



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A**

Hon. Roger Jaensch MP

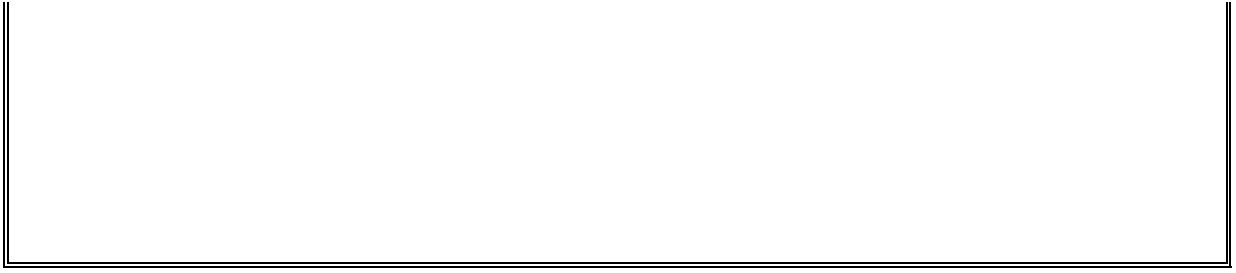
**Friday 27 September 2024**

### **MEMBERS**

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)  
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)  
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP  
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

### **OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS**

Ms Ella Haddad MP  
Mrs Miriam Beswick MP  
Mr Rob Fairs MP  
Ms Helen Burnett MP  
Ms Rebecca White MP  
Ms Cecily Rosol MP  
Mr Simon Behrakis MP



## **IN ATTENDANCE**

### **HON. ROGER JAENSCH MP**

Minister for Children and Youth, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

### **Melissa Gray**

Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform, Department of Premier and Cabinet

### **Steve Gall**

Director, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, Department of Premier and Cabinet

### **Shane Gregory**

Associate Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet

### **Courtney Hurworth**

Chief Reform Officer, Department of Premier and Cabinet

### **Jenny Burgess**

Associate Secretary, Department of Children and Young People

### **Craig Woodfall**

Director Community & Custodial Youth Justice, Department of Children and Young People

### **Sue McKerracher**

Acting Deputy Secretary, Children and Families, Department of Children and Young People

### **Claire Lovell**

Executive Director, Children and Families, Department of Children and Young People



# PUBLIC

**The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.**

**CHAIR** (Mr Wood) - Thank you. The time being 9.00 a.m., the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Community Services will commence. Welcome, minister and everyone.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Good morning, Chair. Committee members, good to be with you this morning at the table. I have with me Mellissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform at DPAC, and Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director, Community Partnerships and Priorities in DPAC.

**CHAIR** - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Community Services is 1.5 hours. Just to note, the resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

Also, I remind everybody to be careful of the microphones as it can be sometimes difficult for Hansard to hear. I ask that members speak one at a time and not over each other again to assist *Hansard* with their job. Minister, would you care to make an opening?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would. Thank you, Chair, and thanks again for committee members' time this morning.

The Tasmanian Government is supporting the community sector to deliver essential services needed to improve the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The 2024-25 Budget addresses the needs of Tasmanians here and now as well as supporting longer term structural improvements, including the development and release of some significant strategies and action plans by 30 June 2025, including a refreshed and extended Carers Action Plan, an Older Tasmanians Action Plan, Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy, Volunteering Strategy, LGBTIQA+ Framework and Action Plan and a multicultural action plan.

This Budget eases hip pocket pressure for Tasmanians through energy bill relief payments, half price bus fares, and healthy lunches in schools. We're providing NILS, a No Interest Loan Scheme Tasmania, with \$2.1 million over three years to deliver up to 2000 additional interest free loans a year for Tasmanians on low incomes and \$500,000 a year for the next four years to extend the Energy Saver Subsidy.

We're investing \$9.1 million to deliver food relief and develop food resilience for Tasmanians, including \$1 million to continue all increased emergency food relief funding for 2024-25: \$5 million for capital upgrades, including \$2.5 million towards cold storage upgrades for Loaves and Fishes Tasmania; \$120,000 over the next two years for each of our food vans, Gran's Vans in the north-west, Mission Beat in the north and Loui's Vans in the south; \$75,000 for a vehicle for Eat Well Tasmania; \$200,000 to develop a new whole-of-government Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy. The important Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy will be developed in partnership with stakeholders and will be completed in time for the 2025-26 budget.

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We're investing \$18 million in our neighbourhood houses to continue delivering outcomes for local communities across Tasmania, including \$50,000 a year in additional operational funding for each house for the next three years, \$6 million in new capital funding over the next three years, the continuation and expansion of the place-based Community Connector Program with a total of \$6.6 million over four years, \$150,000 in 2024-25 for the Hood in the Hub Community Garden initiative at the Warrane/Mornington Neighbourhood Centre. I thank our neighbourhood houses for supporting Tasmanians, particularly those been affected by recent extreme weather events. I visited a number of houses during the relief effort and witnessed first-hand the work being done, providing hot meals, warm refuge and a place to come together and recharge batteries, actual and social for people who had been displaced by the weather or the lack of power in their homes.

We're investing \$2.1 million to support our 71 Men's Sheds across the state as a place to meet and share and connect for men, including \$200,000 a year for the Tasmanian Men's Shed Association for the next two years, \$175,000 a year for the next two years in competitive grants programs, \$1 million for a capital investment program and one-off funding for a number of sheds themselves.

We are supporting older Tasmanians with digital inclusion through \$150,000 a year for the next two years, in partnership with the Council on the Ageing. Our Ticket to Wellbeing Program will help older people stay active while saving them money, with \$1 million to be provided for the program over two years. We're supporting COTA Tasmania to continue their advocacy, Seniors Week and prevention of elder abuse activities through an additional \$200,000 each year for the next two years.

We're continuing our commitment to the LGBTIQ+ community by providing supports and services through provision of \$250,000 each year over the next two years. I look forward to the release of the new LGBTIQ+ Framework and Action Plan 'Proud and Equal'.

We're supporting our Tasmanian volunteers who are critical to communities across the state. Our investment includes \$520,000 a year for two years to Volunteering Tasmania, which includes the delivery of the Volunteering Awards, \$150,000 to develop Tasmania's first Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan, and \$44,250 to Meals on Wheels to support existing and attract new volunteers.

We're also building our support to our multicultural communities by providing over \$2.1 million over the next two years, including \$500,000 to support social connection and a sense of belonging for migrant and refugee people and communities with \$200,000 for an inclusive grants program. \$400,000 over two years for a new grant program for multicultural small businesses with up to \$5,000 to help finance projects that build capacity and new skills. \$175,000 a year for the next two years -

**Ms ROSOL** - Excuse me, Chair, I was wondering how long this is going to be? It's been a very long time already.

**CHAIR** - I'm sure the minister is very close to wrapping up. We are here all day, thank you, Ms Rosol.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. I note that there's quite a bit to talk about in this area. I wanted to cover the key points.

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**Ms ROSOL** - I have lots of questions to ask also.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Our multicultural community, though, is very important to us. I'd like to read through a few more of these items where we're investing public money to support them - \$80,000 over two years to establish a new multicultural small community festival grants program; \$75,000 a year for the next two years to the Moonah Multicultural Hub; we're also committed to funding the Festa Italia Festival, the Estia Street Festival, the Chinese Lunar New Year Festival and the annual Diwali Festival; and \$50,000 over two years for a multicultural liaison role within the Mersey Leven region.

Our government's aware of the importance of indexation for community sector organisations and that's why we've announced, for the first time, the indexation rate that will apply for the next four years. The rate of indexation will be 3.5 per cent in 2024-25 and 3 per cent for the remaining three years, compounding each year. This commitment to indexation will invest an additional \$25.97 million into the community services sector over the next four years. This will uplift the base each year, which ensures real growth for funding to these community sector organisations. This provides certainty and supports longer term planning.

In 2023, our government committed to longer term funding agreements for our community sector organisations. Longer term agreements, where appropriate, will provide certainty for organisations and assist with recruitment and retention of staff. We'll also be implementing an outcomes framework that will link to the new Tasmanian wellbeing framework that's currently under development. With the development of an outcomes framework, we will look at the current reporting requirements and what can be simplified and consolidated to reduce administrative burden on both community sector organisations and the Tasmanian government agencies that work with them.

This Budget, Mr Chairman, supports Tasmanians when they need it, while at the same time helping to develop strong communities and enhancing our regions through longer term strategic action. I'm happy to take the committee's questions.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. Ms Haddad.

**Ms HADDAD** - Thank you, Chair. Thank you, minister, that was a very comprehensive opening statement. We have questions on lots of what you've mentioned.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Good.

**Ms HADDAD** - Short output - I want to start with longer term funding agreements. I know that it was a welcome commitment that you made at the TasCOSS budget briefing and in public that you will be moving to five-year funding agreements.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In answer to your question even.

**Ms HADDAD** - Yes, thank you for taking my question at that forum. The point I'm trying to make is this work's been ongoing since 2015-16. Do you have a timeframe for when organisations will transition to five-year funding agreements? Can you indicate how many staff you have in your department specifically working on this task?

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**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Ms Gray to be ready to answer you on staff. In the meantime, yes, we want to make sure that we have the right sorts of funding agreements in place to deliver the outcomes that we want for Tasmanians. We are aware that there have been a number of community service organisations in Tasmania which have had very similar fixed-term grants for many years in a row and we might be better off for them to have longer term agreements based on outcomes and with things like indexation recognising the changing cost of delivery over time for them.

