure that TAFE is delivering a much more contemporary experience for the range of different learners that go through a range of different courses. It's a big investment for TAFE, and it's something that we're working through.

But really, in terms of modernising TAFE, there's the physical assets and equipment that we use, and that's key. The north-west Centre of Excellence for renewable energy that's being established at the Burnie campus, and the Freer Farm Agricultural Centre of Excellence as well. But it's also then the digital technology that helps our learners to be connected to the latest forms of teaching and the newest information. I'll pass to the team at TAFE to add further.

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Mr HISCUTT - Pretty well answered, to be honest.

Mr McSHANE - It was actually - I'm quite impressed, minister.

Mr ELLIS - I've been paying attention.

Mr McSHANE - I think I've done well teaching. Yes, certainly a lot of the grant money that we've got is being allocated towards that intangible asset. So you'll see in the intangibles that it will increase from 2026-27 as that software goes live. But there is also a component of our cash for items that will be expensed through the P and L relating to our virtual campus project, which are more likely to end up with expenditures as opposed to asset capitalisation.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you for that. I understood his more than I understood yours, but that's okay.

Mr ELLIS - Will's an accountant, so don't hold it against him.

Mr HISCUTT - The answer clearly shows how the TAFE's cash and deposits are at a significantly depleted level at the forward Estimates. What's the plan for the future? Or how was that built up? Was that just through grants, or how was it built up, and then what happens after 2029?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I mean, built up in anticipation of making big investments like the student management system. That's really a significant kind of generational investment for TAFE to build that and have that as the real cornerstone. So you see the buildup of cash in advance of a major purchase, and then of course, the cash is then drawn down as you build it. I'm not sure if there's anything further the team from TAFE want to add.

Mr GARDNER - No, I think that answers it, minister, other than to say that we continue to work with the state around opportunities for further capital investment, and our job is to manage with the resources we've got.

Mr HISCUTT - I note that the interest we received this year is greater than the total we will have in the final year, something to obviously look out for. Perhaps a slightly more motherhood conversation about advanced manufacturing is a key aspect in Tasmania's future, which I will always continue to champion.

What is TAFE doing? Being from that industry, I know there's a severe shortage of trainees and apprentices in that region: sheet metal, boilermakers, fitters and turners. What strategies are TAFE using to get people - and not necessarily those - there's a lot of focus, I find, on people who are not suited to university or grade 11 and 12, and that seems to be the target. I feel like that's a concern, that we're not also targeting those who might be our best and brightest coming to those trades as well, because they can become future leaders in this space as well.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. Mr Hiscutt, your experience just goes to show you don't need to go to university to have great opportunities in life.

Mr HISCUTT - I did go to university, just in a completely different field, but that's fine.

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Mr ELLIS - Did you? Okay. Mate, you've got it all covered. Well, certainly, and some of the people that you work with.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, absolutely. Sorry. Your point is made, I think.

Mr ELLIS - It really is a strength, particularly for the north-west coast. There are some important investments that TAFE made in terms of a range of equipment that's been really important. Across the state there's been a major investment even into newer technologies as it relates to some of those traditional industries.

The immersive skills hub that we just recently opened with the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone Partnership at the Launceston Alanvale campus has been a really exciting investment. It enables learners to do, as you know, high-risk work in a way that's safe for them to learn the practices and procedures. Similarly, with things like our welding simulators at the Alanvale campus where learners are able to learn in a way that's not as costly in terms of materials too, which, when we're talking about manufacturers, are a really key input and a key barrier to the provision of some of these learning products.

I'll pass to the team at TAFE to talk through some of the investments and the focus that we've got on advanced manufacturing. I'll pass to Ms Paterson to talk about the broader picture as well on advanced manufacturing trades.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, minister. So further to your comments around the investments we've been making, to the extent that our resources allow, we continue to seek to modernise our equipment across the organisation, and clearly, advanced manufacturing is a really important point - manufacturing generally, and the trades that sit around that.

The minister made reference to welding simulators. We've invested in 12 new portable welding simulators. That allows us to use - we're using virtual reality and augmented reality rather than having to be put straight onto welding equipment. In fact, we're the first organisation in Australia to receive and use these simulators and use them for courses. We've invested in new milling machines in Devonport and Alanvale campuses; new plasma cutters in Alanvale, Burnie and Devonport campuses; and new CNC machines for civil construction at the Alanvale campus. One of the important pieces of investment in electrical technology was a significant investment in low-voltage electrical training equipment to significantly reduce the risks to our learners in using that equipment.

There's all those things, and we continue to look to every opportunity to modernise what we've got. Obviously, we have the clean energy centre which we based in Burnie coming onstream, which we've received a combination of state and federal funding for. That will allow us to continue to build on the capabilities that are needed. I think it's fair to say that the mix of trades that are required in these sectors, there's a lot of crossover. We invest more in the clean energy area, and then we get a spillover into the other industries within the region.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you.

Ms PATERSON - I'm happy to add, through you, minister. There's also the advanced manufacturing industry compact, which is a commitment between Skills, the government and the sector, in particular TMEC and other stakeholders. That was signed off last year or the year

before, and that looks at all of the workforce challenges that the manufacturing sector are currently experiencing across the state and seeks to find a pathway to address those.

In addition to that, we also have an industry partnership program, which is a contestable program that's available for industry partners to come forward for investments, in particular in upgrades to equipment, to support them advancing their businesses in that way.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. A quick comment, if I could.

CHAIR - No, that's fine.

Mr HISCUTT - One thing that we found in particular was the fact that work experience kids from years 9 and 10 coming along through their school's insurance weren't able to put hands on tools. They'd come to an industry focus. All they'd be allowed to do is brush the brooms, and then they go, 'Well, this is rubbish. I don't want to do that for the rest of my life.' I that say as a comment to make a representation to the Education department why cards and hand tool training for kids would be a great incentive. At least when they get to sites, they can do stuff, and then they might get interested in it and come to it. I'll leave that as a comment.

CHAIR - Maybe Education minister tomorrow.

Mr HISCUTT - Perhaps, yes.

CHAIR - If I could ask with regard to enrolment figures for 2025 across TAFE and also staffing levels. With the staffing levels, have you had any difficulty obtaining fully trained staff? Do you have any vacancies? If I could have, first of all, the number of enrolments for 2025 and then staffing, if possible. If you haven't got the figures, I'm happy to take it on notice.

Mr ELLIS - No, that's fine. We've got it here, from what I understand. Obviously, TasTAFE's strategic goal is to increase the organisation's ability to be more responsive to the needs and expectations of Tasmanian learners and industries. Underpinning that strategic plan is the TasTAFE learner-centric approach. In 2024, enrolment activity did show a slight overall decline in enrolments in comparison to 2023. That's largely due to a decline in the number of apprentice and trainee commencements in 2024. We expect that trend to continue into 2025, particularly noting that we had a very large increase over the course of the stimulus measures during COVID.

CHAIR - It's stabilising now?

Mr ELLIS - That's right. We're stabilising at a higher level, which is good. One thing that as Tasmania and I know other states continue to advocate to the Commonwealth is around training incentives, particularly for apprentices. There's a very strong correlation and, frankly, causation with when Job Trainer came online. Huge increase in the number of people going through vocational education and training. That subsidy was then taken away by the current federal government, and we've seen a decrease since then. We think that there are some opportunities for them to bring that back, and it makes good economic sense.

The other piece that's more work that we're doing with partner agencies, particularly in DECYP, is about increasing the number of young people going through Tasmanian schools getting a vocational education there. Our goal is to get it to 50 per cent, because that reflects

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actually the needs in our economy. The more learners that we can have on that pathway through school often will mean that we'll see higher uptake in the long run. I don't know if the team at TAFE has anything further they want to add in terms of the data.

CHAIR - If you have a figure, it would be good.

Mr McSHANE - Yes. In our annual report, which was released a short time ago, we had 25,182 enrolments for the financial year just gone.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do you have any indication that people start to enrol early that you would have an indication obviously for next year? Do they enrol this early?

Mr McSHANE - They do, yes.

CHAIR - I would've thought so. Do you have any indication of the figures for next year, whether they're likely to be similar?

Mr McSHANE - Not at hand at the moment. We are through that process. Enrolments are open, so I don't have figures right now.

CHAIR - They're still ongoing at the moment, the enrolments.

Mr McSHANE - Yes.

CHAIR - How are we going with staffing? Is there difficulty? I know in some of the year 12 categories at school, it's hard finding fully trained science and maths teachers. I'm assuming that at TAFE it's similar to find fully trained staff for the variety of different courses you have. Any difficulty finding appropriate staff? Do you have any vacancies at the moment that you're really having trouble filling?

Mr McSHANE - We find it is dependent on the industry, dependent on the course. We do look at those areas where it is often very, very hard to find teachers, particularly if the end-qualified people on those areas are in such high demand themselves. Particularly in the building trades, electricians, plumbers are typically hard to find because they are deep into the industry. It really is dependent on where we are. An example could be heavy machinery, which is such a specialised area, where it's very, very difficult to find a teacher who has qualification and currency.

CHAIR - How are you going at the moment, then? Which areas are you having trouble finding, or do you have a full complement?

Mr McSHANE - I would say at the moment we have a full complement. We've always got an eye on the future. Typically speaking, the age of our workforce will be a little bit elevated because of those that've come through industry and then join us probably at the latter stages of their career. We're always on the lookout, but it is, of course, a treadmill. It's difficult.

CHAIR - Do you have any vacancies at the moment that you haven't been able to fill which makes courses much more difficult? Have you got a shortage of teachers in any particular area that it's getting hard to actually find someone to take a class?

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Mr McSHANE - I probably wouldn't point to a particular area.

CHAIR - So nothing that's standing out?

Mr McSHANE - Nothing that stands out right now, but there are always challenges that we face, and I think we're always going to find those challenges.

CHAIR - My last question, for the minister, when you retire, plumbing is obviously looking for trades. You'll be fine.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. It'd be a life change to be TasTAFE teacher.

CHAIR - You will be fine. I'm sure the minister is very well trained.

Mr ELLIS - My dad's probably the one who could teach at TAFE, probably not me.

CHAIR - The last question that I have in this area: Immersive Skills Lab, the virtual reality. How does that go staff-wise, teaching-wise? Does that require less teaching? How many people would you need in that area to take on that area? I appreciate that we had a look at it and put the glasses on, and it seems to be a great area to certainly make things safer. How does it go staff-wise, numbers-wise?

Mr McSHANE - Specifically, the Immersive Skills Lab is operated by the BBAMZ.

CHAIR - You're not involved?

Mr McSHANE - It's on our campus. We have a partnership of sorts where we're able to use the lab for certain days, but it's more to complement what we do as opposed to us staffing that lab itself.

CHAIR - You're allowing them use of it, and they allow you use of it as well?

Mr McSHANE - Yes.

CHAIR - It's a joint process.

Mr McSHANE - It's a partnership.

Mr ELLIS - That's probably actually a good point leading back to your previous question as well. The more we can engage with industry on some of these opportunities to utilise some of their best people to teach in our facilities, that's actually future best practice. If we can continue to work with industry in a range of different ways to unlock the training potential of people who are working on the tools in industry, then that's going to be the best outcome for TAFE, industry and more importantly the learner. They get someone who has current industry experience as well as clearly a deep interest in training.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - I'd like to go back to pick up where I left off earlier around the lab techs, because I want to be very clear about some data here because of assertions made about low

enrolment numbers and low course completion rates. The low enrolment numbers, this course has a cap of, effectively, 18 places because of laboratory size.

Mr ELLIS - I mentioned before, Ms Webb, there are two courses -

Ms WEBB - Yes. That's right.

Mr ELLIS - so it's important to talk about there are two courses. The two are quite different.

Ms WEBB - One hundred per cent. The Cert IV has had very close to the 18 maximum enrolled consistently over many years. You quoted 2024 completion rates, which was unusually low as an outlying stat. It was 40 per cent, but that same year, the diploma completion rate was 71 per cent.

This year, the completion rate, for example, is expected to be 75 per cent for the certificate, 63 per cent for the diploma. If you compile the data from 2021 to 2025, 2024 is clearly an outlier. If you average the completion rate across the five years, you would have 65 per cent completion rate for the Certificate IV and a 72 per cent completion rate for the diploma. Are those numbers that you would dispute, minister, and do you describe those numbers, 65 per cent and 72 per cent, as low?