There are over 400 agreements with community organisations across the various agencies of government. There is a range of business models in the community services sector as well, so it's not one-size-fits-all. We also have a Treasury that is used to four-year outlooks, not five-year outlooks, and so there's work going on with them as well. My hope is that by the end of the 2024 calendar year, we will have the models set out and over the first half of next year we will be able to go to the community sector organisations who fit different models and talk to them about how we make the transition to a longer term agreement.

I need to take advice about Treasury's instructions and probity and other things about how we can change agreements mid-term. If our aim is to cut down on transactions and uncertainty, I would prefer it if we didn't wait for the current agreements to expire and go through that again.

**Ms HADDAD** - They'll all be expiring at different dates across different agencies.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They will all be expiring at different dates, that's right, so I'd rather us make this transition as soon as we are able. Not all organisations and not all things that we fund will be amenable to longer term funding agreements, but the principle would be that where we've got recurrent or continuous or permanent service delivery -

**Ms HADDAD** - It's about providing certainty for them isn't it? Their operations, being able to employ staff, and so on.

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

**Ms HADDAD** - The second part of the question was about -

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - One of the other things for us to get right is working out how we overlap the processes, so at the end of an agreement, regardless of how long it is, we have the next agreement lined up or certainty about whether there is going to be one. Some overlaps, say at the end of year four, we'll be providing some certainty about how a new five-year agreement might come about. That means you don't have staff six or 12 months out from the end of their contract moving on.

**Ms HADDAD** - That is welcome news as well because not knowing is tricky for community organisations. They can assume, but without an ongoing agreement they don't know if they need to be making provisions for redundancies and winding-up. That overlap will be welcome, then. The other part of the question was around how many people are working on this task.



**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Ms Gray if she'd like to comment on that.

**Ms GRAY** - I will start by acknowledging that this has been a matter of interest for the committee member for some years, purchasing for outcomes as well, and thank you for your interest in this really important thing.

We're developing the model and working on guidelines in consultation with the community sector and co-designed with the sector as well. Because the contracts just sit with DPAC, it also involves liaising with a lot of government agencies - DPAC, the Department for Education, Children and Young People, Health, Justice, Homes Tasmania and also Treasury. In our core team there are about three FTEs working on this, given the tight timelines, but there are also people in all of those agencies who are our key contacts.

**Ms HADDAD** - Thank you. Ms Gray answered the next question I was going to ask, which was exactly that. The work is more complex now because of the various departmental restructures. I know how challenging it is to get buy-in from departments across the public sector, so it's good you have those key contacts. Are you confident you'll be able to implement this model for all community-service organisations because it doesn't matter to them which government agency their funding stream is coming from. They need to know that they have certainty of funding and some consistency around funding arrangements across the sector.

I'll quickly put the second part of that question on the record and I put it on notice if it's necessary. Could we have the number of agreements that are funded under your portfolio and a number broken down by how long each organisation's agreement is? I know some people have moved, some organisations have had to move to one- or two-year agreements. If we could have a breakdown of the contracts within your purview and how long their current funding agreements are.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. I'll ask the department and advisers to confer on what information we have to hand on that and or take on notice.

**Ms HADDAD** - It doesn't have to be the names of the organisations, just a tally.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In relation to the other question, the commitment we made didn't refer to departments, it referred to government contracts with community-sector organisations. We have a policy that applies equally right across government. We'll come up with the mechanisms for that and work with Treasury and all relevant agencies to ensure that it's rolled out in a consistent way.

We do know that in the period between the end of last financial year and now that agencies have dealt with the bridging period in slightly different ways. When it comes to things like the application of the indexation, we are in a position to make that effectively back-paid, so everyone gets the benefit of a 3.5 per cent indexation this year. Nobody misses out on that and that should equalise across the board regardless of what individual departments have paid out.

We will still have short-term agreements, but they'll be for short-term activities. Where we have recurrent business-as-usual work, it should not be a short fixed-term grant.

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**Ms HADDAD** - Yes, that's the point. It's the core funding that needs to be secure. Everyone understands there will be short-term contracts that come in and out for project-based work, but it's the uncertainty around core funding agreements and that they're, I would argue, too low, that puts pressure on the sector. Do you want me to put that second part on notice because I know that time's rolling on?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Do you want to speak to that at all now?

**Ms GRAY** - Yes. We have the number, but not the length, the term of agreements.

**Ms HADDAD** - You can take that on notice.

**Ms GRAY** - Yes, that would be great. Thanks.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think I'm meant to say yes, I'll accept that on notice. I'm just following the instructions from the Chair. He's very strict and I don't want to get it wrong.

**Ms HADDAD** - Minister, would you be happy for me to put that on notice?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would be. Thank you very much.

**Ms ROSOL** - You just mentioned indexation, minister. I have some questions on that because community services are vitally important and provide essential services. The indexation offered to the community sector by the Tasmanian government hasn't kept pace with CPI for 20 years. While it's good to see the indexation increase in this Budget with 3.5 per cent for this year and 3 per cent in following years in the forward Estimates, it doesn't go far enough because community services have been underfunded for years. They've said they need approximately a 4.8 per cent uplift in indexation. I note the government's managed to find hundreds of millions of dollars for a stadium. Why have you ignored community services, please, for the funding they need to provide their vital services?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for the question, Ms Rosol. We haven't ignored the sector. We've heard them loud and clear that they want certainty and that they want to see that there is growth built into their their funding over time. We've provided certainty by announcing proper compounding indexation of payments with a four-year outlook, which they can plan around and plan for within their business. It's set above Treasury's forecast CPI curve for Tasmania. It is in line with public sector wages across the same period, as well as benchmarks to guide the level that we've struck. In total the value of the indexation alone over the next four years will be nearly \$26 million to the sector in growth.

There is a number of factors that drive costs for the cost of doing business for community sector organisations. Some of them will be shared across the sector, some will affect different types of organisations differently, depending on their size, their staffing structures and those sorts of things. We will continue to have a discussion with the sector about the sustainability of their funding and their resources, just as we have had a conversation with them over the last few years around their workforce and development. As a continuing investment in our sector development plan, we'll work with TasCOSS and their member organisations to ensure that we're addressing these sorts of issues. In the meantime we're providing certainty that they never had before, and \$26 million additional funding over the next four years.

## PUBLIC

**Ms ROSOL** - I guess the community organisations are still saying that that's not enough for them to keep providing the services they need to. They're saying that they've had to cut back on programs and that the indexation that's being provided won't be enough for them to continue to provide things. If they're looking at cutting services, what services are you suggesting that they cut? What's acceptable for them to cut, if they're not getting the funding they need to provide the services?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm not suggesting that anyone cut services. Where we have organisations that have received short and fixed term grant funding within the last couple of years, the expectation for those would be that the cost of delivering the services were factored into those agreements at the beginning. For those organisations that have longer term agreements, the indexation and some of the additional payments that have been made over recent years have aimed to meet those additional costs, or growth in costs, of delivering the services.

Where we want to get to next is with longer-term funding agreements that are based on outcomes - one of the reasons for doing that is we don't lock in one way of doing things in a fixed contract with a line item by line item itemised budget that we've funded, that people need to report and acquit against. The focus will be on delivering an outcome and freeing those organisations up to find the best way to do it, to use their resources efficiently and well, to partner, to innovate. That's another way of ensuring efficient use of funds as well. It will reduce the administrative burden of managing short-term contracts with lots of reporting and acquittals processes. We believe we can save further percentage points on costs of doing business, improve outcomes, and keep talking with the sector and with individual organisations about their needs to continue operating and delivering the services that we're purchasing from them.

**Mrs BESWICK** - The needs of community have been changing over time. We have significant concerns around mental health, family breakdowns, and lack of connection in the community. How are you and your department developing contracts and services which deliver flexibility - you have touched on that - for the community, but also allow for measurements to ensure best value for money?

**Mr JAENSCH** - One of the things that we want to introduce, as I've touched on, is an outcomes framework for the sector, so that we have a rolling conversation with the various organisations and their peak bodies, and the community more broadly, about what it is that's most important. Some of these strategies and action plans that I've listed in my overview statement will help guide that, for volunteering for the ageing, for digital literacy and inclusion and those sorts of issues. Then we have a procurement process which is based on achieving those outcomes the best way we can. That's the way we keep relevant, and we can measure what we're achieving, not just what we're delivering. That's good for efficient use of public funds, but also should give the sector some flexibility in how it delivers those outcomes. Does that answer your question?

**Mrs BESWICK** - In a vague way.

**Mr FAIRS** - Can I talk to you about our volunteering strategy? As you and I both know, without volunteers, nothing gets done.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Correct.

**Mr FAIRS** - I'm sure the committee agrees with that, no matter what area it is. Can you share how the government is addressing the future of volunteering here, following the state of volunteering report, which revealed a shift in the way people want to volunteer these days?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I was briefed recently by the new CEO and the new chair of Volunteering Tasmania on the 2023 State of Volunteering Report. The report gives us a better understanding of the complex and changing nature of volunteering in Tasmania. I thank Volunteering Tasmania for commissioning the report, with support from our government. It found that 332,000-odd Tasmanians - nearly 70 per cent of us - gave their time to volunteer in 2023 - you're one of them, I reckon, Mr Fairs - volunteering - not you personally, but collectively - 89.4 million hours of their time.