Mr ELLIS - I mentioned before, Ms Webb, there are two courses, and we've spoken about how low numbers or low completions are some of the operational considerations that TAFE is making.

Ms WEBB - I've just put those numbers to you.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, but the area that's high completion is unsustainably low numbers overall. As you mentioned before yourself, a handful of learners. I'll pass to the team at TAFE if they -

Ms WEBB - Are you saying that 18 - the fact that it's capped at 18 because of laboratory or -

Mr ELLIS - No, Ms Webb. Ms Webb, we're talking about two different courses. One of those courses, as you mentioned, has completion numbers of around five. We are talking about unsustainably low numbers for that course. I'll pass to the team at TAFE so they can talk through -

Ms WEBB - What about the Cert IV course?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, I'll pass to the team at TAFE to talk through those numbers.

Ms WEBB - Yes, great.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, minister, and thanks, Ms Webb. All I can come back to is a comment I made earlier that we're very confident in the data that we've used to make this decision. We've considered a number of factors to get to this point, and I can't comment on data provided otherwise.

Ms WEBB - Well, it's been sent through to the minister.

Mr GARDNER - I understand. From a TasTAFE perspective, we're very confident in the data that we used, and when we look across our full product suite, that we've made a decision that is the right decision for TasTAFE and for our broader learner cohort so that we can continue to reinvest and invest where it is most required in our organisation to deliver the best outcomes for our learners and for Tasmania.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I think that probably points to is completely underfunding of TasTAFE full stop by this government. That means these decisions have to be made.

Mr ELLIS - Well, I mean, there's been an additional \$118 million invested in TasTAFE, Ms Webb. There's an important need to be accurate and not misleading in this committee.

CHAIR - Do you have any further questions on TAFE?

Ms WEBB - Not on this.

CHAIR - On TAFE itself?

Ms WEBB - No. I don't believe so.

CHAIR - I might go to Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Your annual report showed you had more than 2000 learners with a disability enrolled, and more than 2000 from a non-English speaking background. I'm interested to talk about what services and provisions you provide for both of those cohorts.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Mr Edmunds, and it's really important. The skills plan does mention pillar 2, 'Supporting learners to succeed', and that's people coming from a whole range of different backgrounds and different life experiences.

It's interesting when you look at a TasTAFE graduation, the representation from people right across the globe. It's really an empowering and enabling place to come and learn, and that's important. Our major investments in our taypani Learning Centres, which are all about making sure that learners have the resources that they need, the support for their study, and technology potentially that they may not even necessarily have at home, is really important where - broadly as a government, we recognise the need to support higher participation in the economy.

That often comes through doing vocational education, and so we see supporting our learners at TAFE and in other vocational education institutions as a key part of that. I'll pass to the team at TAFE to talk about some of the specific programs that we've got available.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, minister, and I will refer on to the CEO in relation to specific areas of investment around foundational skills, support services that we provide, the adult migrant English program, but suffice to say that we're incredibly proud of the diversity of our learners and the opportunities that we provide to transform their lives.

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Mr McSHANE - Look, I'm only adding to what's already been talked about in that we do invest fairly heavily in the foundational skills to ensure people have access and are able to get to where they need to get to, but we certainly have as part of our organisation disability liaison officers.

Of course, we've got other programs that we've done recently in conjunction with the migrant community, including the Diverse Leadership Program that are bringing some of our migrant community through to learn skills that they ordinarily wouldn't have had access to. We do have a fair investment in that and to support them.

Mr EDMUNDS - Are those services fully subscribed from a staffing perspective?

Mr McSHANE - The adult education - sorry. I better get it right - the migrant program, it's fairly well subscribed.

Mr EDMUNDS - So it's more just regular turnover rather than -

Mr McSHANE - It is, yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, great. Also with the Diversity Leadership Program, et cetera.

Mr McSHANE - Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, great.

Mr McSHANE - It's probably also worth mentioning that people living with disability are also a key cohort when it comes to fee-free TAFE. So there's the support for the learners when they're at TAFE, but support also for learners to get to TAFE and be able to take up some of those opportunities.

Mr EDMUNDS - Do you track requests for assistance or expressions of interest in those programs, or is it expected that anyone who puts their hand up, so to speak, will find a way into one of those programs?

Mr McSHANE - Probably have to take that question on notice, but I believe that the supports are available, whether it is on enrolment or whether it is through identification once they arrive. I'd have to take them on notice.

Mr EDMUNDS - No sweat. Another one that's a bit topical at the moment, and I think probably need to ask, with the issues with the kinetic sand at schools, obviously, you've got a childcare touchpoint for TasTAFE. Are there any facilities that you're concerned about with either your staff or people who are enrolled through TasTAFE?

Mr McSHANE - Of course it is topical, given people are looking at this, and the schools have come out with their views on it. We've looked back through our organisation, and we don't have any exposure to those products that have been recalled.

Mr EDMUNDS - What about any students or participants who - placements, sorry, yes. Anything being reported back from places where they're placed around exposure to this product?

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Mr McSHANE - We're not aware of any as yet. It's not to say that it hasn't happened. We're not aware of it.

Mr EDMUNDS - If there was, say, a flag went up at centre X, would that communication go directly to the participants in the program, or would it come back through TasTAFE?

Mr McSHANE - I would probably have to take that question on notice, Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. I asked about the recently opened community Health Hub at Alanvale which requires both operational resources and staffing. Could you give a bit of an overview about that and how we're looking for the operational resources and the staffing.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. This has been a really exciting investment, \$7.5 million expansion for the Alanvale Health Hub which has built on election commitments. There's two elements to it. There's the Health Hub expansion, and then there's also the taypani Learner Centre which I mentioned before. The Health Hub itself, or the expansion of, is providing great new capability for some of the additional health service areas.

CHAIR - Such as - if you could expand.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure. For example, mental health, drug and alcohol support and youth work. Through the expansion, we'll be able to offer a Cert IV in peer support mental health, which is really encouraging. We know that people with lived experience often have an amazing capacity to make an impact in some of the areas that they've been through. Supporting that, we'll also be looking over the next year or so at additional courses for drug and alcohol as well because, again, it lines up with the skills plan areas that we really have high priority in our community. And because it is a new facility, there are consulting rooms that mirror much more closely what industry expect when people come into their facilities. So our learners get an experience that is more closely aligned to what they will see on the job.

The new facilities also enable us to have hybrid classroom approaches, whereby learners at the Alanvale Health Hub will be able to be connected directly with classes that maybe are operating in the south or the north-west, learners that might be in individual locations and then being able to be part of that class.

Then the taypani Learner Hub is, as I mentioned before, really about supporting our learners to succeed by wrapping the support services around them and really enabling them to have a supported journey through TAFE. I'll pass to the team at TAFE to talk through some of that further.

CHAIR - No, that's good. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Will, is there anything further you want to add.

Mr McSHANE - Probably more to the question, Chair, about it being ready to go. We are taking enrolments for next year, so we're in a position of starting in that new area.

CHAIR - How many staff would we have in that area?

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Mr McSHANE - I would need to confirm.

CHAIR - So you're still looking for staff, though? I noticed that it was saying 'requires resources and staffing,' whether you've actually got staff already there or whether you're still looking.

Mr McSHANE - We do have staff that have been there getting ready for the next year. But, as the minister alluded to, there are further programs that we'll build, so we expect that -

CHAIR - So you'll be building on it?

Mr McSHANE - Continuing to build upon it. Yes.

CHAIR - Through you, minister, does that include people like carers? I know there's a great need in the community now for carers. Do you do courses? Will that be in that area, or is that something you already have?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that's part of the Alanvale Health Hub that's built. It's a beautiful facility. If you're interested in a tour, Chair, we'd love to facilitate that.

CHAIR - Yes, that would be good.

Mr ELLIS - It is interesting, with TAFE, a lot of people think of TAFE as kind of blokes in hard hats and hi-vis and all that sort of stuff. But really, our care industry is our biggest task. And of course, with an ageing population, potential universal childcare for our country that's been flagged by the Prime Minister, as well as the importance of disability care through the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This is our key workforce challenge as a country and here in Tasmania. So the more we can invest in this space - and it's really a priority for us - the more that we'll have the workforce that will be able to care for people in the future.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I wanted to come back to correct something, make sure it's clear on the record here, as the minister was pulling me up before, speaking about enrolments and completion rates and being across two courses.

We know that the Cert IV course has had consistently close to maximum enrolment rates and very good completion rates - except for 2024, which was unusually low.

You were reminding me it's two courses; there's a diploma course as well, minister. But of course, that lost its subsidy back in 2016. So that course has been a very expensive course at commercial rates since 2016.

So that would be, I presume, part of the explanation for low enrolments in the diploma course across the intervening years to now. So surely, you're not using low enrolments in the diploma course as a reason to cut the subsidy to the Cert IV course, which has had consistently capacity enrolments - or close to - and good completion rates. Surely, you're not doing that.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, I'm happy to pass to TAFE if there's anything further to add. I know you've asked the same question a number of times. As we mentioned before, there are

three RTOs providing government-supported places. We mentioned those before. The majority of Tasmanian government-funded enrolments in Cert IV were actually in those private RTOs.

I mentioned before about the importance of making sure that TAFE is focused, that it's not duplicating effort, that it's not all things to all people, and that where there are specialist training providers that are doing a good job, that we're supporting them as part of a stronger and more connected system.

I'll look to the team at TAFE if there's anything further to add.

Ms WEBB - Just to clarify that record, because it's not the same question. Yes.

Mr GARDNER - I have nothing further to add, Ms Webb. As I'll restate, we have full confidence in the data that we've used in the decision that we've made.

Ms WEBB - It's not about the data. It's about using the rationale of low enrolments in the diploma to cut the subsidy to the Cert IV. The diploma has not had a subsidy since 2016 and so has been offered at a very expensive level, comparably. Surely, we're not making an argument about those low enrolments to affect the Cert IV decision.

Mr ELLIS - Again, Ms Webb, we're talking about two different courses.

Ms WEBB - Exactly right.

Mr ELLIS - And we look at each course on its merits.

Ms WEBB - Yes. That's why I was pointing to the Cert IV, which has not had low enrolments.

Mr ELLIS - Well, as you mentioned, the completion rate for the Cert IV -

Ms WEBB - Yes, is high.

Mr ELLIS - Well, 40 per cent.

Ms WEBB - No, that was one year, minister. That was an outlier. If you average it, it's above 65 per cent.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, as we mentioned before -

Ms WEBB - I just want you to be accurate, minister. It's important. These are courses that have been offered for decades. Teachers have been teaching them for a very long time in a committed fashion within TasTAFE, and I'm sure they're valued teachers, and industries across our state have been served well by the graduates. Many of those industries are yet to be clarified as actually being served by the other options you've talked about, because you haven't consulted with them.

CHAIR - You have made your point.

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Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, I think we've made it very clear that the majority of Tasmanian government-funded enrolments in the Cert IV are actually private RTOs. This isn't a future thing.

Ms WEBB - You haven't shown that they can fill this gap.

Mr ELLIS - This is a current thing.

Ms WEBB - You haven't shown -

Mr ELLIS - This is what they are currently doing.

Ms WEBB - You haven't shown -

CHAIR - Please let the minister answer, Ms Webb.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, the majority of Tasmanian government-funded enrolments in the Cert IV in lab tech are private RTOs.

Ms WEBB - It's a meaningless statistic.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass back to TasTAFE if there's anything further to add. But I don't think there's anything additional to add.

CHAIR - The minister's team has answered. You can continue questioning, but they have answered. I think it's a waste of time to continue on that line of questions when the answer's -

Ms WEBB - I think there's a lot of people who care about it, Chair, and who would like to have this discussed accurately on the public record. I'm happy to have done that, and that's fine.

CHAIR - I agree. You've made your point, but the answer's been given.

Ms WEBB - Yes, there's no explanation.

CHAIR - All right. Do we have any further questions?

Mr GAFFNEY - TasTAFE?

CHAIR - On TasTAFE.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, I do. I'm interested to know what the cost - the reason for - I think there's a new TasTAFE logo design. Is that correct?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly is.

Mr GAFFNEY - I'd like to know, one, the reason - what was the design cost of the new logo? What is the total anticipated rebranding cost to TasTAFE in rolling out the new logo across signage, buildings, stationery, business cards, vehicles, websites, et cetera? You might

not be able to do this all now. What is the cost-benefit analysis outcome for the rebrand in terms of the cents-per-dollar return?

Mr ELLIS - I'm very glad you asked this question, Mr Gaffney, because as the team at TasTAFE know, when it was put to me about the opportunity for a rebrand, I said we need to make sure that this is cost-efficient and that it meets purposes. I understand that there are good reasons for the rebrand. I'm delighted about the cost effectiveness, but I'll pass to the team at TAFE to talk through that.

Mr GARDNER - Mr Gaffney, the total cost of the rebrand exercise is \$1048 -

Mr ELLIS - Including GST.

Mr GARDNER - Sorry?

Mr ELLIS - Including GST.

Mr GARDNER - Including GST. We as a board and as an organisation are incredibly concerned about spending money on branding exercises. I put that on the record. The specific reason for making minor modifications to our logo and effectively refreshing our brand, one of those is particularly the opportunity to - what we had identified is that TasTAFE is not recognised as Tasmanian. So particularly in international markets and our opportunity to build international markets, we were not identified as Tasmanian. So we simply added 'Tasmania' underneath, so it's now 'TasTAFE Tasmania', and simplified the graphics around it. That was primarily driven to increase brand recognition in areas that we see opportunity to grow.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay.

Mr GARDNER - In terms of the ongoing cost, I appreciate the question and you're correct that we're not able to provide that specific information, but I will say we are very clear that we are just progressively refreshing as we go, over a number of years, as collateral wears out - tires. But also, in some places we want to actually put new signage in. We want to give that sense of refresh and renewal and some pride, where you can see that the facilities or that the branding on them is tired and it needs replacing. We do not, and are not, spending outside of our annual marketing budget to do that.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. So it's coming from within the Budget that's already there.

Mr GARDNER - Within our operating budget, and as we find bits and as we prioritise pieces, we're replacing them.

Mr GAFFNEY - That's good to have that on the record. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any further questions? Ms Webb, do you have any further questions with regard to TasTAFE?

Ms WEBB - No.

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CHAIR - If we could, minister - I'm not sure whether you need to bring anyone different to the table. We did have it down for 3.30, but Skills and Jobs, which is pretty much a similar area.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure.

CHAIR - If we could start that a little bit earlier.

Mr GARDNER - May I be excused?

CHAIR - You may be excused.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - And thank you so much to your team.

Mr GARDNER - Thank you, minister.

CHAIR - If you could stop the broadcast, please.

The Committee suspended from 3.12 p.m. to 3.15 p.m.

DIVISION 11

Department of State Growth

OUTPUT GROUP 3

Skills, Training and Workforce Growth

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Now we have Skills and Workforce Growth. If you would like to introduce your team at the table and maybe make a short overview as well.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. Much appreciated. I'll just double-check with my overview, because you are right. We didn't actually provide that in the previous one. I've introduced Ms Paterson. The only other introduction to make here is Mr Stuart Hollingsworth, who's the director of Jobs Tasmania.

For skills and jobs, our government makes the largest recurrent investment in economic development in Tasmania through the Skills and Training portfolio. This is about building the workforce we need today and preparing for the opportunities of tomorrow. The Tasmanian Skills Plan sets a clear direction and puts the learner at the centre of the VET system and guides our investment. The central theme is skills for jobs. We prioritise funding for training that leads to employment outcomes. It's focused on skills in shortage and those demanded by employers.

The plan also aligns with the National Skills Agreement, where governments have agreed to prioritise effort towards critical priorities. To deliver this, we've used tools like the Regional Employment Dashboard for data on employment growth areas and work closely with industry, drawing on industry skills compacts to target high-demand skills. Key sectors include the care sector, clean energy and traditional trades. TasTAFE as the public training provider, including maintaining a presence in regional areas. Our objective for TasTAFE holds to provide

responsive and innovative VET tailored to the needs of industry and business, with the learner at the centre.

We've committed a significant reform agenda, backed by \$118 million in additional investment plus growth in recurrent funding. In the 2025-26 deed, it provides \$105.84 million, an increase on previous years. We've grown funding to TasTAFE, and we want to maximise value for learners and employers and our economy through this investment.

I mentioned before some of the investments that've been made through TasTAFE supported to grow enrolments, respond to industry needs, and deliver initiatives like the Alanvale health hub, the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence and training for our visitor economy. All these investments will support TasTAFE to increase its capacity for enrolments and deliver more contemporary training.

To maximise the value in the future, we accept the need for change, and TasTAFE will need to adjust the course offerings and capacity from time to time to meet learner and employer needs. A responsive VET system is what keeps us relevant and ensures Tasmanians are supported to take up opportunities and have the skills they need to be job ready.

Beyond TasTAFE, the government supports over 100 registered training organisations through contestable grant programs, with training subsidies supporting jobseekers, existing workers, apprentices and areas of immediate training need. Examples include seafood and maritime training for seafood and maritime - or SMT training, I think they call themselves - response training for the meat industry, and work in training and avidity, bolstering training capacity for the care sector.

Tasmania is a smaller market, so we've always leveraged the benefits of the national VET system for specific lower demand skills, engaging interstate providers to come to Tasmania to train, as well as supporting apprentices to train wherever opportunity exists for them to get the specialist skills they need, has always offered a solution in thin markets.

If learners are to be at the centre, we need the Tasmanian VET system to remain agile and responsive. This means embracing change, leveraging strengths across the system, and delivering in a way that drives public value, value for money, and maximising value from investment.

At the same time, we're focused on improving completions, with the highest completion rates in the company, but we know there's more that can be done. We want to set up learners to succeed, to finish their qualifications and be ready to take up job opportunities. In October, I announced a new commitment of \$25.8 million to strengthen VET across the state. This is a continuation of the national partnership that we have with the Australian government to strengthen the VET system, ensuring that it delivers high-quality, responsive and accessible training.

A critical element of this package is additional funding of \$15.8 million to support students and improve training completion rates. This includes the new Pathways Partnership Program with the Education department to improve transitions between school-based VET and TasTAFE and investment in mentoring programs to improve wraparound support for learners and employers. With this plan, we're ensuring that Tasmanians are supported to succeed and have the skills for jobs now and into the future.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Mr Edmunds, I believe you have the first question.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you, minister, I note the explanation after table 12.2 talking about the changing in funding profile arounds skills and workforce group. I wonder if you could talk to me about the future status of some of those programs that are mentioned on page 254, like the earthworks training, the wool centre, High-Vis Army, et cetera.

Mr ELLIS - Obviously, some of those are capital programs. The Earthworks Academy, for example, that's a program that'll be delivered, ditto the wool centre. Once the physical buildings are built and constructed, it then moves to operational. With the High-Vis Army, we've been working closely with our High-Vis Army partners. Much of that is around capacity building, and that includes investments in, for example, the Master Builders training facility at Cambridge, I think, in the beautiful electorate of Pembroke. I always forget the borders down there.

Mr EDMUNDS - Clarence, yes.

Mr ELLIS - Clarence?

Mr EDMUNDS - TasTAFE? Yes, that's in -

Mr ELLIS - Cambridge in Pembroke?

Mr EDMUNDS - Cambridge, no. That's Rumney, sorry.

Mr ELLIS - No, all good. Anyway, very close to the beautiful electorate of Pembroke, and expanding that program to work closely with other new industry partners, including the sparkies and the plumbers. I know, for example, that NECA, the Electrical and Communications Association, are looking at making investments into mobile training provision through training trailers and other opportunities. Where you're seeing some of that funding provision end, that's because different things are being built and will be constructed. I'll look to Ms Paterson, if there's anything further that you wanted to add.

Ms PATERSON - No. Thank you, minister.

Mr EDMUNDS - I've got a question about High-Vis Army. From when it was first announced, one of the targets was to grow the construction labour force by 25 per cent over four years. Has that been met, or is that a work in progress? Where are we at with that?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to Ms Paterson shortly. We've seen very strong success and big support from our High-Vis Army partners. To see the capacity that's been built from industry bodies is very heartening to see. One of the PESRAC findings off the back of COVID was that really needed to support industry to step up to deliver more training and more workforce development. Pleasingly, the High-Vis Army have really shown the way. We've had significant interest from other bodies within construction. I mentioned the expansion to plumbers and sparkies, and then other industry bodies that are looking at the High-Vis Army is an excellent example where the industry can be supported to lead and succeed in workforce development and training.

Interestingly enough, the early childhood association have - it's not a High-Vis process, but certainly we're seeing, where we can work more closely with industry bodies, we deliver really good outcomes. I'll pass to Ms Paterson.

Ms PATERSON - Thank you, minister. The High-Vis Army program has delivered an array of successful projects and activities, including pre-vocational training programs, support for state-of-the-art training facilities. The additional funding through round 2 will see the construction sector actively enhancing career pathways, improving regional access, building capacity in the teaching workforce, and promoting construction careers, especially in regional areas.

High-Vis Army members have presented at over 650 schools, industry and jobseeker events, with over 62,000 people engaged. The program has resulted in over 4,300 learners participating in 442 accredited courses. Over 500 people have participated in 43 pre-employment and job-ready programs, with a focus on regional areas, women and migrants. Over 365 people have been identified as successfully gaining an apprenticeship and employment from those programs.

There is a range of examples of successful initiatives delivered. The CCF has delivered 29 civil-ready awareness programs, including four Women In Civil programs, two migrant programs, 12 general entry programs, three traffic management programs, three civil career awareness programs, and four regional trade training programs. In addition, CCF delivers civil awareness programs to over 50 schools annually. Master Builders has opened its new training facility in Cambridge and has delivered training to over 300 students, currently employs over 100 apprentices through their group training organisation and has delivered white card training to 269 students in 26 sessions across 16 schools.

The HIA has employed an additional 37 apprentices through its GTO arm as a direct result of the Hi-Vis Army funding, and a total of 27 of these apprentices belong to one or more equity groups, and the HIA has also attended around 25 career expos and jobs fairs presenting to over 2,000 students with a total of 400 students at 20 participating schools engaged in the YouthBuild program.

There certainly has been a lot of positive activity, particularly in promoting careers through the construction sector. I don't know if that answers your question in particular in relation to the target, but certainly the outcomes are there.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. The data is really - I was really interested in that, that you provided. Thank you. Is that funding throughout the forward Estimates for the Hi-Vis Army? I note some media from the Premier at the start of this year. I assume that is part of those figures?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We're into round 2 funding for the Hi-Vis Army.

Mr EDMUNDS - And that expansion you talked about, yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that's right. So it's then moving to the next phase. Ultimately, it's an area where we want to be uplifting capacity, which is clearly happening for particularly some of those larger organisations, and then moving towards a kind of more steady state, where they're then supported, say, through their training opportunities with the Skills Tasmania

offerings and a range of other areas. I'll pass back to Ms Paterson to talk through the funding, through the forwards.

Ms PATERSON - The funding in terms of out to 2026-27 continues for Master Builders, CCF, HIA, NECA, and Master Plumbers. We're working through the round 2 grants at the moment.

Mr EDMUNDS - So based off the - I was just trying to figure out - so that is the - I'm not trying to be provocative, but the drop in the number reflected in 2026-27 is when that ends, or is that reflected in 2027-28?

Ms PATERSON - I understand that the drop in 2027-28 reflects less the drop off of the Hi-Vis Army funding and more of the profiling of the Australian Government funding for the National Skills Agreement.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay. So the Hi-Vis Army dollars go throughout the forwards through 2028-29?

Ms PATERSON - They go throughout to 2027.

Mr EDMUNDS - Right, so it's the year before the federal money goes.

Ms PATERSON - Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - So that's the drop in 2026-27.

Ms PATERSON - Correct.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Anyone else?

CHAIR - Yes, Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Through you, minister, and my apologies if this was mentioned when I was out of the room, however, looking at the trades and labour group on the Public Infrastructure Workforce Supply Dashboard, which is in the Infrastructure Australia website, it shows significant shortages in the projected supply of a number of trades in Tasmania. Although, we do have apparently a surplus of 500 plumbers, so it's probably good you got out.

Mr ELLIS - People keep asking me to go back down the west coast and get on the tools.

Mr GAFFNEY - Three questions. Do these projections include the anticipated additional demand for construction workers that may come from a new stadium project? If the stadium is confirmed, where will the additional workers come from as almost every other state has similar shortages? The final question, what will the government do to ensure that there are sufficient skilled construction workers available for existing essential projects such as building more homes?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Gaffney. Certainly, these are the kind of problems that we want. We want the opportunities of growing economies, more opportunities for people to take up jobs. The ideal situation is to have more jobs than people rather than more people than jobs.