Volunteering is good for us individually, as well as the communities that we that we work with and the people we help. We also realise that it's changing, though. More people are choosing to volunteer in casual ways; fewer volunteers are participating in more formalised and organisation-based activities.

We need a strategic approach to address this changing nature of volunteering. That's why we're investing \$150,000 this year for development of our first volunteering strategy. We've listened to the sector's calls to resource the strategy. A strategy and a five-year action plan will be developed with Volunteering Tasmania and the sector they work with. We'll consult with a broad range of stakeholders across the sector, to understand the challenges and opportunities they face as well. We recognise the work that Volunteering Tasmania does. We want to recognise that and support it, with \$520,000 a year for the next two years for their peak body funding, and also to run the Tasmanian Volunteering Awards, which recognises the positive contribution of volunteers right across our state. I look forward to attending the awards ceremony and meeting this year's recipients in November.

**Ms HADDAD** - I don't want to get into the weeds on indexation, because you have already covered quite a bit of that in answer to Ms Rosol's question earlier. The point I want to make - and the question I want to ask you - is that what I'm hearing back from the sector is that while their commitment to indexation is welcome, it's being applied to core funding amounts that have been too low for a number of years. It won't keep up with the demands of other cost pressures that are rising for all not-for-profits and businesses - power, insurance, rents, and so on - so they are either going to have to cut services or staff, or both.

My question is: will you commit to a review of those core funding amounts, outside of the model that you're working on with indexation ? Will you commit to a review, at least of the contracts that are within your control, of what their core funding dollar amount is, and if it's sufficient to actually fund the services that you're purchasing from those organisations?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for your question. I understand where it's coming from, as well. Whenever we enter into new agreements, the agreements have to be reasonable and they have to be agreed by all parties as being appropriate to what we're agreeing to deliver. I'm not going to pre-empt any across the board shifts there, but my understanding is that when we enter into an agreement between parties to deliver something, we do so in full knowledge of what's being asked for, what it takes to deliver that. We need to be a willing buyer, willing seller of services agreeing on reasonable terms to these things. We'd take that approach. I'd take that approach into any future agreements that we have with community sector organisations.

## PUBLIC

**Ms HADDAD** - My next question is going to a different topic. You mentioned the work that your department's doing to support LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians. I know that's something that both of us care about. I know that this question is going to overlap a number of portfolios, but that's, by its nature, often the case when there are these whole-of-government strategies supporting cohorts of our community.

The question is specifically around conversion practices legislation. The government committed to introducing conversion practices legislation to protect LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians from the very real harm that these dangerous and discredited practices inflict. There was a draft bill released for consultation. There's widespread concern in the community that the draft bill didn't reflect the TLRI report's recommendations and could have the counter-intuitive effect of increasing the likelihood of people being subjected to conversion practices in this state.

My question is a quick one. Will you have conversations with your colleagues, the Premier, and the Attorney-General to revise that draft bill to make sure that a final bill can reach the Chamber that does what's intended, which is to stamp out these dangerous pseudo-science practices in Tasmania?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's important upfront for me to confirm that legislation is the responsibility of the Attorney-General on behalf of the government. In terms of questions around it specifically, I'd have to refer them through to him.

**Ms HADDAD** - I know that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - However, the whole purpose of releasing draft legislation and discussion papers and points is to get feedback from the community. I encourage all stakeholders with an interest or concern or information on this matter to take full advantage of the public comment period and make their case very clear. The government puts documents out like this to hear the feedback and to take it into account before finalising legislation. Then we have the opportunity to debate it in our parliament. I'm confident that that process is designed to enable a full exploration of all the issues relating to these topics.

**Ms HADDAD** - Thank you. I know that community advocates and members of the community are doing that. They are providing that feedback. My question really is to you as the responsible minister for the whole-of-government, LGBTIQ+ framework. Will you make those representations to the Attorney-General on behalf of LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians as well?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll listen to everyone. It's important that we have evidence. It's important that we have the sentiments of the community, the lived experience of individuals, as well as the opinions of experts in the law to ensure that we get legislation right. I'll play my part in that process.

**Ms ROSOL** - Yesterday in minister Street's hearing we heard that the community support levy has \$1.23 million unspent in the bank. I know that Mr Street is responsible for the CSL, but while the community sector is desperate for funds, particularly those who are dealing with the fallout from policies - how is this money unspent? Did you lobby for these funds to be allocated to community services? If not, why not? There's money that's available there that could be used for community services. Did you lobby in any way for that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There was a range of priorities put forward in our election process and through our budget process as well, many of which I listed at the opening of this session today. That's what we're able to secure from the budget process. In terms of what funds remain in areas that other ministers are responsible for, that's a matter for them. I'll continue to advocate for the sector I'm responsible for to secure budget for what we need.

**Ms ROSOL** - Are you saying that, given there's that desperate need for funding in the community sector, that money is available there, the \$1.23 million as a result of that levy? Are you saying you will lobby for that on behalf of Community Services?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's funding which is gathered through a levy and held for specific purposes, whether it's been fully expended through existing grant rounds and programs, or whether it is being held over for the next grant random process. Certainly, we will be encouraging organisations and putting forward submissions of our own to make sure it's put to good use, within the guidelines and the purpose it's collected for.

**Ms BESWICK** - Looking through the budget papers, there are very few outputs and measurements in this portfolio. How are you going to ensure the department is delivering effectively?

**Mr JAENSCH** - One of the features of this portfolio, which I've only been back in since the election, is that it's not mainly about government doing the delivering. It's about government purchasing and funding community sector and non-government organisations to deliver a range of programs and services.

Where we're going next, I've mentioned a couple of times, is the development of an outcomes framework. That means that we're not just year on year providing funding with indexation or without it, with top ups, with or without, et cetera, for various organisations to continue to exist and do the work that they're good at. Rather, we have an agreement with them and across government, about what it is that's most important to do and how we're going to measure whether we're delivering that or not. That'll be used to frame the funding agreements that we have with those organisations. It'll also enable us to better track and measure what's being delivered and achieved against those outcomes.

**Mrs BESWICK** - From a government point of view and department point of view, how are you measuring that they are doing their jobs efficiently and effectively?

**Mr JAENSCH** - How the government is?

**Mrs BESWICK** - How the department manages these outcomes, that makes the contracts, that does these strategies. How are you making sure that they are done in the time, fashion and effectively as they can be?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Maybe I could ask Ms Gray to speak to that, and how the KPIs work in agreements, and where they apply to government's role in those agreements.

**Ms GRAY** - We manage individual contracts and agreements with the funded community sector organisation. There are significant key performance indicators in those agreements and milestones that need to be met before sometimes payments are staged across the agreement. There's quite a rigorous contract management process. As the minister has said,

and there was some discussion in another committee as well, as we move towards the outcomes measurement framework and align that with the 0 to 99 wellbeing framework, that's also being led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, there will be an opportunity to revisit some of the KPIs, some of the performance measures as you outlined, that are currently in the budget paper, which are more output focused rather than outcome focused.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is that covering it?

**Mrs BESWICK** - Not really. I realise that there's contract management stuff going on, but how do you make sure that - I've been on a board where it took two-and-a-half years into a five-year program to finally get their grant approved. How do we make sure that that sort of delay is not happening?

**Ms GRAY** - We do really return to client management. That, I acknowledge, is a significant delay. Without knowing the circumstances of the individual case, I couldn't really speculate as to what may be happening there other than to say that over the past few years we have worked under the TasCOSS Community Services Industry Plan to ensure that we have a sustainable and viable industry.

As the minister's already commented, some of that work has involved really listening to some of the significant challenges that the sector has in relation to granting and funding agreements. We are streamlining, where we can, the number of agreements, but also getting better about providing payments in a timely fashion. There's quite a body of work underway in relation to that, but without knowing the individual circumstances, I couldn't -

**Mrs BESWICK** - So we expect some sort of measurements to be in place at some point that would show us that those sorts of things are happening in a timely fashion?

**Ms GRAY** - Yes.

**Mr FAIRS** - You spoke about multiculturalism and what the government is doing and contributing, et cetera. One thing I'm interested in is if you could update the committee on how the government's enabling a gathering space for the diverse cultural communities here in Hobart.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. We have always supported our multicultural communities and we love them. They enrich our society, make us more worldly people, and more informed, tolerant and inclusive at the same time.

An important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is to support our communities further, to build stronger communities, to eliminate racism, and to celebrate diversity.

The next iteration of our Multicultural Action Plan is in development, informed by over 1000 Tasmanians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Supported by \$105,000 in the budget, the Multicultural Council of Tasmania, the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania and Migrant Resource Centre North conducted extensive community consultations to inform the next plan. Following the consultation process, the emerging plan's vision has been adapted and refined to a harmonious, inclusive and respectful multicultural island where all Tasmanians belong, contribute, achieve and succeed.

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The Tasmanian Government has committed \$500,000 to address racism and foster social cohesion, which directly addresses the outcome's sought of 'We feel safe and we belong' as part of that overall plan. Of that funding, \$200,000 was allocated to a competitive small grants program addressing racism and fostering social cohesion through local place-based partnerships. Applications for the program closed on 30 August and are now being assessed.

One of the ways in which we can encourage social participation is to provide welcoming and accessible places, going to the crux of your question, for people to come together. This is why we are providing \$75,000 a year for the next two years to the Moonah Multicultural Hub, which is a venue for hire managed by the Multicultural Council of Tasmania. It's available for activities organised by and for newly arrived and emerging cultural groups. I was pleased to visit the hub recently and observe it being hired for, I think it was a Tai Chi class, which was very calm. We had to be very careful not to disrupt because everyone was extremely focused on what they were doing. It was fantastic to see a group of people who were new to Tasmania, new to their local community and maybe new to each other as well breathing and moving together silently in this room and enjoying the experience and the social cohesion that that offered there.

We also visited a new commercial kitchen which was close to being completed at the hub, which looks fantastic. That'll allow groups to hire the space for self-catered events, but also be able to support other sorts of sharing and inclusion, which so often happens through food. A lot of people and cultures express their love and hospitality through food. They can literally give people in their community a taste of their culture and their history, their heritage through being able to use a kitchen facility like this to share that with their community. Another worthwhile investment and I look forward to attending more activities and potentially meals at the Moonah Multicultural Hub in the future.

**Ms ROSOL** - Can I clarify the length of answers, please? How long is allocated for answers in the committee today?

**CHAIR** - I'm giving a degree of latitude to all members for questions and answers today. Ms Haddad has the call.

**Ms HADDAD** - Minister, in the 2020-23 Budget there was a provision of \$180 billion for the continuation of time-limited programs. It was in Finance General. There was \$40 million in year 2, rising to \$80 million in year 4, which is 2025-26. That was an acknowledgement that there is a large number of programs funded for just one, two or three years, which I was talking about earlier, which the government didn't have any intention of cutting. A lot of those one-, two- and three-year funding agreements are in funding community organisations. From my reading of this year's Budget, it looks like that provision has been removed from the Budget for this year. Does that mean that there is a plan to cut these time-limited programs, or has it moved somewhere else in the Budget?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll just get some advice. Could you direct us to -

**Ms HADDAD** - It was Finance General of the 2022-23 Budget and I don't have that part open for this year's Budget, but there isn't an equivalent allocation of funding in this year's Budget across the forward Estimates. It was called provision for continuation of time-limited programs in the 2022-23 budget that allocated \$40 million in the 2022-23 year, \$60 million in the 2024-25 year and \$80 million for 2025-26.



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**Mr JAENSCH** - In relation to this portfolio?

**Ms HADDAD** - It was for time-limited programs and there was discussion at the time of that Budget that a lot of those time-limited programs are contracts of between one and three years, many of which are contracts into the community services sector. It doesn't look like that provision has been replicated in this year's Budget. That's what this question is about.

**Mr JAENSCH** - From what you've referred to, it's not clear that this is a portfolio matter or that the time-limited programs referred to are within this scope. That's a matter for the Treasurer.

**Ms HADDAD** - Some of them would be. It's in Finance General, but it was money allocated for one-, two- and three-year contracts across government, many of which are in your portfolio in communities' organisations. Another way to phrase the question is, can you guarantee that there isn't an intention to cut time-limited programs?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm not aware of any cutting of any funded programs, certainly not a whole category of programs. In every year, there are things that are already scheduled to conclude that don't necessarily appear in next year's Budget - those fixed term, fixed time, one-off purchases or initiatives. There will always be evidence of that in some churn, but this is in the general budget paper. I don't think that's mine to comment on portfolio wise. I think it's a matter for the Treasurer.

**Ms HADDAD** - I understand that, but Treasury funds everything. Are you confident that whatever component of that allocation that would have applied to contracts within your control, isn't going to flow through to your department, meaning there isn't enough money? In other words, there might be yet another budget deficit or black hole to continue to fund those time-limited programs of one, two and three years.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm not aware that this Budget has discontinued funding for time-limited initiatives in my portfolio areas. I haven't been involved in any decisions.

**Ms HADDAD** - You are confident that there is budget there to do that, to continue the funding rather not to cut the funding?

**Mr JAENSCH** - For the period that there are agreements, as far as I understand, those agreements will be met.

**Ms HADDAD** - It would be easier to interpret the papers if there was a clear indication in the budget papers of the whole spend on community services and that is difficult to unpick from this year's budget, partly in your own department alone, but also because of the split of contracts across 5, 6, 7 different agencies. It is difficult to actually see a whole picture of the sector now in the budget papers.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is and I think what we need to do when it comes to things like how we do our contracting and how when we make commitments about increasing the terms, outcomes based et cetera, that that applies uniformly, but I would expect that health will always be doing the contracting for health outcomes with its relevant organisations and us with others.

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**Ms HADDAD** - You have to recognise that some of these organisations, many of them actually have contracts across government.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Exactly.

**Ms HADDAD** - So they might have a contract with health and with you and with Justice and with Homes Tasmania and for them it's really burdensome to have to think about which government agency their funding is coming from. It really should be quite seamless for the sector and it isn't right now.

**Mr JAENSCH** - At least consistent

**Ms HADDAD** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Many businesses have multiple clients and strategic partners so we just want to make sure that we're reducing red tape for them and at our end as well because the other thing that we're very aware of, particularly when we're looking at efficiencies and savings as well, is that for every acquittal report, every application for another round of funding, et cetera, someone has to write that report, someone has to read it. Are we generating value all the time and ensuring that we're getting good use of public funds? We need to declutter that to the extent that we can, save the whole system some resources and let more of those dollars be used to deliver outcomes for Tasmanians rather than moving paper around.

**Ms ROSOL** - I just wanted to come back to the Community Support Levy, that's the levy collected from the gambling industry and 25 per cent of it is for the benefit of charitable organisations. That would potentially be community service organisations who are providing support to people who are affected by gambling addictions and we know that they're struggling to meet the need.

That \$1.23 million sitting there, gathered by that levy not allocated to any funds, are you involved in any way in the decision making around how that community benefit the charitable organisations as it's called money is allocated. Do you have any role in that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We know the levy and it's played an important role in our community services sector each year. We do note that from July 2023 we doubled the funding available through the Community Support Fund to deliver services to support people impacted by gambling, education programs to help Tasmanians make informed decisions about gambling, community grants programs to deliver local responses to gambling and research projects to inform support and education directions. There is a funding request process through which CSF funding is available to government agencies which the Treasurer approves based on recommendations provided by the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission.

I understand in the past that there has been significant funds delivered through Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania's engagement. This year \$1.5 million in that category, also scheduled for next year as well, so definitely, if there's a reserve of funds there, there is a process to make it available and we'll be making application for that in my portfolio area.

Can I just highlight that in 2023-24 Community Support Fund Grants Program recipients included Anglicare, Burnie Community House, Georgetown Neighbourhood House, Huon Valley Police and Citizens Club, Live Well Tasmania, and Rokeby Neighbourhood Centre.

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Small grants went to a long list of organisations which I'm sure you won't want me to read all in, but it's one of the sources of grants for community services organisations. I expect that it'll continue to be available to them.

**Ms ROSOL** - Given there's \$1.23 million sitting there unused and there are processes available, will you use those processes to seek funding for services?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's not clear to me that when you're referring to the amount that's available, if it is an amount that is due to be expended through large and small grant programs and government internal applications. I don't think that unspent funds in that levy are returned to Treasury for general revenue use. I expect that they're held for that specific purpose they were collected for. That's how levies tend to work.

There are grants programs that the community has access to and internally across government we can make application for.

**Ms ROSOL** - That's interesting because yesterday minister Street said it's just sitting there; it's a surplus. So, it's available and could be used. Will you know that it's there, follow up on that and seek some funding from that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll definitely follow that up with him, but as a levy that's collected from the public for a particular purpose, if there is a balance in an account, there are rules about how it's used and there are processes through which application can be made and decisions are made about it. I'd expect that those rules would continue to apply and we need to make sure that that money is working for the purposes it was collected for?

**Mrs BESWICK** - Minister given that we've had obviously quite a late budget this year and you have mentioned that indexations will be backdated, how quickly are we going to get a lot of these grants and approvals out the door and when can we expect that those budgets will be completed?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The roll-out of the indexation can only apply after our Budget is passed through both Houses. As soon as that happens, then there is an account to work with. I might ask Ms Gray, what's the process and the time frame for that sort of reconciling that uplift in indexation.

**Ms GRAY** - Yes, as the minister said, once the Budget is passed - and minister has mentioned the modelling work and the guidelines work that we're doing with the sector - we would expect that we'll just be getting on to rolling-out the commitment as soon as possible.

**Mr FAIRS** - Minister, can you update the committee on how the state government's addressing long-term food security please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - As I mentioned earlier, we are in the process of investing \$200 000 from this Budget in a Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy, where hopefully the first stages will be in place in time to inform the 2025-26 state budget. In the meantime, there's about \$7 million committed in the Budget to support emergency food relief programs across the state while we're taking that longer-term outlook through the strategy, Mr Fairs.

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The strategic work will be done in partnership with major emergency food relief providers, including Loaves & Fishes, Food Bank, the Tasmanian Food Security Coalition, our agricultural sector, our charities and social enterprises, neighbourhood houses, Eat Well, School Food Matters, transport and logistics stakeholders as well as the hospitality sector.

We've seen food resilience in action recently when the state was affected by adverse weather events. Through that, we were able to boost some funding for Foodbank and Loaves & Fishes, \$50,000 each, and also create a boost for our Neighbourhood Houses, \$255,000 across the state. Between them, they know what to do to get food into people's bellies who need it in a hurry.