Obviously, that means we do need to engage strongly with the task of building our construction workforce.

The infrastructure pipeline across Tasmania over the next 10 years will surpass \$30 billion dollars. Obviously, this discussion about the stadium being \$1.1 billion, but when you think about the overall scale of the task, this is a good problem that Tasmania has had to work through for a number of years. It's good, too, because it provides the construction sector with certainty for years to come. Taking on an apprentice for four years, that's a big investment for that apprentice, for the business and for our training system. So when there is a pipeline of work ahead of people, that's certainly a helpful dynamic for us to have. It's projected we'll need over 2000 new workers in construction alone by 2027. These workers are obviously for roads, bridges, dams, schools, hospitals, commercial and residential development.

To meet the workforce need - we've spoken about the additional \$6 million being invested to boost the highly successful Hi-Vis Army initiative until 2027. That includes the expansion of plumbers, which I don't think we have in excess of 500, but, certainly, there's a need to continue investing that space and with the electricians as well.

It builds on the investment going to Master Builders, the HIA, who are obviously very heavily focused on housing, and the Civil Contractors Federation, and with the Hi-Vis Army funding, it adds an investment of \$4.3 million in the new Earthworks training academy, which is at Quercus Park, the Agfest site, as well as the recently announced Clean Energy Centre of Excellence in the north-west. There are some really encouraging investments there, but we also recognise the importance of continuing to grow.

The Housing Industry Association, obviously - we're speaking about housing - recently started its plan under the round 2 of the Hi-Vis Army funding. It's focused on the development of programs to attract people who complete Cert I and Cert II programs, which is kind of our industry attraction and development, and then the other key part of that training work that we do is through Keystone, which is the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund.

The levy revenue estimate of \$5 million in 2025, and it's an average of \$5.1 million per annum over the next three years to support training in workforce attraction - training and workforce attraction, I should say, for the construction industry, but I'll look over to Mr Hollingsworth or Ms Paterson if there's anything further to add.

Ms PATERSON - Perhaps just, minister, through you, to note that the additional investment that you mentioned in your opening speech in terms of supporting group training organisations to provide wraparound support for apprentices is very much part of the boosting capability to support apprentices to improve their completion rates, which is a really important part of getting more people into jobs.

Obviously, we have the best completion rate in the country, but a long way to go in terms of still improvements to make. The more that we can do to maximise our existing investment by improving that completion rate the better, which that program is targeted towards.

Mr GAFFNEY - I appreciate that, and I also appreciate the minister's comment. Interestingly, though, when you talk about all those other areas that we might need skilled workers in, the stadium, for example, has some penalties if we don't build that first. If that doesn't get completed by a certain date or a certain time, there is some financial disincentive.

A lot of the other ones you spoke about, whether it's the housing industry or other local industries that you mentioned, probably not going to get that grab because we're going to have to focus a lot of those people into the stadium build and across Australia with the Brisbane Olympics and work going in other places. That's going to also be limiting for us to be able to attract so many people to here. Is that a concern?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose what it highlights is that stadiums create a lot of jobs. The Brisbane Olympics is going to be a magnet for tradies from around the country. We want the stadium here to be a magnet for Tasmanian tradies. We think that there's clearly some incredible capacity within our construction sector for building these large projects.

If you look at the Bridgewater Bridge, that's an investment of a similar size in terms of the overall cost, and I have to say the Tasmanian construction workforce performed exceptionally well. In our shared electorate, Mr Gaffney, the capability that was demonstrated by BridgePro Engineering, building the piles for the bridge, some of those were some of the longest piles that were being constructed anywhere in the world. They were doing it at Latrobe, 90 metres down into the bedrock below the Derwent. I think that is quite incredible, and that capacity, know-how, is really encouraging.

We've asked Keystone Tasmania to work with industry peaks and others undertaking a workforce assessment and looking closely at the opportunities for workforce and training from the stadium. We want it to build a legacy of training as well. There will be with some of the major hospital redevelopments, apprentices that completely uplift their career opportunities because they're able to complete or substantially work through their apprenticeships on those jobs. Work is ongoing. We're engaging with industry on the project, but it is exciting to be talking about the future skills needs of big projects rather than the alternative.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, it is interesting to note the same thing is happening in Western Australia where, I think, they've recently decided to put their \$1.5 billion into the build of a hospital instead of one of their projects. So the skills and that would still be there in a different format, in a different infrastructure project. The capacity to do that would still be there, it just has to be focused on the stadium.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and there's a range of big projects. Ideally, you want a pipeline of work. That's why we talk about that \$30 billion pipeline. Things like the Midland Highway, obviously, but major wind farm developments too, are a big opportunity. If you look at, say, some of the mine restarts as well, or additional investment, you know, the Rentails development is hundreds of millions of dollars. And ditto of the restart of the Mount Lyell Mine.

There are some massive opportunities. They're, I suppose, less heralded or well understood by communities because often they're less visible to the media down here in Salamanca, but there is some amazing capacity within our industry. It won't be a case of we can have the stadium or we can have hospitals, or we can have the stadium, we can have roads. It'll be very much a case of we'll need both.

There are the opportunity challenges that come from providing opportunities to young people across our state are exactly the sort of challenges that we welcome because we want more of them to get jobs, go through training, and participate in our economy, and that's what these big projects bring.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Could you give an update on childcare and childcare workers and how you're engaging in that industry to increase that? It has a flow-on effect because people who aren't able to get their children into childcare are potentially unable to go back to work as well.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. Very, very important for young families in particular, Mr Hiscutt, thank you for the question. The Early Years Workforce Development Fund is part of a broader \$48 million strong plan for Tasmanian children, which includes a \$5 million election commitment to establish the Early Years Workforce Development Fund to grow and upskill the childcare workforce. Basically, the objective of the fund is to improve completion rates in essential early childcare qualifications and retain workers in the sector to boost the availability of childcare places in Tasmania, and that's particularly in rural and regional areas like ours.

The fund will provide scholarships that combine direct incentives to the learner with wrap-around mentoring services to support students in the early childhood education and care sector. It also includes incentives for staff relocation and retention in rural or isolated areas. We want to be supporting industry bodies to really uplift their capacity and to help drive some of these outcomes. The program will be delivered by Early Childhood Australia, or ECA Tasmania Branch, and will commence in the coming months.

\$500,000 of the \$5 million commitment is for scholarships for speech pathologists and psychologists to secure employment for a minimum of three years, which is being implemented by DECYP, but in addition to supporting students to complete essential qualifications, the ECA Tasmania branch will receive \$890,000 over three years to support the early childhood education workforce and care providers to attract, support, and retain workers.

In October 2025, Skills Tasmania hosted an industry-specific event focused on addressing the current and future workforce needs of Tasmania's community services and health sector. The event brought together industry associations, RTOs, because many are - I suppose, many of the people who are trained for this workforce go through private RTOs - and business representatives for an exchange of ideas, insights, and collaborative solutions for workforce challenges. Over to Ms Paterson to talk more about the skills compact for the industry.

Ms PATERSON - We have industry skills compacts with, I think, 11 of our sectors now, including with the care sector, and similarly to the advanced manufacturing one that I mentioned earlier, it's a compact between the government and registered training providers, including TasTAFE, and the sector to better understand their workforce needs and ensure that their training requirements are being met.

Healthcare is one of the highest qualifications that we get requests for funding for through our contestable programs, and it is often in the top sort of three qualifications in terms of funding received through those programs.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you for the answer.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. Minister, in your announcement to close Hellyer Mine, you outlined support for affected workers such as access -

CHAIR - Sorry, we actually have Hellyer Mine later on.

Ms WEBB - Oh, we do?

CHAIR - We have mining.

Ms WEBB - This is actually not related to the mine.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and the jobs.

Ms WEBB - That's part of the preamble.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms WEBB - You outlined support for affected workers such as access to employee assistance program services, career advice, pathways to alternative employment, upskilling or reskilling where required. Workers in the community services industry are currently at risk of job losses due to insufficient government investment and inadequate indexation to funding, which is currently fixed below CPI and wage increases.

That's resulting in real funding cuts and imminent job losses. What support will the government provide for affected workers in the community services industry who are laid off as a result of the government decisions in relation to inadequate funding and indexation?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. Obviously the minister for community services has to be able to speak more through some of the claims that you're making there. We might talk just in general though about the Jobs Tasmania support for redundant workers, which may or may not apply in this space. Basically, Jobs Tas supports redundant workers through the Jobs Hub, Career Connector service, and Rapid Response Skills Initiative, and these programs have been integral in supporting recent worker redundancies through a range of different areas.

The Rapid Response Skills Initiative supports people who have been made redundant in the last 12 months due to retrenchment or business closure, with reskilling to help them secure new employment. Eligible job seekers can access up to \$3000 towards the cost of training or licences to help them re-enter the workforce, and where there are 15 or more affected workers, employers are required to notify Services Australia, and that triggers engagement from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations at a federal level, and their local jobs coordinator who works closely with Jobs Tasmania. I'll pass to Mr Hollingsworth to talk through, in more detail about that process.

Ms WEBB - Could you confirm that community services workers in the state would be eligible for those, and in what way?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, again, Ms Webb, very much a contested premise, and I'm sure the minister for community services would reject the premise of your question -

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - I don't think she could.

Mr ELLIS - particularly given the significant funding that's provided and supported and provided to the community services sector.

Ms WEBB - Yes, the numbers are there.

Mr ELLIS - In fact, record funding in many areas.

Ms WEBB - Well, it always is, isn't it?

Mr ELLIS - I don't think you should take anything for granted, Ms Webb -

Ms WEBB - Inadequate indexation.

Mr ELLIS - because we've seen what happened under a Labor-Greens government.

Ms WEBB - We know what's looming for yours.

CHAIR - Let's get back to the question and answer.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I'll pass to Mr Hollingsworth to speak about the kind of support that we provide for workers in general.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Thanks, minister. The program is open to all sectors. As the minister noted, it's available to all workers who are facing redundancy, and it doesn't discriminate against which industry that is. In fact, our program is quite dynamic to the small community closures. There's obviously some of the big, more high-profile scenarios, but through the networks and the local jobs hubs and our work with administrators, we can identify and engage early through our services to connect anyone to a new pathway through those programs.

Quite often we see that if we can get a conversation with those workers early, we're able to, through our Career Connector program, working with Jobs Hubs, redeploy - really quickly - job-ready people. To the question before about labour supply - can be redeployed into new jobs fairly rapidly without even needing to draw down on the training fund that's available to them as well. So we've supported a range of sectors.

Ms WEBB - Can you give me some data about community sector involvement in that program over the past few years?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Let me have a look here. I had a question on this previously. I have a breakdown here in relation to location and age. I may have to take on notice the industry exits, from which state people are leaving that we can take on notice in terms of that one.

CHAIR - Thank you. I appreciate that. Can you just say the name of the program again so I can get it right in the question that I'm going to put on notice?

PUBLIC

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - This is the Rapid Response Skills Initiative. That's where they're accessing the training fund available.

CHAIR - Yes, that's fine.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - In terms of those who are accessing, in order to qualify with that program, they sit down with the Career Connector service, who has a conversation about what skills they have to ensure if they need to access this fund as well. We might provide the data we can per industry in a combination of those programs, if that makes sense, who are accessing that support.

CHAIR - Thank you. Minister, I'm interested in the Industry Partnership Program, noting that up to \$50,000 is available for small grants and \$250,000 for large grants, with a total of \$2 million in funding available for allocation under the 2024-25 grant round. The grants obviously have been submitted. It was up to any time till 30 June 2025 or until funds are fully allocated. Can I get some detail of the grants that were provided, the size of the grants? I'm not sure whether you're able to advise who received the grants. Is that confidential, or is that publicly available?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to work through the data and the detail there, Chair.

CHAIR - Yes, thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Basically, the program provides grants to eligible organisations, training providers, employers and industry bodies for resource and equipment related to nationally recognised training and contextualisation of training and assessment materials. The program supports industry compacts and encourages partnerships, collaboration, innovation to deliver better quality training experiences for Tasmanian learners and improve responsiveness of the training system to meet industry and business needs. I'll pass to Ms Paterson to talk through some of the details.

Ms PATERSON - Thank you. Through you, minister. I can note that the IPP program outcomes are on the Skills Tasmania website. That will let you know what was funded and through which organisation.

CHAIR - Can you perhaps advise for *Hansard*? Rather than people looking and having to go to another website, they can actually read it on our *Hansard*.

Ms PATERSON - Certainly. There was a project to Lady Gowrie, Tasmania, which was to support trainees to succeed through enhanced interactive learning and design. The value of that was \$46,786. A project for Avidity Training to support a training centre in Launceston and Devonport, and the value of that grant was \$44,680. A project for Master Builders Association of Tasmania for a trade-ready trailer, which was to purchase a dedicated tool trailer to support the delivery of training across a range of pre-employment and industry awareness programs, and the value of that project was \$49,760. A project for the Trustee of Medecs Australia Trust for contemporary training equipment for the disability and care sector to the value of \$48,860. A project for Nyrstar Hobart to purchase equipment and contextualisation of training and assessment resources for the delivery of Certificate III in Process Plant Operations for Nyrstar's workforce to a value of \$40,000.

PUBLIC

A project for Link Resources to purchase modern plant and associated equipment and the development of contextualised training and assessment materials tailored to the needs of various engineering, manufacturing, construction and mining sectors for the delivery of locally relevant, nationally recognised training and forklift operation to the value of \$247,159.

A project for SRTA Pty Ltd for empowering Tasmanian industry through advanced simulation and training facilities to the value of \$46,823. A project for Building Group Apprenticeship Scheme for Tasmanian cabinet making and timber technology training enhancement project, which was for the purchase of specialised carpentry equipment for the delivery of that Certificate III in Cabinet Making to the value of \$81,000. I think that's about it.

CHAIR - Did you come close to \$2 million or no? I didn't add it up as you went through. I wouldn't have thought so.

Ms PATERSON - There was an underspend in that program, but it will be released again in February 2026, underspend based on slow uptake. It was a new program. It's taken a little while for people to realise that it's there and understand what the opportunity is. It will be re-released in February next year.

CHAIR - How do you advertise to the industry that it's available?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass back to Ms Paterson shortly, but one of the good points to make here is about that Skills Plan with the stronger and more connected system. One out of two learners in Tasmania in vocational education go through a provider other than TAFE, one of those 100 RTOs that we were talking about. It's important that, if the learner's at the centre, we're supporting the choices that they make, whether they choose to go to TAFE or whether there's other options that are available to them. Investing in uplifting those RTOs, many of which are specialist or industry aligned, is really important for the future of the workforce needs in Tasmania. I'll pass to Ms Paterson about the advertising process.

CHAIR - No, that's good.

Ms PATERSON - Thank you, minister. We engage with RTOs through our industry partnership managers and through Skills Tasmania's general communications channels. What this has raised for us is an opportunity to perhaps promote a bit more strongly this program, which we would certainly intend to do prior to it opening this year.

CHAIR - Is it an ongoing program of grants? How much did you have leftover this year?

Ms PATERSON - We funded \$700,000 in projects this year.

CHAIR - Yes. \$1.3 million left.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. It is funded again for next year.

CHAIR - At \$2 million?

Mr ELLIS - It's round \$2 million.

PUBLIC

Ms PATERSON - Yes, there's definitely around \$2 million. It's at least \$2 million. I might have to chase that figure for you.

CHAIR - So funded through the government for \$2 million a year?

Mr ELLIS - No, I think it's \$2 million for this round.

Ms PATERSON - It was \$2 million for this round.

CHAIR - What happens to the \$1.3 million? I was wondering where that's gone.

Mr ELLIS - That's what we're saying in terms of that can then be rolled over into future rounds and opportunities.

CHAIR - So it's not \$2 million every year?

Mr ELLIS - No. We work with the industry around future opportunities that we might have partner together on some of those opportunities, but I'll double-check with Ms Paterson that I'm not being overly stingy.

Ms PATERSON - Through you, minister. That's correct. Certainly, yes, that \$1.3 million is an underspend which would be applied again through the program next year, but separately, it is also additionally funded for another \$2 million next year. It will be a larger program next year.

CHAIR - Another question, minister: the Tasmanian Training Awards held annually by Skills, is it held actually in each region, or does it take turns between the three regions? How does that work?

Mr ELLIS - You will be very pleased to know, member for Launceston, that normally it has been held in the south.

CHAIR - That's a surprise, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. In recent years, it's been held in Launceston and very successfully so, a beautiful night, and there are some good opportunities. I note, being a parochial north-west coaster, that there may be future opportunities to hold it at a facility like the Paranalpe Centre.

Our team is very practised at this and do provide a wonderful night as well down here in Hobart, the times that it has been held. It was the first time in years that it'd been held up in Launceston, and I think that's a real credit to the Skills Tas team for their commitment to make sure that we're recognising learners but doing that in locations around the state.

CHAIR - Can you confirm, minister, that that will continue? When you look at the people who are probably applying, it's a sad situation if people can't attend the event, because they can't afford accommodation so they can't be there, because obviously we would have award-winners from various regions.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Tasmania's obviously a regionalised place. We've got learners from every corner of the state that need to go somewhere, and they all need to gather. That can be a

PUBLIC

challenge, but it's part of the reason why, as I mentioned, for the first time in a long time, it moved out of Hobart and up to Launceston. I don't know if anything further you wanted to add on it, Ms Paterson.

CHAIR - Is it going to continue to actually share around the state so that people who are receiving awards can actually attend, if it goes to the north-west, it goes to Launceston, it goes Hobart, just to be fair to some of these people who may get awards and they actually attend without a huge cost?

Mr ELLIS - We've got an open mind on that process. It was a big step to do the one in Launceston. We were really pleased with that, but I don't know if there's anything further that you wanted to -

CHAIR - I will remind you.

Ms PATERSON - Through you, minister, it was a very successful event in Launceston. There's no reason why we wouldn't continue the practice of moving it every year or every other year.

CHAIR - And probably go to the north-west as well, to be fair to people. Well, to be fair to the people there. I think we've got to be regional.

Mr ELLIS - Tall Timbers is a beautiful place to hold a conference as well.

CHAIR - I always consider Launceston as probably the best in the state. However, I do believe it's important to be fair to all regions.

CHAIR - Yes, and certainly, if you look at the - the Tasmanian Training Awards then goes on to the National Training Awards, and certainly, you look at the ethos there, it's shared around the country and the different states. During my time, we've been very pleased to host the National Awards here in Hobart, and I think it'd be fair to say it was the best ever, without a doubt. So the more that we're able to continue that ethos of making sure that training is celebrated and valued in every corner, then that'll be a good thing.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Do I have any further questions?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

CHAIR - Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. It's about the energy training centre in Burnie.

Mr ELLIS - North-west Clean Energy Centre of Excellence?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. When can we expect people to be able to enrol at that?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Edmunds. Meeting our renewable energy targets requires rapid investment in renewables, creating a high demand for skilled workers to build the necessary infrastructure. To meet this demand, we've invested \$27.2 million into the TasTAFE

Water and Energy Trade Centre, which is based here in the south to deliver training to more than 1250 students.

We're also upskilling our TasTAFE teachers in design and installation of solar systems and, of course, the investment in additional \$6 million to expand the Hi-Vis Army. The electoral qualifications are a key focus of the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence, which is a jointly-funded project by the Australian and Tasmanian governments. It will invest in state-of-the-art equipment for training for design, construction, and maintenance of renewable energy infrastructure, and, importantly, the facility will include a targeted redevelopment of the Burnie TasTAFE campus, equipment upgrades, provision of on-campus student accommodation, which that construction work is already underway, and a review of delivery models to put students at the centre. Benefits that will flow from the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence will not be restricted to the north-west, but will flow across the state.

I'll pass to Ms Paterson to talk about the work to get that centre up and running, noting, of course, that this is not just investment in buildings, and it's a significant uplift in people and capacity, and electrical training is provided at that location currently.

Ms PATERSON - Thank you, minister. I think this investment is designed to boost the capacity of TasTAFE to deliver in these critical areas of shortage where we know there will be huge demand coming in the future. It's intended to boost capacity for enrolments, but also to improve the quality of training through an uplift in the contemporary equipment and approaches to training for these qualifications, particularly out of the Burnie campus.

As the minister has mentioned, there is currently under way a quality delivery plan which will be considered by the advisory committee in the next few months. That's looking at contemporary approaches to training delivery that's sort of industry current and provides the best support we can for learners to ensure completion. There's also another piece of work that the advisory committee will consider which is a workforce needs assessment. So that's trying to get a good handle on what are the occupations and the associated qualifications that we need to deliver, where are the gaps, and where does TAFE potentially need to shift to provide additional qualifications on scope or, indeed, other providers.

Having said all that, learners can enrol now. I guess this is a continuous improvement program. Certainly, the Cert II and Cert III in electro, in instrumentation post-trade training already exist at TAFE. This is intended to boost capacity and quality in those qualifications and add different and new qualifications that are required for emerging needs in that region.

Mr EDMUNDS - So it'll be run by TasTAFE off that campus, is that correct?

Ms PATERSON - The advisory committee is still working through the model, if you like, but certainly, the funding is attached to the TasTAFE Burnie campus because it is not just a capital commitment, but it is also about quality delivery. As the minister mentioned, it will have a statewide benefit. But, yes, the TasTAFE Burnie campus is designed to be the location.

Mr EDMUNDS - But not necessarily run by TasTAFE?

Ms PATERSON - Run by TasTAFE, yes, in partnership with industry.

Mr EDMUNDS - That's the next question I was going to ask, the role of TMEC in that?

PUBLIC

Ms PATERSON - I guess that'll be determined as part of the development of the model TMEC on the advisory committee, and we would certainly expect that they would be an ongoing industry partner for TAFE when it gets up and running.

Mr ELLIS - And NECA's probably the other big one in terms of electrical.

Mr EDMUNDS - Did you say NECA?

Ms PATERSON - NECA.

Mr EDMUNDS - Sorry, I didn't hear you. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any further questions, members?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, Chair. We've just got to add to an answer.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Yes. Through you, minister, to the question previously about industry access to Rapid Response. So just pulling out the data, but we've identified that 11 per cent of applicants approved over the last two calendar year were from the health and care sector, the community sector.

Ms WEBB - Do you break out health from the community services sector?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - These are the Bureau of Statistics classifications.

Ms WEBB - Okay. So we wouldn't really be clear whether they were, in fact, health businesses of some sort, rather than community service organisations providing government-funded services?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - No. We couldn't make that distinction. It'd be the industry classification that encaptures those, that industry sector.

Ms WEBB - And those two years are the two years that the program's been running?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - No. It's been running for a long time, Rapid Response, going back to Caterpillar before my time. So we've just evolved it, refined it, added the career component, which has actually improved the outcomes of the investment.

CHAIR - Thank you. We're going to have a short break now, minister. If we could stop the broadcast please.

The Committee suspended from 4.02 p.m. to 4.19 p.m.

MINISTER FOR BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND RESOURCES

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister. If you could introduce your team at the table. Then we will go on to Minister for Business, Industry and Resources.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. We've got Craig Limkin, secretary, Department of State Growth; Dennis Hendriks, acting Coordinator-General; and Adam Foster, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

CHAIR - Do you have an overview or anything you'd actually like to speak to?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. Tasmania's economy continues to perform strongly, and our government's focused on the things that matter most: supporting business, securing investment, backing our regions, and protecting local jobs. That's what Tasmanians expect, and that's what we're delivering.

The Office of the Coordinator-General remains a key driver of investment attraction and major project facilitation for Tasmania. Last financial year alone, it facilitated \$431 million in new investment. Since 2015, it's delivered more than \$5.3 billion in projects and built a pipeline worth over \$21 billion. That's real investment, real confidence, and real jobs for Tasmania.

Tasmania's advanced manufacturers are competing and winning on the national and global stage. We're backing them through our Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan and Defence Tasmania, which continues to secure new opportunities for Tasmanian companies across the defence and maritime sectors.

We're also standing firmly behind regional communities when they need it. We've established the Bell Bay Response Team, which is a practical, proactive step to give the region certainty and coordination at a time of change. Our support of King Island Dairy and Group 6 Metals shows that when jobs and communities are at stake, our government steps up, does the hard work, and gets outcomes.