What we found is that people are already turning up to their Neighbourhood Houses, even those who've never been in one before. The power was out for days at a time, they brought their kids and their soap and towels. There was there was soup and sausages and things ready for them, they had a hot meal, had a shower and were able to go home. We didn't have to tell them what to do. The Neighbourhood Houses intuitively just fed people because they needed it. Foodbank and Loaves & Fishes stood up their supplies to those houses. We provided more resources for them so that they weren't constrained by their business-as-usual funding, but could meet the needs wherever they were right around the state. We're very grateful for them doing that.

Through the 2023-24 Action Plan that I referred to earlier that's already in place, we've delivered additional funding for the emergency food relief providers, Loaves & Fishes and Foodbank, \$400,000 for School Food Matters for the delivery of the School Lunch Program pilot, \$100,000 to Eat Well Tasmania for nutritional programs delivered through Neighbourhood Houses, \$300,000 for delivery of a Community Food Relief Grants Program for small food relief providers, and \$100,000 to Neighbourhood Houses through community garden grants.

We'll keep working with Food Secure Tasmania, formerly the Tasmanian Food Security Coalition, to design and deliver three place-based community led food relief pilot projects. I'm very keen to see that we have a statewide strategy, the Food Relief to Food Resilience one, which makes sure that we're not just funding activities like the ones I've mentioned where they already occur. We're identifying where there might be food deserts, or food relief or resilience deserts. People are missing out where there is not a local provider. This is one of the areas where I'd like to see our outcomes framework approach working, where we say everybody in Tasmania who needs it needs to be able to access nutritious food.

We know that we've got wonderful effort underway, across the board. We need to ensure that we're not doubling up in some areas and missing out others entirely. That might mean that we go to some sort of head agreements with larger organisations that can take responsibility for ensuring that there is delivery across a whole area of the state. They might subcontract and work with local organisations of different kinds in those local areas to make sure that that happens. It will be a strategic approach as well as that emergency response.

**Ms BROWN** - I'm glad to hear that you're passionate about food security. Once again, I'm pleased to see in the Budget money for Meals on Wheels. As you are aware, Meals on Wheels Rosny will be losing their venue on 31 December due to decisions made by your government. Can you provide an update on what you are personally doing to secure them a new suitable venue?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand there has been a fair degree of engagement with Meals on Wheels regarding possible alternative venues. I'll ask my department if they can comment on that. My office has been dealing with Meals on Wheels, and looking with them at suitable spaces, and other organisations they might be able to partner with. I understand that Meals on Wheels is a Health portfolio funded program. Some of those other details would be in minister Barnett's area. We've been responding to the calls that have come to us and trying to assist them through the networks that we have in my portfolio as well to see where we can find them a suitable space to operate from.

They do fantastic work. They're one of the organisations that has expressed strongly to me their concerns around attracting and retaining volunteers and ensuring that there is appropriate training for those volunteers, particularly because they're out on the road a lot. We have a duty of care to the volunteers, to other road users, and to the people who are being served. Some of the investment in the budget for Meals on Wheels is about ensuring that they can secure the volunteer base that they need to keep working. We'll work with them and liaise with minister Barnett's office further to ensure that they've got a base to work from.

**Ms BROWN** - Great. Will you commit today that you, with the help of minister Barnett, will find them a suitable venue by 31 December?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll work with them to identify what options that they have. We're not going to make those decisions for them, but we'll assist in any way we can.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Hello Mr Willie. How are you?

**Mr WILLIE** - Good, thank you. I want to follow up on my colleague, Ella Haddad's questioning around time-limited programs. There was an acknowledgement in the budget last year that some programs would continue, even though they're not funded in the budget. There are a number of examples here. This is a conversation I was having with the Treasurer earlier this week. Not only are your expenditures flat or decreasing across the forward Estimates, there is a number of programs that will continue that you haven't allocated funding for.

I can give you some examples. I was listening to the conversation earlier. The Council on the Ageing Tasmania, I'm sure you're going to fund that past the two years that's in the Budget. Emergency Food Relief is only funded for one year. The LGBTIQ+ framework and action plan is funded for two years. There's nothing in the last two years. The Multicultural Council of Tasmania, a very important organisation, particularly in my electorate, is only funded for two years. The No Interest Loan Scheme, we can both agree that that's a great program, you're going to fund that in 2027-28, but it's not funded in the Budget. This is the problem. Last year there was an acknowledgement that these things would continue, and there was a provision for it. This year there is none.

**Mr JAENSCH** - If you had been here at the opening, I provided an overview of the portfolios and what's in the Budget in relation to them. The thing I started with was an explanation that, partly due to the timing of this Budget this year, we find ourselves in a position where we are in the process of renewing some of the longer-term strategic action plans, strategies, and plans for our sector which will inform future budgets. I went through the Carer Action Plan, the older Tasmanians action plan, the Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy,

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the Volunteering Strategy, the LGBTIQA+ framework and action plan, and the multicultural action plan.

These are all to be finalised by 30 June 2025. They will inform the next two years' budgets and forward Estimates. We don't want to pre-empt the outcomes of those plans, but they will give us a current contemporary evidence-based up-to-date plan that we can then address through future budgets. We don't know what their needs are going to be. What we're doing at the moment is funding continuation of work in a number of these areas on the basis that future funding for them will be directed by these strategies and action plans.

**Mr WILLIE** - I understand that, but this is why your forward Estimates can't be believed. Last year you had a provision to protect some of these programs, this year you don't. You've just said that you're going to review and probably fund these programs, but there's a black hole in the Budget.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They're not so much programs. These are areas where we have to make strategic investment. We don't just allocate money to keep doing what we've always done. We need to, from time to time, sit down with these sectors and replan.

**Mr WILLIE** - I understand that. Last year there was a provision in the Budget for that to occur. This year there are black holes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know what black holes you're talking about, but we'll work with -

**Mr WILLIE** - Stuff that's not funded that will end up being funded.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's why you have a budget every year, to bring things forward. Otherwise you'd only have a budget every four years, Mr Willie, surely?

**Mr WILLIE** - Your government's talking -

**CHAIR** - Ms Burnet has the call

**Mr WILLIE** - -about a pathway back to surplus. It can't be believed.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you Chair. Good morning, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Good morning.

**Ms BURNET** - I'm here to talk about multicultural communities -

**Mr JAENSCH** - You're welcome here. It'd be nice if you'd been here at the beginning when we talked about all this. Sorry, I beg your pardon.

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**Ms BURNET** - We have 20 minutes to talk about multicultural communities, which is farcical to be honest.

My first question is, when will the government have a dedicated multicultural minister? This was a very important question that came up during the election campaign. Mr Willie will remember some of the community forums we went to. It is important for our multicultural community to be recognised. When will the government have a minister for multicultural communities?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Welcome, Ms Burnet, to the committee. I agree our multicultural communities are very important. I take my responsibilities for them in this area, as Minister for Community Services, very seriously. We don't have 20 minutes to discuss this; we've had an hour and a half and we've been here since 9 a.m. I reject that we're downplaying this area by not giving it enough time.

That being said, the questions of how the Premier assigns portfolio responsibilities is one of those things that is for the Premier alone to decide. I trust you've raised the issue with him. We've certainly received correspondence from you and others promoting the need for a standalone portfolio minister for this area. That'll continue to be a matter for the Premier to consider.

In the meantime, I can assure you and our multicultural and culturally and linguistically diverse community in Tasmania that I am deeply committed to being a very effective minister for them and on their behalf. My door's open to them. I look forward to engaging with them and understanding their needs and the contributions that they make to our community, which are highly valued. I'll do my very best with or without a formal title of being minister for multicultural Tasmanians.

**Ms BURNET** - My second question is in relation to a reduced funding arrangement or certainly reduced funding the Diwali Festival committee is being provided this year. I believe their festival funding was lumped in with another festival.

**Mr WILLIE** - The Chinese festival.

**Ms BURNET** - Thanks Mr Willie.

I want to point out their distress. They're holding their festival this year in PW1 and, while PW1 has a special rate for not-for-profits or organisations such as this committee, essentially their costs to bump in and out and to have a day festival is \$37,000. It's not cheap - and it raises concerns how any not-for-profit organisation will be able to have something at any proposed Macquarie Point stadium because I don't reckon they'll be able to afford to hire that. I'm wondering what you can tell the Diwali organising committee as to how you might help them. I did raise this with Madeleine Ogilvie in a text recently, concerned about what might be happening in her electorate, but also with some of her interest in the area.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. It's fantastic to see celebrations like Diwali - or Deepavali, depending on who you speak to - growing and expanding. More strength to their arm. I understand they're also supported by the council and others. We have an allocation in the Budget towards supporting the festival - \$5000 a year out to 2025-26. We also understand that the festival has grown and that they have chosen to go to PW1, which has a different cost

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structure for them to be involved with. I understand that my office is in the process of arranging a meeting for me with them next week, and we'll have a talk through what they're planning to do and how we can assist that. The choice of venue, however, and the costs that come with that is the organiser's choice. We want them to succeed, obviously. We have a contribution that we announced in the Budget, but I'm always happy to talk to them about their plans for the future.