Tasmania's minerals and resources sector remains a cornerstone of the state's economy, responsible for the majority of our goods, export earnings and thousands of regional jobs. We are strongly positioned in critical minerals, and our upcoming Critical Minerals Prospectus will help attract further investment into this high-value, high-growth sector. Through measures like the Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative, we're ensuring Tasmania remains competitive and exploration-ready.

We're delivering this through the development of our economic diversification and investment strategy, with a clear focus on productivity, AI adoption, and unlocking new investment opportunities across Tasmania. At its core, this portfolio is about jobs, investment, and long-term economic strength.

Our government's got a clear plan, the right tools, and a proven track record of delivery. We're backing Tasmanian businesses, attracting new industries, and ensuring the state's economic future remains strong. Look forward to expanding on this work throughout the hearing.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you, Chair. In the Strong Plan, it talked about -

Mr ELLIS - The 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

Mr EDMUNDS - That's the one.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. It's a good one.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, we'll find out. It talked about updating the powers of the Coordinator-General. I'm interested what, if any, changes have been made to the powers that the Coordinator-General holds.

Mr ELLIS - We're working through a process for that. We certainly recognise that the Office of the Coordinator-General has done exceptional work since 2015, and I outlined some of that work before in terms of the \$431 million of investment in Tasmania through the 2024-25 financial year, and the very strong pipeline of work. That total investment now facilitated about \$5.3 billion. We'll continue to work around the legislative opportunities that are available to us, but certainly it is pleasing to see that the Labor Party, which was opposed to the Office of the Coordinator-General, now appears to be supportive of it, and that's encouraging, I think, for the community to know that there's that policy certainty. I'll pass to the team of State Growth if there's anything further you want to update there.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, minister, and through you. You would have seen earlier this year the government made an economic statement as well, and they had additional policy definition around this work, including a commitment to an economic futures act. The Department of State Growth is working in partnership with the Coordinator-General and also the Tasmanian Development and Resources Board to commence the work on three pieces of work: the economic resilience and investment strategy the minister spoke about in his opening; updates to the *Tasmanian Development Act*; and also the 2030 economic futures act. That work has commenced and is being led by various parts of the department in partnership with the OCG and, as I said, the TDR.

Mr EDMUNDS - Do any of those pieces of work expand the powers of the Coordinator-General?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through the legislation currently, but we think that there are some opportunities that we want to work through in terms of investment facilitation more broadly. I'll pass to the team at State Growth, if there's anything further to add.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, minister, through you. We're currently working through the work, as the minister indicated. There are a couple of options that the government is exploring. There is an investment facilitation role, there is a planning role, there could be an infrastructure coordination role. All those options are currently being worked through. We're also working in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, plus also DPAC and Treasury, to take a whole-of-government approach to how we streamline investment facilitation while ensuring that there are appropriate checks and balances in environmental, social, and our economic [inaudible]. So we are working across government as part of that work.

Mr EDMUNDS - So there's nothing necessarily we can wrap our hands around in terms of extra powers or the like from the Coordinator-General's office?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - I think we mentioned this, but, you know, happy to try to make it clear - we expect the 2030 economic futures act will include more powers, but of course that act is still being developed.

Mr EDMUNDS - When are we likely to potentially see that act, do you think, minister?

Mr ELLIS - We're working on development at the moment, and so likely next year.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Is this the appropriate stage - I'll take your advice - to talk about red tape?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - I don't want to jump - I don't want to miss it -

CHAIR - That might be some of the streamlining, maybe.

Mr EDMUNDS - Indeed. In March this year the Premier announced the Start-Up Permit, which would enable small businesses to trial their concept for 12 months with a single permit. I'm interested in any progress that's been made on that policy.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. Certainly one frustration that we see from small businesses applying for multiple permits and waiting for those permits and approvals. The government released a discussion paper in 2025 and has commenced discussions with stakeholders and relevant government agencies, and we expect that the government will release a discussion paper on the single permit application system for small, low-risk business start-ups. The permit could allow a new business to apply through a single application and potentially commence operation while obtaining the relevant state and local government permits over a 12-month period. That work is in progress and we're looking forward to providing a further update. I'll look to State Growth if there's anything further.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, minister. The start-up permit is actually the accountability of minister Barnett. Minister Barnett released the discussion paper that the minister spoke about on Monday the 17th. It's currently open for consultation until 16 February. This looks at how we cut unnecessary red tape and remove duplication between levels of government - both state and local and federal. How do we encourage enterprise and investment? How do we accelerate job creation and local economic activity? And how do we strengthen Tasmania's reputation as a state that supports innovation and enterprise? My expectation is, following the conclusion of this, further work will be done to enable a bill to be brought forward to parliament next year.

Mr ELLIS - Then there's some broader work in terms of red tape, because of course the small business start-up permit's one. There's revising the red tape portal; the parliament red tape repeal days; implementation of net negative one to reduce legislation; an audit of all licences, permits and approvals to remove unnecessary red tape; the establishment of a red tape reduction industry taskforce; cutting red tape for poppy growers, for example, with a simpler crop approval process; simplifying event permits for festivals, for food and wine events with a single application permit; new digital liquor licensing with deemed approval within 30 days; and then, of course, a big suite of reforms in building and construction as well as planning.

Mr EDMUNDS - So that list, is that under your responsibility or is that minister Barnett?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - There's a range of different responsibilities. Obviously, red tape exactly exists within every portfolio, and so through the OCG and State Growth, we take a coordinating and convening role. Some are the direct responsibility. There are, of course, others. I mentioned poppy growers that sits within NRE; liquor licensing, which sits within Treasury; building construction, which sits within Consumer Affairs. Broadly speaking, we take a leadership role and work closely with colleagues to help get some good outcomes there.

Mr EDMUNDS - Great. That list, are they all likely to be things we could expect to deal with in parliament, say, next year, do you think?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through them. Some are more simple than others, and we'll be bringing that through, but broadly speaking, the pipeline of work for red tape reduction needs to be continuous improvement. We'd expect that, over the next four years, we'll see significant work to reduce red tape, noting that it's a really high priority for business in the community.

Mr GAFFNEY - Just to follow on from that, I hear you've got a red tape reduction portal. When was that instigated, or when did that come into the being?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the team from State Growth, but it is an excellent tool for the community to reach out to us and provide insights to the lived experience of dealing with government. We want to be improving our customer service, and when we hear directly from the community that bring forward these suggestions, it's often a good opportunity for us to see what areas we need to be reforming and changing. As a summary, most of these areas for change are in the building and planning and licensing and permits area. I'll pass to the team from State Growth to talk through further.

Mr HENDRIKS - The red tape portal was launched in March this year. It's been operating for a little while. I don't have in front of me the exact number of questions that've run through the portal at the moment, but I think there's been a few, and they are being explored by the various agencies. They get distributed out.

Mr GAFFNEY - Would you be able to provide me with the cost of the portal, if we take that on notice, the number of people who've accessed the portal. You've obviously found it an easier and effective way of operating to get to all those businesses. Is that the feedback you've been getting, or what feedback has been coming in?

Mr HENDRIKS - Certainly, there's been a lot more applications that've come through the portal than otherwise normally would. From that perspective, it's been quite successful in drawing red tape issues out.

Mr GAFFNEY - If I could have it on notice on the cost of the portal and how many people have accessed it in that short period of time, it would be very helpful.

Mr ELLIS - It's probably worth also mentioning that, where we remove barriers to economic opportunity and development, that has an offsetting benefit to the community. Sometimes that's hard to quantify, but it can be significant as well.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Mr HISCUTT - A follow-up is whether that was developed inhouse or whether that was an off-the-shelf portal. Can we take it on notice as well?

Mr HENDRIKS - Sure.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. I have a question with regard to the statement of the Department of State Growth in regard to Office of the Coordinator-General on rather a motherhood statement, I would think: 'The Coordinator-General will help streamline the Tasmanian business environment, promote competitiveness, and assist with assessment and approval of investment opportunities.' Can you advise, minister, what does the Coordinator-General actually do to streamline the business environment? How does he promote competitiveness and assist with the assessment and approval of investment opportunities? What does he actually do to help in those situations?

Mr ELLIS - It is a wide range of actions that are taken. I think Tasmanians can certainly take heart from the fact that we were the second-best performing jurisdiction of all the states and territories in Australia in the recent Business Council of Australia Regulation Rumble, which ranked all the states and territories against a range of regulatory competitiveness. Of course, second is good. We want to be number 1.

CHAIR - How does he streamline it? What does he actually do? Who does he work with? How does he sort it out for these people?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the acting Coordinator-General to talk through more about some of the process, but we're finding that it's been very successful work.

Mr HENDRIKS - I can indicate the work of the Office of the Coordinator-General is really broad. We work on a case management approach, really, with different proponents, because really all the proponents that we deal with are different.

CHAIR - I understand that.

Mr HENDRIKS - They've all got different issues in working through, so -

CHAIR - Say, for example, you get someone coming in with issues. How do you streamline it? Do you work with the council? Do you work with the government. Do you try to have something removed?

Mr HENDRIKS - Absolutely. We would work with if it was local government. Certainly, we will work with introductions through to different GBEs. We'll assist companies in relation to outlining what the various processes are that they might need to follow. We'll make sure they're introduced to the right people within those organisations to try to streamline that activity and make sure they're getting adequate and proper advice. We'll work with them in relation to site identification issues in different locations.

CHAIR - Do you cut any red tape?

PUBLIC

Mr HENDRIKS - We certainly try to cut red tape, and certainly the red tape advocate that we have is actively involved. I think, alone, he's supported 80 different inquiries or thereabouts over the last year, and they've been ranging from everything from tenancy issues to liquor licence issues. There is an ongoing effort all the time to try to act as that intermediary to try to make things easier.

CHAIR - Sounds like our electorate offices, actually, doesn't it, with the issues that we receive. I might ask one further question. The cost of the Office of the Coordinator-General, including travel, for the last financial year would be good.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the team of State Growth.

CHAIR - I think you've already indicated the money that's been brought in to the member for Pembroke. I'm happy to take it on notice, if that's -

Mr HENDRIKS - The operational budget of the office is around \$2.5 million per year. It sort of fluctuates marginally from that. That doesn't take into account -

CHAIR - Travel?

Mr HENDRIKS - Travel would be included in that. I can indicate that the travel for the office in the last year was \$118,669 or approximately thereto, which is made up of Tasmanian, interstate and some overseas travel on travel missions. There is within our budgets or within other funds, but those funds are allocated specifically towards existing projects. That's money attached to existing commitments, be they loans, grants, and those sort of activities.

CHAIR - I was looking at some information from previously. When members travel on government business, do they stay at five-star hotels normally? How does that -

Mr HENDRIKS - Not in my experience.

CHAIR - I was looking back to 2023.

Mr HENDRIKS - Sure. That wouldn't be the norm.

CHAIR - Not anymore?

Mr HENDRIKS - No. I certainly haven't.

CHAIR - No. Thank you, minister.

Mr GAFFNEY - I've got a question.

CHAIR - Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Something slightly different. I think this sits under Business, Industry and Resources. Alerting the group to, after a three-year pilot in Ireland, they've just implemented an expanded basic income scheme for the arts that will provide a weekly taxable payment of about \$580 to \$2200 to provide some stability to those in creative industries.

The reason I'm putting it here is - and it was a three-year pilot - the pilot demonstrated an average cost-benefit ratio of 1.39 euro for every 1 euro of public money invested in the scheme. This year, it's gone up to 1.75 euro so far for 2025.

Given the success of MONA and other champions of the arts in boosting our economy, has the government considered doing something similar here to give our artists something with a bit more punch and longevity in what they're trying to. It was a three-year study they did, too. It wasn't just like, 'Let's run this for eight weeks and see how it goes.' The proof was in the money that came back invested into the arts.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Gaffney. There's no plans for a universal basic income. The federal government is more in this space anyway of income support and supplementation programs. In terms of what the state does, it's very much focused on, say, the range of different arts funding that we have across portfolios. Mr Limkin, as the secretary of State Growth, might be able to talk through some of the other funding support that's provided for the arts, but certainly universal basic income isn't part of our plans.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you. Through you, minister. There is a number of programs that Creative Tas has to support artists at work, and Screen Tas. In relation to tax reform for the arts, minister Graham from New South Wales has been leading a national approach. We are taking a position of working with the New South Wales government. Most states and territories' cultural ministers are. Minister Burke, at a federal level, is also considering it.

We are providing options. I'll use an example, at a national level, if you provide a donation of an artwork to a museum - a state-run museum or a local government-run museum - there is a tax-deductibility under that. Minister Graham is passionate about looking at expanding that for theatre-making and screen, and so those are active conversations happening at the moment. In relation to this area, we're really working on a national approach because the Federal government has most of the levers.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. That would be great, because 95 per cent of our time at the moment seems to be spent with sports and associated things, and our arts, I believe, are falling behind a little bit in that media coverage and in that space. Anything we can do to bolster that funding and the focus onto the arts, would be appreciated. Thank you.

1.2 Industry and Business Development

CHAIR - Thank you. Any further questions on this line? If not, if we could move on to 1.2, Industry and Business Development. Do you want to bring someone to the table, minister? Could you introduce your new team member.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. Michael Mogridge, deputy secretary, Economic Development for the Department of State Growth.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Gaffney, I think you're first up.

Mr GAFFNEY - I must have asked it.

CHAIR - I'm sure you've got something really exciting to ask.

PUBLIC

Mr GAFFNEY - No, I don't. You'll have to get someone else.

CHAIR - Does anyone have a question on this line?

Mr GAFFNEY - No. I probably just asked the question.

Ms WEBB - I missed to ask something about it from the notes.

CHAIR - No, that's fine. The question was really asked in the last line item.

Ms WEBB - I'll just ask something about it from the notes.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes.

CHAIR - No one? If that's the case. Sorry about that. You've had an early minute. I'm sure there'll be other opportunities.

Ms WEBB - There's a big drop away. Someone can ask about the numbers in the line item. Explain the numbers.

CHAIR - Well, we could but Mr Gaffney asked his question in the last line item.

Ms WEBB - What I mean is, we could ask about the numbers that are presented here and have them explained across the forward Estimates, if you'd like.

CHAIR - If you'd like to come back to it, Ms Webb's going to ask you a question.

Ms WEBB - I'm looking to see what the explanation is given.

CHAIR - No, that's fine. Not everyone goes through line items as we do.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Looking at the line item in the Budget papers in table 12.2, revenue from appropriation, I see there's a footnote to say that this includes both industry and business development output, but also, that means that ministerial portfolios of small business, trade and consumer affairs - which is, I think, where we are - but also innovation, science and digital economy. Can you split it up for us so we know which portion of that we are looking at with this, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure. I'll pass that to State Growth to provide some clarity.

Mr LIMKIN - We will have to get the calculator out, Ms Webb, because I actually don't have it broken down, but I'm happy to do that and provide the answer before we finish the session.

Ms WEBB - That's fine. I'll ask another one then. That one can be worked on in the background while we have another one. When I look at that line item, I see that in 2024-25 through to this year, there's a smallish drop away of about 20 per cent, but then there's a significant drop away from 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29. Can you explain why funding drops away in that funding mix across those forward years?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - Yes. It's worth mentioning that a lot of the funding which comes through here is often one-off grants and things like that for specific industry development purposes. So there are some matters, of course, that can't be foreseen, and hence the particular way that it's accounted for, with very much a focus in the current years. I'll pass to the team at State Growth to take it further.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, minister, and through you. The minister is right. So a steady state in this area is about \$12 million to \$13 million a year. That's where the forward Estimates go back to. In the 2024-25 year, there are large grants in relation to - and the 2025-26 year - there are large grants provided to Nyrstar for the Nyrstar support that's being provided; some farm debt mediation support; INCAT support for continuing the government's election commitment regarding the low interest-free loan offered through the TDR board; some primary producer; and a variety of other smaller enabling business grant programs throughout the year.

Ms WEBB - So largely it's the dropping away of election commitments from 2024.

Mr LIMKIN - That's correct.

Ms WEBB - Right. So we had a nice big bump buying our way to an election, and then it's all falling away back to normal now. Okay.

Mr ELLIS - Supporting the community in important projects, Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Yes, that's right, absolutely. Supporting the community towards voting for us. Are you expecting to see an uptick then in the May Budget. We're probably expecting to see a situation normal, which you described as sort of about \$12 million to \$13 million across that, or \$10 million to \$13 million, I think you said.

Mr ELLIS - Well, the forward Estimates are there. We'll work through future budgets at that time.

Ms WEBB - Congratulations on having forward Estimates actually on the line, because so many lines in this Budget don't have forward Estimates, so it looks nicer. That's at least an honest line. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks for your feedback.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - Any more questions? Mr Gaffney, did you have a question?

Mr GAFFNEY - No.

CHAIR - No. On that note, thank you very much for coming back to us.

Ms WEBB - You'll come back to us in a bit. When you spoke to those items that drop away, was that a complete list of what drops away, or is this something we should ask for full detail on in a question on notice?

Mr LIMKIN - Through you, minister. The information is contained in the Budget papers, Ms Webb, so the 2024 Budget paper will have it because there are a large number, and then 2025. A number of these have been over a couple of years.

Ms WEBB - It's surprising, though, not to see it here in the explanations through on page 254, isn't it? Normally when there's been that variation across the line item into the forward Estimates, we'd have received explanations written about the falling away of election commitments or whatever. Was there a reason that wasn't provided in detail?

Mr LIMKIN - Through you, minister. I don't think so, Ms Webb. I'm happy to make sure that occurs in the May Budget. It was not intentional.

CHAIR - Shortness of time, perhaps.

Ms WEBB - Could we put a question on notice to you, minister, to supply a complete list of what does represent that drop away. I know the secretary provided some commentary on it here. If there's more detail to provide a comprehensive list, could that be provided on notice once a check has been done.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to put what's in what's in the Budget.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Well, it's not in this one. We'd have to go back and look in the previous ones, and I wouldn't necessarily know what to look for in terms of what might be dropping away.

Mr ELLIS - That's okay. As I said, happy to help.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you, Ms Webb. Thank you, minister. If we now move on to 4.1 and Ms Webb. Forestry policy.

OUTPUT GROUP 4

Resources Policy and Regulatory Services

4.1 Forest Policy

CHAIR - Forestry policy. Do we need to bring some more people back to the table?

Mr LIMKIN - Minister, if you're comfortable, I can answer Mr Gaffney's question while we just set up. I am advised the portal was built in-house and there are no other external costs. It's just normal staffing hours. We have received 193 submissions to date. Forty-seven of those relate to building and planning issues, 38 per cent relate to permit or approval red tape suggestions.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. That's very good information.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, I introduce Vanessa Pinto, deputy secretary, ReCFIT and Resources.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb has questions.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. It's going to be a similar slant as to the last set of questions, to be honest. When I look along that line item there and the appropriation across table 12.2 for it, there is some movement with uptick into the 2025-26 year, and then a fall away in the out years. There is, hopefully, some commentary provided over on page 254 about that variation reflecting a funding profile of initiatives that are presumably coming to an end. It mentions 2024-25 Budget initiative, 'On Island Processing Program', and 2025-26 key deliverable, 'Forestry Future Growth and Innovation Pathway.'

Can you quantify the amounts of those programs that come to an end, and so where we can see where that affects that line item? What were the activities which were occurring under those programs, given that the funding finishes. What happens to those activities? Are they time-limited activities that will naturally come to an end, or are they things we've funded that we'll have to stop funding, and that will have consequences?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. Obviously, you mentioned grant programs. Obviously, as those grants are provided for capital upgrades and things like that, then that's a sort of natural cycle in terms of the expenditure. I'll pass to the team at State Growth to walk you through the expenditure profile.

Ms PINTO - Through you, minister, thank you. Some of the specific items which are included in that, there is the On Island Processing program that the honourable member referred to. There's some previous Budget initiatives that we are carrying forward in the forward Estimates, around \$1.4 million and \$409,000, and in this Budget, we've also got \$1.875 million and \$625,000.

Ms WEBB - Can you tell me what those are attached to? Sorry, it wasn't clear to me.

Ms PINTO - On the Island Processing Program, that grant program. So we've done, like, another. We've got a round that's currently open at the moment, and we've also got ongoing support to the Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board of \$192,000. That's running every year until it drops off into 2028-29, and they're probably the main one. The only other one which I might note was there was some funding that was originally in 2024-25 of around \$100,000 for the resources security in the forestry sector that's dropped off that and you're not seeing it in this year.

Ms WEBB - The one that is the 2025-26 key deliverable of the Forestry Future Growth and Innovation Pathway, is that just a one year?

Ms PINTO - That's just a one year. That's correct.

Ms WEBB - That accounts for the fairly significant uptick in this year?

Ms PINTO - That's correct, yes. That's right.

Ms WEBB - What was the quantum? It would have been in the key deliverables. Sorry.

Ms PINTO - \$650,000. Thank you. I should have mentioned that, I skipped over that, but, yes, that is only one year.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. In the expenses table, that's expenditure table - sorry, the 12.3. Is that page - I'm just going to go to the right page myself. Page 253. It indicates that expenditure on resources, policy and regulatory services. Hold on. I might be skipping to a different line item, am I? Yes, great. Yes.

Regulatory services: it's going to exceed the annual appropriation from the Budget and across the forward Estimates. Presumably, there's other sources of revenue making up that shortfall gap for the expenditure. Can you detail what the alternative revenue consists of?

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, minister, and through you, I am advised that there was a higher original estimate received in the special purpose account from Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement. There was a federal government payment, and it's the timing of it. The federal government paid it earlier. It went into the special purpose account that comes through as revenue.

Ms WEBB - All right. Does that explain the difference across the forward Estimates as well, then, between the appropriation and the expenses? Is that the national amount?

Ms PINTO - Yes, the amount would change, and I don't know the exact number across the forward Estimates, Ms Webb, but it would be similar to that.

Ms WEBB - In terms of that key deliverable, the Forestry Future Growth and Innovation Pathway, I'm just going to check if I've answered my questions already. Forgive me while I run my eyes down the list. Can you give us some more detail about that? Is it going to be focusing on forest policy and forest contribution to tackling climate change, for example, exploring the role of climate change resilience, any of those sorts of things? Can you give me some more detail about that key deliverable?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. There is \$650,000 for it. Probably a key thing to note, there's quite an important structural change that's happening in forestry at the moment, particularly with regard to Sustainable Timber Tasmania, and noting, of course, we'll have GBE scrutiny coming up very soon, but to speak at a higher level, there's a significant transition that's happening for that key player in the market with a significant volume of plantation saw log coming online as part of the timber supply mix.

As our industry is adapting and changing to the changed resource that's coming through, we think it's important that we have some funds which are available to assist the industry to make that change because the resource is quite different, and then also working around some of the other strategic opportunities that may present themselves.

You're right in terms of the importance of climate change to the future of forestry. It is the only carbon negative industry that's practiced at scale around the country, and there are some major opportunities for us as we use a natural product that stores carbon and also provides the goods that we need across a whole range of areas of the economy, from timber to build our homes, to fibre for a plastic-free future, and carbon capture naturally. I'll pass to the team at State Growth if there's anything further to add.

Ms WEBB - If I may say, to help shape that further detail, I'm interested to know, we're allocating \$650,000 just in this one year for it, is my read of it, and we're expecting people to be applying for these grants. Broadly, what are we expecting them to be applying for them for?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through the process and we want to be supporting growth opportunities in the industry, potential options coming up, including advice on how the commitment can be implemented, but the listed focus for the initiatives are on industry engagement, growing the supply of private timber and value adding and product diversification, which is in some of the areas that we've discussed. I'll pass to the team at State Growth.

Ms PINTO - Thank you, through you, minister. Carrying on from the key areas the minister referred to, there's been a really important body of work that Private Forest has been undertaking just over the last few months, working really closely with industry, looking at other jurisdictions to see how a framework for creating that relationship between private growers, whether that could be farmers themselves, or they're expanding into other lines of crop because basically trees, if you think about it, are another form of development on a farm.

They're looking at how, through that, they could effectively grow the supply source through private programs and provide that access through to developers that would then process that raw product. They're looking at the mechanisms, and they've progressed quite well through that program. Part of this funding would be timely to support for that next phase of looking to establish more mechanisms around that market. That's one area that's quite key.

Others in the carbon space, there's - again, if I talk about Private Forest Tas, they've run a really effective program, Stems for CO₂, which is providing support, again, in the space of giving private landowners that have got this opportunity to expand and diversify their own business from a private business perspective and to go into an opportunity to not only look at, as I was just saying before, selling the raw product, but also the benefits that you get through carbon markets and the value of those. There's some work around that as well.