**Ms BURNET** - Could I have an update after you've had that meeting? As multicultural spokesperson for the Greens, I'd appreciate that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you. They want to be as independent from government as possible. It's only these first few years that they want to have this support, but \$5000, quite frankly, is well below what you'd expect for this kind of thing.

**Mr FAIRS** - Minister, can you update us on how the government is planning for our ageing population, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We hear a lot about Tasmania's ageing population. It's sometimes painted as a negative for us, but it's also an opportunity for individual Tasmanians and our community. It's something that all of us get to do, if we're lucky: grow older and enjoy old age and reflection with the wisdom gathered through our lives, and to contribute back to our community. It's our vision, as a government, for all Tasmanians to stay active and healthy and resilient and connected to their communities, regardless of their age. Helping older Tasmanians to remain active and engaged in community life is an investment in the quality of life for individuals, families and communities, and helps to reduce pressure on our health system as well.

That's why, in this Budget, we've allocated \$1 million for a two-year trial of the Ticket to Wellbeing program to support the social participation, and health and wellbeing of older Tasmanians; \$200,000 per annum for two years to the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Tasmania to continue its Seniors Week; elder abuse prevention services and advocacy for seniors in Tasmania; and \$150,000 per year for two years in partnership with COTA to develop digital inclusion initiatives, including peer education for people who are not natives to the digital world and are finding themselves with more and more services and information that they need only being available online and in digital forms. That's a real challenge for us, but one that COTA is up for, and we'll back them 100 per cent.

I'm very committed to listening to and working with older members of our community, to understand and respond to their needs and advocate for them, as I am for the multicultural community. I note there's been strong advocacy from COTA for there to be a dedicated minister for older Tasmanians. Until there is, I am it, and I'm deeply committed to doing a good job at that.

We are progressing the development of a new older Tasmanians five-year action plan, including enhancing wellbeing, safety and quality of life for older Tasmanians, while addressing the unique challenges associated with growing older, and creating an age-friendly environment that supports the wellbeing and dignity of older Tasmanians and encourages their active participation. A community reference group has been established to assist with direction of the action plan, and consultation is underway across government and with key stakeholders



including COTA, Carers Tasmania and Volunteering Tasmania. That plan is intended to be finished and released by the end of this year, Mr Fairs.

**Mr WILLIE** - Given the time, I might ask a few local member ones.

Minister, in my electorate and where I live in the northern suburbs, the past 12 months have been particularly shocking for its racially motivated attacks. The multicultural community is struggling through that. I've met with various groups and I've written to the Premier. One example was on behalf of the Nepalese community; they wanted to meet with him and he refused. He delegated that to, I think it was Jo Palmer, the Community Services minister at the time.

I'm interested in what you're doing as Community Services minister to support our community here in Hobart, particularly the northern suburbs, through this. There are people I've met who are isolated. They can't go to the Glenorchy Bus Mall for fear of being targeted, which means that they don't have access to transport. It is a real worry and I think more needs to be done.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I've met with the Migrant Council of Tasmania (MCOT) and the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tas), and will continue to learn from them about what they're hearing directly from their member organisations and communities across not only Hobart but other areas of Tasmania as well. There is a feeling amongst various communities that there have been targeted attacks or violence towards them.

I'm also trying to understand that in the context of some broader community concerns regarding antisocial behaviour and violence in certain areas, in bus malls and things, at certain times of day, and amongst different demographic groups. In that, I'm trying to understand the extent to which this is racially targeted violence and antisocial behaviour, or if it is more general antisocial behaviour that disproportionately affects people from migrant communities because of where it's happening and what times of day and in what settings, like in public transport and affecting groups like taxi drivers, who might have an over-representation of people from other countries.

I'm listening to the multicultural community and how it feels to them because that's the reality. I'm also trying to understand the perceptions of police and others, for example, as to whether they are seeing this as directed violence or if some members of our community are disproportionately affected by it. I am aware that we have people in our multicultural communities who have come from places where they were targeted and persecuted, and who have trauma that makes them particularly vulnerable to any violence and intimidation or racism in our communities. I'm very sensitive to that. I'm trying to understand the dimensions of it.

We are supporting a grant program with half-a-million dollars to address racism and foster social cohesion across our communities, including \$200,000 for a competitive small grants program for local communities to do things that are meaningful and have impact in their local areas; \$70,000 to the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania for counselling and psychosocial support for individuals and groups within their communities where that's needed; \$30,000 to MCOT for Harmony Week and, as I mentioned, \$200,000 to support actions under the next multicultural action plan, which needs to be celebration, but also protection and the safety of our multicultural community. I think one breeds the other. More understanding has a protective value as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - I don't think you can downplay some of these incidents. There have been high-profile incidents that are racially motivated, that is clear.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't doubt that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I was a bit concerned with what you were saying. Look, I take my hat off to people like Detective Inspector Jim Simmons, who's doing the best he can with the resources he has. He has run public forums but with some of the groups that I meet with, it seems like there's a huge breakdown in communication between authorities, following up on police reports and things like that and people feel they're not being listened to.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll be very happy for anyone who brings specific concerns like that for you to refer them to me. I'll be very pleased to hear from them either through you or directly. Please ask them to get in touch.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have one more question. It's on a different matter, Neighbourhood Houses. I am interested in the Community Connector Program. I know they wanted to roll that out to all houses, but you're running a pilot.

The second question on Neighbourhood Houses is, in my electorate, you'd be aware of Bucaan Community House, a great community house. They're limited in their infrastructure. They did have plans to redevelop their current site. It was very expensive for not much. I've connected them with the council when they were working with the council about some land. Are you aware of that issue? I'm just interested in your engagement given their needs supporting the local community.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Our houses are a huge resource for Tasmania. I think that Tasmania does neighbourhood houses and men's sheds better than anywhere else. There are about 34 neighbourhood houses across the state; they all respond uniquely to the unique needs of their local communities. We're very grateful for the work that they do.

In terms of the houses that are outgrowing their current facilities or they're not fit for purpose, there is a \$6 million capital improvement fund announced as part of the Budget and \$2 million a year for three years, which houses can make application to.

**Mr WILLIE** - We need the whole lot for one year.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll have to have a discussion on the side about that. But there are houses that need to rebuild, like the Bucaan one. East Devonport is another one and that's for structural reasons and safety reasons as well as capacity, looking for a new site right now. We have a few houses that we are working with to make sure that they've got a plan for what their options are and availability of sites.

Homes Tasmania is part of the mix in a lot of cases and a lot of the houses are owned by Homes Tasmania. Quite often, it's crown land or council land that they are on as well. So, we'll look at all of the options for those houses that need a new build, as well as across the network, ensuring that there are dollars there to ensure what they've got now remains fit for purpose and safe.

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**Mr WILLIE** - As a follow-up, can I ask that you engage with Bucaan Community House about the negotiation with the council and also potentially make representations to Glenorchy Council? I've done that for them as well, but I think it would be powerful coming from you as the minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We want there to be houses that have appropriate spaces to operate from. I'm very happy to engage with them directly and to interact with the council if that's required, but all of our houses need safe and fit-for-purpose buildings to operate from. There's no doubt about that. They need to be able to maintain them as well, hence the \$6 million in the budget, a continuation of the extra \$50,000 a year for each house as they've had for the last year or so, and investment in maintaining and expanding the Community Connector Programs as well so that there are budget line items for all of those.

**Ms BURNET** - I have a minute to ask a question in regard to - and this covers other portfolios, but bear with me because it's around migrants. In regard to exploitation of migrant workers, is the government doing anything to regulate labour hire agencies that are providing migrant labour to Tasmanian industry and taking a substantial cut of their wages?

We've had reports from community members of temporary contract workers being provided to a northern suburbs based company under labour hire contracts.

**CHAIR** - Unfortunately, the time for Estimates for the Minister for Community Services has expired. We will have a short five-minute break and resume the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

**The committee suspended from 10.30 a.m. to 10.36 a.m.**

### MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**CHAIR** - The time being, after 10.30 a.m., the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will commence. Welcome again, minister, would you please introduce the persons at the table?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you Chair, and good morning to committee members. To my right is Steve Gall, who's the Director, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. To my left, Mel Gray, Deputy Secretary from DPAC and to her left, Caroline Spotswood, Director, Aboriginal Partnerships in DPAC.

**CHAIR** - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is 1.5 hours. Minister, would you like to start with an opening?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In doing so, I acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of the land that we're meeting on today, acknowledge ancestors and elders and Aboriginal people in the room with us here today.

I'm pleased and proud to be here today in my capacity as minister for Aboriginal Affairs and will provide a quick update on the last 12 months in the portfolio as they relate to the Budget that we're here to examine. We've continued to consult with and receive feedback from Tasmanian Aboriginal people that's informing the drafting of new, stronger Aboriginal cultural

heritage protection legislation for Tasmania and our amendments to the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995*.

Discussions and feedback to date have indicated positive support for many themes and key issues proposed for both pieces of legislation. However, several of the matters are complex and have required further discussions with Tasmanian Aboriginal people to ensure their views are properly responded to. My commitment is to listen carefully to all views and introduce legislation that is effective and balanced and robust.

We intend to release a draft exposure bill for the new Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection Act for further consultation next month as part of our second 100-day plan ahead of its introduction to parliament. I'm pleased to note other measures to support the new act are included in the 2024-25 state Budget, including funding for a new Aboriginal Heritage Register and an Aboriginal Heritage Consultants' Training Program.

We've also continued to work with and support Tasmanian Aboriginal community controlled organisations to build their capacity to deliver services in line with our obligations under the National Agreement for Closing the Gap. We're currently developing our second Tasmanian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan in partnership with our Coalition of Peaks partner and all other Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and I look forward to its release later this year when it's finalised.

The Aboriginal Advisory Group appointed by our government to progress advice on Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty continues to make regularly and I thank them for their commitment and their preliminary advice to date. We're not setting a time frame or a predetermined outcome for their important work. These matters will be determined by the group to ensure the process is truly Aboriginal-led and I look forward to receiving the group's next instalment of advice regarding the next important phase of this work.

We're committed to working respectfully with all Tasmanians on this journey and we will continue working with all Tasmanian Aboriginal people to deliver better outcomes for them and their families right across the state. Thank you, Chair.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, it was three years ago in November 2021 that the Pathway to Truth-Telling Treaty report by Professor Kate Warner and Tim McCormack was accepted in full by your government. What progress can you say has been made on key recommendations of that report, such as the establishment of a Truth Telling Commission and Treaty and truth-telling advancement legislation being put forward?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's not accurate to say that the government committed to the outcomes of the Warner and McCormack report in full. We received that report and we undertook to listen to the communities' responses and priorities arising from it. On the receipt of the report and its publication we listened to Aboriginal people in particular and their responses to the matters raised in that report. I must say that our Tasmanian Aboriginal communities are as diverse and complex and varying in their views and opinions and priorities as any other subset of our population and our community. It's no surprise that there were mixed reviews and differing priorities across Aboriginal people.

One of the things, though, that there was more support for than just about anything else was that we progressed down this path towards truth-telling and treaty, and find a way to do

that in a way that was meaningful and safe for Aboriginal people. We set out a process to understand what that pathway might look like, and to be directed by Aboriginal people on how to do that.

We set up our Aboriginal Advisory Group. They have been meeting over the intervening period. They've been examining the experience of other jurisdictions around Australia, some of whom are more advanced than us, some of whom have had false starts and have rethought their approach to developing truth-telling and treaty processes. They're doing it in different order. Some of them have stopped what they're doing and started all over again. Our advisory group has been meeting with and listening to a lot of people from interstate. It is preparing advice for the government as to what they think a model could look like here, and what needs to be done to consult further on that and present that as a proposition for Tasmania to accept.

**Mr WILLIE** - Clearly there are frustrations within the Aboriginal community. Just a couple of months ago we had some members of the Aboriginal community camped out here in Parliament Lawns. They were frustrated with the lack of progress. I'm interested in what the Premier said to them to give them some assurance that progress is being made.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm not the Premier. You need to ask him -

**Mr WILLIE** - Surely as the minister you would understand what he said.

**Mr JAENSCH** - what he said to them. I understand that he heard their concerns. He met with them and heard their concerns. They felt heard sufficiently that they packed up their camp and moved off. As I understand, he has had further communication with the group. He also has appointments to meet with a range of different Aboriginal groups and organisations across the state on this, and other matters that they want to bring up with him. We remain committed to this pathway to understanding the best way for that to happen. We will be advised by Aboriginal people and we'll learn from other jurisdictions.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have one more question. It's my understanding that you have draft advice from the Aboriginal Advisory Group on the way forward. When is the time line for that release and what do you plan to do from here?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The latest I have on that is that there's still finalising that. We've had some information from them, but they're putting a little bit of extra work into that. I'd expect that over the coming weeks we'll have some further discussions. We'll consider the advice they have for us. Not only what they see as a model or a proposal for Tasmania, but also what they suggest happens next. When the advisory group was formed, it was to look at other jurisdictions, to consider various models, but also to ensure that there was consultation with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on a model or a pathway. Some of that work still needs to happen but you need to have the thing to consult on first. We're looking forward to getting a briefing from them on that.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is a fact that since you've been the Aboriginal Affairs Minister and since the Liberals have been in government, there have been no land returns, there has been no improvement in heritage protections, which are appalling for Aboriginal heritage, there are still Aboriginal children languishing in Ashley Youth Detention with no prospect of leaving.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Why would you say that, with no prospect of leaving?

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**Dr WOODRUFF** - There is no movement for process, for truth-telling and treaty. No movement at all has happened. Nothing has happened.

Many people in the Aboriginal community feel that your words are hollow and your government's actions towards Aboriginal people are tokenistic. Nothing could be more apparent than the Macquarie Point Precinct Plan that was tabled yesterday. The original copy, I'd like you to talk about the draft copy of the Aboriginal precinct plan, because it's changed the Aboriginal culturally informed zone between the draft and the final. What we see now with the final is that the approximate area has been reduced from 9000 square metres to 8000 square metres. The additional approximate area has reduced from 7000 square metres to 5000 square metres. There's been a loss of 3000 square metres.

There's also been a loss of a commitment to delivering a Truth and Reconciliation Park. The draft copy made that commitment, the final plan does not make a commitment to delivering a Truth and Reconciliation Park. What do you say about the fact that is a clear, utterly tokenistic way of treating Tasmanian Aboriginal people? You're not even making a commitment to consult with them on this incredibly important place.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are you finished? In place of a question, you've given me a whole series of statements of the way that you want this government and our actions to be seen in relation to Aboriginal Affairs.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Do you dispute that no land returns have happened? Do you dispute that? Do you dispute that there is no improvements in heritage legal protections? Do you dispute those things?

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would love to go line by line through the question that wasn't really a question there, but the one that I want to pick out -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Just go to the question.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The one that I want pick out, Dr Woodruff, is that you shouldn't say that there are young people, Aboriginal or otherwise, languishing in detention with no hope of ever getting out. That's an irresponsible thing to say. I reject that entirely, that characterisation, of the young people themselves and of the people who work with them and our youth justice system.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It's not a characterisation of them; it's the awful conditions they're living in.

**CHAIR** - Order

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think it is a disgusting portrayal that you've put in place there. I reject it outright. I think you should apologise because I think it's insensitive as well as inaccurate. We do have overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in our youth justice system and our adult

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correction system as well. For you to ever say that someone has no chance of leaving, that is deeply irresponsible.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Don't put words in my mouth. I didn't say that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You said it and I think you should withdraw it.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I did not say that. Chair, the minister's putting words in my mouth.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No I'm not.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I said Aboriginal people -

**CHAIR** - You had a very long-winded question, allow the minister to answer.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I had a long statement and it had one question at the end. It had one question.

**CHAIR** - Please be silent and listen to the minister's answer.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Well, he's just -

**CHAIR** - No, no, no.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Excuse me, he's just asked me to withdraw a comment.

**CHAIR** - Excuse me, no, I will not tolerate these interruptions. Allow the minister to speak.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Can you please clarify, Chair, what I need to do as a member of the committee?

**CHAIR** - No. I want you to listen in silence to the minister's answer.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you Chair. Ms Woodruff, in relation to a couple of the other matters that you have raised. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection Act, a brand new act, is being drafted. I've just said that it's going to be released in draft in the next month.

This government has already amended the existing legislation to, for example, update the use of terminology in the act so it is not offensive to Aboriginal people in reference to relics. It will also ensure that the penalties that apply for destruction and interference with Aboriginal cultural heritage in Tasmania are benchmarked against an equivalent to those for destruction of any other heritage in Tasmania, so that that disparity has been addressed as well.

We are undertaking substantial reforms in the area of Aboriginal cultural heritage protection. I would like it to have moved faster. We have had interruptions along the way to the business of government generally, on a number of fronts, that have also prevented that from happening. We've just had a discussion in response to Mr Willie's question about the steps that we are taking regarding the pathway to truth-telling and treaty. We'll continue to do that work.

Whether that's fast enough for you or not, I'm less concerned than to ensure that we are respectfully seeking and taking the advice of Aboriginal people, and that we've given all Aboriginal people and groups the opportunity to participate in that process. We'll continue to do so as we go.

With regard to the Macquarie Point precinct, that is not a project that we manage. We have provided support and advice to the Macquarie Point development body regarding Aboriginal contacts and information. The management of their consultation process is a matter for them and how that manifests in their precinct plans. I note that they have also engaged with Aboriginal people in the concept designs for the stadium itself. Aboriginal themes have been incorporated into the look and the textures applied in the design of the stadium structure. I'm looking forward to continuing engagement from Aboriginal people with them on the Aboriginal themed and dedicated areas of the broader precinct. We'll stand by to assist Macquarie Point with that, and to support and enable Aboriginal people to be part of that process.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - As Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, are you concerned about the fact that the draft Macquarie Point precinct plan had a commitment that said:

MPDC remain committed to delivering a Truth and Reconciliation Park, however, only if this is consistent with the guidance from community. This space is anticipated to be an open-area Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone

Are you concerned that that statement of commitment to delivering a truth and reconciliation area consistent with the views of the community and a commitment to an additional 3000 square metres have been removed from the final plan?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I expect that we will see areas there dedicated to themes and presentation that are informed by -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Who?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Aboriginal Tasmanians, and that will continue to be part of the overall precinct delivery.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Why wouldn't the MPDC have a stated commitment to seeking the views of the Aboriginal community on a Truth and Reconciliation Park? Why would they have removed that statement?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think you need to ask them those questions. We will stand by to support and inform them to any extent that we can.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - In reference to the commission of inquiry's Aboriginal Youth Justice Recommendation 12.29, which includes funding for the recruitment of a full-time Aboriginal liaison worker to support youth in the justice system, has this critical position been filled?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm going to check in with my adviser on that.