What we will be seeking to do is look at the opportunities to leverage and deliver some other programs for the industry.

Ms WEBB - All right. When is that expected to be delivered? When will that be opened for people to put in for grants?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through the process. Happy to provide an update. I'm not sure if there's anything more we can share.

Ms PINTO - Thank you. Through you, minister, acknowledging we are towards the tail end of the financial year that this Budget relates to, we would be seeking to look to progress to programs early into next year, and there is always an opportunity if funds cannot be leveraged within that given year to roll over into the next year if that would be needed. What we'd be looking to do is work through the minister a comprehensive program of how we would apply those funds and if need be, to make sure that those funds made are available in the best form to industry. We do always have that opportunity.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - In relation to the On Island Processing Program, I note that the application closed for that in July, I believe. Two questions: (1) has it been fully uptaken; and (2) when is it likely to be released to receive the grant funding for that?

PUBLIC

Ms PINTO - We're still going through a process of evaluation at the moment. I'll check with the team on timing. Yes, we're going through an evaluation process at the moment. I'll check in a moment as to the actual timing of when we will be providing out those grants and come back to you.

Mr HISCUTT - Do you know what the uptake was, if you can check that as well, whether the uptake was to the completion of the full amount or -

Ms PINTO - I believe it's been very, yes, thumbs up. It's been very positive. We tend to find it's a really positive program. It's obviously designed to assist industry in modifying and transitioning across, particularly for plantation raw product, but also to go into value-adding products. It's been really successful in that regard.

Mr HISCUTT - I noticed the company names from the round 1 which was in 2001, I think it was. Are they the same companies that are able to apply for the round 2 as well, or has there been any restriction there?

Ms PINTO - I'm gonna do a check. I don't believe that minimises their eligibility, no, because, obviously, all the programs that were granted funding have all now reached completion. It's around providing that opportunity to the market to continue to modify.

Mr HISCUTT - Perfect. Thank you very much for the answers.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any further questions?

Ms WEBB - I just have one.

CHAIR - Ms Webb, yes.

Ms WEBB - One little more, another one relating to the On Island Processing program. We mentioned that as part of the explanation for variation in the appropriation table, the 2024-25 Budget initiative On Island Processing program, and when that program was in the 2024-25 Budget papers, it was referenced as being something that would be a first round of \$6 million to seven projects that would generate an expected \$23 million of investment. Was that expectation of investment met by the program, and if so, how did we quantify that to confirm that it delivered what was intended?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. I will refer that to the team at State Growth with that information.

Ms PINTO - Yes, certainly. Of that \$6 million, which was allocated to seven projects during that first round, and those projects were projected to generate around \$23 million in matching investment from industry and create at least 30 new direct and indirect jobs. Building on that success because, obviously, not only is that driving into that local economy, but as I noted, this program's all about adaption and building that focus. Building on that success, the government then committed an additional \$5 million in funding towards the second round of the program, and that's the round we're in at the moment.

Ms WEBB - Yes, but my question was did we check that that occurred? The expected \$23 million of investment and the jobs that you mentioned, did that occur from that first round of \$6 million to seven projects?

Ms PINTO - In terms of monitoring the output performance, I probably would need to check, through you, minister. I don't have that information to hand, but I can see if we do keep a record of what the results have been for those businesses from those investments.

Ms WEBB - Can you take that on notice? I would appreciate it if you could take it on notice. Clearly, if we're going to make claims about what a particular funded program is going to achieve, it's probably important for us to ask ourselves afterwards, did it, in fact, achieve that?

Ms PINTO - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any further questions on forest policy? If not, if we could move, please, minister, to Mineral Resources.

4.2 Mineral Resources

CHAIR - Do you need to bring anyone to the table?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. While Mr Morton's coming to the table, I've got an update as well.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, minister, and through you, to the member from Nelson's question on the totals, so for the business, industry and resource portfolio in the 2025-26 Budget, it's \$40 million; 2026-27, \$8 million; 2027-28, \$7 million; 2028-29, \$7 million.

Innovation, science and the digital economy: in the 2025-26 Budget, it's \$1.8 million; 2026-27, \$1.3; 2027-28, \$1.3; 2028-29, \$1.4 million.

Small business: in the 2025-26, it's \$5 million; in 2026-27, it's \$2.9 million; in 2027-28, it's \$2.9 million; and in 2028-29, \$2.1 million.

Forgiving for roundings, that will agree to the table \$12.2 million, the revenue from appropriation by a portfolio and output.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I appreciate -

Mr ELLIS - To correct the secretary, 2025-26 for small business is actually \$4.9 million.

Ms WEBB - \$4.9 million, okay. He's rounded the wrong way.

Mr ELLIS - He's rounded the wrong way off \$49 million. Transparency and accountability. That's how we roll.

Ms WEBB - Appreciate the attention to detail.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, appreciate that.

Mr ELLIS - No worries, Chair. Alastair Morton, director of Mineral Resources Tasmania is at the table with us.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. If I could start off the questioning with regard to mineral resources. At this time, are you able to provide any more details about the recent direction to Hellyer Gold Mines to cease mining operations at Hellyer mine?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. The government issued a cease works notice at Hellyer Gold Mine site on Tuesday 11 November 2025 due to multiple and significant non-compliances under the *Mineral Resources Development Act 1995*. These non-compliances were in regard to both financial and operational obligations under the act and mining lease conditions. This action was the only appropriate course of action given the nature of the compliance issues. It's not appropriate for a company to extract Crown-owned minerals and substantively fail to follow the regulatory framework.

I understand that Mineral Resources Tasmania - or from Mineral Resources Tasmania that Hellyer is committed to paying all the outstanding amounts in the very near future. I further understand that some progress is being made with regard to the various other and significant compliance issues. As I've previously stated, if the company can resolve these issues, then operations can recommence quickly and lawfully. I'll pass to Mr Morton, if there's anything further to add.

Mr MORTON - No. Through you, minister, that's captured it well.

CHAIR - Thank you. Will this cessation of operations at Hellyer have any wider impact on Tasmania's critical minerals strategy?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of the Critical Minerals Strategy, many of the minerals that make up Hellyer's profile, I suppose you could say, are more in the base and precious metals rather than critical metals. More broadly speaking, though, we want this to be a pathway to Hellyer going back into production. As we mentioned, if the company can resolve these compliance issues, then operations can commence quickly and lawfully. As far as, I think, some matters that are on the record, production from Hellyer had significantly reduced prior to the compliance action being taken. I'm not sure if there's anything further that State Growth will need.

Mr MORTON - Through you, minister, in recent times, there've been limited production, and they were largely producing things like lead and zinc. In terms of critical minerals, no, and the strategy, no, no impact.

CHAIR - I was just wondering, then, how is MRT and the government working with Hellyer Mines to ensure ongoing compliance and the restarting of operations at the site?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, thanks. Thanks, Jeb. There's been significant work with MRT, working directly with Hellyer, and I thank Mr Morton and his team for that work over the recent weeks, but also in probably about the 12 months leading up to the compliance action that was taken as well. MRT has been working closely with Hellyer to try to ensure that they're complying with their obligations. I'll pass to Mr Morton.

PUBLIC

Mr MORTON - Yes, thank you, minister. I don't want to get too much into the detail because we're sitting down. We're working really closely with the company at the moment.

CHAIR - No, that's all right.

Mr MORTON - My focus, really, is in sitting down in good faith and working through the substantive matters at hand. Probably other than to say we're making progress, but some of the issues are probably what I regard as complex and significant. So making progress, but on some fronts, there's more to do.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Can I just follow up on that?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms WEBB - I have to apologise because I was trying to deal with a question on notice. So I missed the first part of the exchange, and it might have been answered, but let me put the question, and, please, someone just tell me we answered that already. Can you confirm that in relation to the Hellyer Gold Mine having to cease operation that that was in relation to non-compliance issues relating to environmental conditions to some extent?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to Mr Morton.

Mr MORTON - Thank you, minister, and through you, it was relating to a number of matters. Some was unpaid debts to the Crown, which has been sort of discussed. There were also some environmental matters, and there were also what I would describe as operational matters. So there's a whole range of issues.

Ms WEBB - Sure. I just wanted to clarify there were environmental compliance issues in the mix. In relation to that, did the operator's licence contain an environmental bond and, if so, what were the conditions and details of that bond, and was that able to be brought to bear here in any sense?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass that to Mr Morton.

Mr MORTON - Thank you, minister, and through you. It's standard process that all companies have a mine lease. In companies of this nature, they need approval from the EPA and council. As part of the process, there needs to be an approved decommission rehabilitation plan, which includes us setting a bond or a security deposit, it's called. That security deposit only triggers if the company abandons the site. That hasn't occurred at the moment. We're still working through the issues. The mine lease is still in place. What I will say is the amount of the bond is one of the issues that we're working through with the company at the moment.

Ms WEBB - Can I check on the timeline of what happened? I'm wondering when you first became aware of the noncompliance concerns, particularly the environmental ones that are part of the mix. The company spokesperson in their response in the public domain said that the government's direction to close came as a shock. I'm wondering what was the timeline of when we first became aware of the noncompliance concerns and then when the company was

first engaged with about those noncompliance concerns. For the purposes of this, if you could just focus on the environmental aspects, because that's the bit I've been asking about.

Mr MORTON - Through you, minister. In general terms, we've been working with Hellyer Gold on noncompliances, which largely relate to the financial aspect, since 2023, so for some time.

The environmental matters were something we became aware of more recently. I'm not going to go into too much detail on them because we're working really closely with the EPA, and primarily they're in their area, but I will make a general comment that a breach of other legislation or EPA conditions or permits actually does represent a breach of mine lease conditions as well.

Ms WEBB - I don't need you to go into detail that's not appropriate at this time, but I am interested in the timeline of it. You said it was more recent that the environmental noncompliance issues, we became - is that this year or within a few months of now, and then at what point did we engage with the company about those matters?

Mr MORTON - Through you, minister. Let's just keep it at the last couple of months we've become aware of that. All these matters, we've been working through with the company. When we're aware of them, we will raise them and work them through.

Ms WEBB - Based on that, it doesn't sound like the company should've felt that it came as a shock that the government took this decision. Would that be fair to say? It seems unusual to think they would be shocked if we've been working with them over a period of time.

Mr ELLIS - What we'll say is we've been working with them for an extended period of time.

Ms WEBB - Okay, thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. The last question that I have: given the drop in both revenue and expenses in the budget for MRT in the forward Estimates, are you confident that compliance assessment will be properly resourced, and what activities and operations at MRT will lose resourcing over the next few years?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Chair. I really appreciate the work of our MRT team. You will find significantly strong support from industry that's operating in Tasmania and also industry that's considering investing in Tasmania for the way that the MRT team do their work. They are highly professional and quite an exceptional regulator for their scale, and so really pleased with the work that Mr Morton and his team have been doing. I'll pass to the team at State Growth to talk further through the financials.

Mr MORTON - Thank you, minister, and through you. It's probably worth noting, in terms of the figures that are given in output 4.2, what we've got effectively is the operational money, and we've got initiative money sitting on the top of that. This reduction here is reflecting that some of the initiative money, particularly the Critical Minerals Strategy, is currently scheduled to finish. The operational money, the money that we've got to do compliance and various other things hasn't changed.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Hasn't changed. That's good to know.

Mr LIMKIN - Through you, minister. Obviously, the department takes safety very seriously, particularly in this space, because it does impact conditions of the lease. If Mr Morton did need additional resources, part of my job as secretary is to look at within the entire department and the skills we have to make sure that we meet those obligations, and I will continue to do that.

CHAIR - Is just to provide them. That's good for you to hear.

Mr ELLIS - One of the other things probably to note as well, Chair, is that we actually had the second-highest rate of mining royalties on record in Tasmania in 2024-25, which, of course, take all the credit: around \$71 million in royalties and over \$2.2 million in fees and rentals. That's really encouraging, because income from royalties paid by mining companies funds essential services that benefit all Tasmanians.

4.3 Grants and Subsidies

CHAIR - Thank you. Do we have any further questions on this area? If not, we'll go to grants and subsidies. Do we have any questions, members, on grants and subsidies? Thank you very much. Thank you very much for everyone coming to the table over the course of the day.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. Appreciate your time.

CHAIR - Really appreciate the time. Thank you. If we could stop the broadcast, please.

The Committee adjourned at 5.15 p.m.