I understand it hasn't been appointed yet. That is a matter for the youth justice portfolio. I don't have those materials with me. I'd be happy to provide you an update on that.



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**Mrs PENTLAND** - Okay, great, thank you. I was wondering - maybe this is associated with that too, but I was going to ask if you could give a detailed breakdown of the funding allocated in this Budget for the protection of Aboriginal youth in regards to the commission of inquiry. Would that be a better suited question for them too?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, for youth justice and child safety, the Children and Youth portfolios. I'm happy to take those questions from you at any time though.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Okay, thank you.

**Mr FAIRS** - Can you update the committee on the government's commitment to progress a new, stronger Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage protection legislation, and other measures in the Budget to support the act when it's in effect?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I'm very happy to give you an update on that. Our government recognises the importance of Tasmania's Aboriginal cultural heritage to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and all Tasmanians. It is ancient and unique in the world and irreplaceable; and it's continuing. It spans tens of thousands of years, and we are only starting to fully appreciate its extent and significance.

The 2024-25 Tasmanian Budget supports our government's continuing commitment to develop a new, stronger Aboriginal cultural heritage protection act, as I said in my overview, which we intend to release for public consultation next month.

To support the new act, we've committed an additional \$300,000 to finalise an improved Aboriginal Heritage Register that will significantly improve Aboriginal heritage assessment response times. The current Aboriginal Heritage Register has been in place since November 2014, but is no longer fit for purpose. It poses some risk for ensuring that Aboriginal cultural heritage is appropriately understood and managed properly in the state.

The register contains approximately 13,500 site recordings, Aboriginal heritage assessment reports, digital and business records. The register is critical to support Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania's desktop review process, which determines if there is known Aboriginal heritage in a particular location, or a risk of interference with or interaction with Aboriginal heritage that may jeopardise it and might require further management actions.

The register also underpins the Aboriginal Heritage Property Search website and Before You Dig Australia, BYDA referral system, which sounds like a brand of electric car, doesn't it? Both of these provide automated Aboriginal heritage advice for a variety of stakeholders.

The department identified the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and information system developed by Cohga Pty Ltd as having a strong demonstrated history in other jurisdictions including Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. The new register will be web-based, including a public facing platform to provide greater accessibility and functionality to AHT staff, Aboriginal people and stakeholders, to better manage and protect our Aboriginal cultural heritage.

It's anticipated the new register will go live in the second quarter of 2025. Linkages with planning platforms such as the Property Search website and Before You Dig Australia will also be maintained. A new robust register is a critical aspect of improving protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage. Importantly, it will make it easier to know about and plan for protection of

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cultural heritage earlier in the development planning process as well. Rather than Aboriginal cultural heritage being a matter which is considered after you've finalised your plans and made your investment and committed to a development, the earlier that you do your homework on it, understand how to work with and around the protection of Aboriginal heritage. It's better for the heritage. It's better for developers, who don't find themselves with heritage becoming a problem for them later in the process, potentially a feature of good design on the sites where they're operating.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'll ask a few more truth-telling and treaty questions. I'm interested in whether you're engaging with tuylupa tunapri, or whether the Premier is, and whether you're considering their advice alongside your Aboriginal Advisory advice.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, thank you. I've had a number of meetings and many, many hours of meetings with representatives from the tuylupa tunapri group. We had hoped that they would agree to participate in the advisory group process that we announced. The door remains open for them to do so. I understand that the advisory group itself has reached out and invited them to come and share their ideas and concepts with the advisory group. To date they haven't, but the door remains open for them to do so.

I understand that the Premier has also made himself available to members of that group for further discussion as well. We're not excluding anybody from this discussion. We'll listen to all the different perspectives and concepts and our hope will be that, ultimately. We'll be able to chart a course that everyone wants to participate in.

**Mr WILLIE** - The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania is underfunded and has been for some time. It's a statutory body, as you're aware, expected to manage all return lands and administer important cultural and country programs. Their budget's normally \$300,000, which, I understand, they struggle to meet some of their requirements, particularly around financial reporting and things like that. I have some advice that it's been now reduced to \$200,000. I do note, though, that there is \$150,000 in another initiative's line item, so I'm just interested if you can provide some clarity around their funding.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand that the year-on-year-based funding is about \$314,000 that the Aboriginal Land Council receives each year. We have, over recent years, provided additional funds each year of around \$50,000 in response to their identification of a need for more resources, and, last year, an additional \$130,000, particularly around the need for a financial controller or services to assist them with some of their financial management in governance issues.

This year in the Budget there's \$150,000, as you point out, which is to enable them to continue that sort of extension of work. The Aboriginal Land Council has also received \$700,000, I understand is the figure, in relation to work at properties it's responsible for at Wybalenna on Flinders Island. There's some work there on interpretation and presentation of the site, which is an incredibly important site in Tasmania's history and Tasmania's Aboriginal history, in particular, and there has been, I think, an additional \$100,000, not through my portfolio directly, but through the Activation Program Built Heritage Scheme to support some restoration activities on a homestead at the Wybalenna site as well.

There's a number of areas where there has been resourcing provided to the Aboriginal Land Council. We anticipate that the amendments proposed to the *Aboriginal Lands Act* will

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create some new governance roles and activities and, hopefully, then result in more land parcels being prepared and brought to parliament for consideration for land return, more management roles for the Aboriginal Land Council. We think that's probably the time for a fulsome review of the resourcing requirements for the Aboriginal Land Council. Until then, we'll support them with additional funds where needed to ensure that they can continue to meet their obligations.

**Mr WILLIE** - It was my understanding that they sought advice from the Treasurer around this \$314,000 base funding, and we were told that because the Budget was delivered late, the amount is pro rata, and the argument is that it doesn't make a lot of sense because there are other organisations in the Budget that aren't being funded pro rata. I would have thought with the financial reporting, you'd see the full amount.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, I'm not familiar with the 'pro rata-ing' that you refer to. I'm happy to see if the department has any further advice for me on that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I can take it on notice if you like.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, \$314,000, I understand, is the Budget amount for the full year as per year-on-year arrangements with the Aboriginal Land Council.

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, the previous precinct plan for Macquarie Point, before a stadium was proposed, committed to a Truth and Reconciliation Park that acknowledged Tasmania's true history and treatment for Aboriginal people, a place for the whole Tasmanian community to commit to truth-telling. You're saying that there will be, what you said earlier, textures in the new stadium that reference Aboriginal cultural heritage. Do you think that's an appropriate change?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think you're misrepresenting what I said. I think I referred to the designs that have been released for the proposed stadium itself have included input from Aboriginal artists and designers as part of that design. In terms of the overall precinct and what's included in that - that's a separate matter - I don't think one is an exchange for the other.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The stadium that's proposed - the Macquarie Point precinct plan - has an area that's allocated to an Aboriginal culturally informed zone.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Correct.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Previously, the government had committed to a Truth and Reconciliation Park that would tell the true history of colonisation in Tasmania and now there is a precinct plan, which we've just seen, has a tiny area and that does not include a commitment to consulting with Aboriginal people about what's going to be in that space. Did you provide advice to the Macquarie Point Corporation in the development of that final plan?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We've provided advice when it's been sought from us on particular matters. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation and its plan for the site is a matter that you should address to them and ministers that have responsibilities for that. As I understand it, the Aboriginal culturally informed zone has that label because what happens there will be

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informed by Aboriginal people through their consultation and design processes, not the Aboriginal Affairs minister directly.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I'm asking you as Aboriginal Affairs Minister - did you have any correspondence with Macquarie Point Development Corporation in the cultural Aboriginal culturally informed zone? Were you aware that it has removed a commitment for consulting with Aboriginal people about what is to be the contents of that zone?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am not aware of removal of a commitment to consult. In all of the engagement I've had with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation on these matters, they have been acutely conscious of any areas of that planning which is intended to honour and respect Aboriginal people, their culture and their place in their role in our community should be informed by Aboriginal people. I've never heard them speak otherwise of that.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So, it was to be a Truth and Reconciliation Park.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That was before there was a stadium.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Hold on a minute. There was to be a Truth and Reconciliation Park, but now it looks like a truth and reconciliation plaque. Isn't that all tokenism? Back to my question, have you had any engagement? Did you provide any advice? Is there any correspondence between you and the Macquarie Point Development Corporation about that space?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would be happy to ask my office to check my correspondence so that I can give you a definitive answer on 'has there been any correspondence'? I think you've worked up your park versus plaque line and needed to get that out today. I think that's a little insensitive.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It's an unfortunate statement of fact.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand that the Mac Point Development Corporation and its precinct plan includes a reference that the corporation is already engaging with the Aboriginal community in this process.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Which Aboriginal community? What engagement process? What consultation process is actually happening?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Again, I have some more information here, but it's not mine to give. I think you should direct your questions to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You are the Aboriginal Affairs minister and you should be responsible for consultation processes with the Aboriginal community or at least know about them.

**CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff, Mrs Pentland has the call.

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, Chair, just on the rotation, it's three to Labor, two to the Greens. I just heard about five or six questions from the Greens.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I asked two questions and there was a bit of backwards and forwards, which is what we've been doing on this committee.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Minister, we know that there's a division within the Aboriginal communities when it comes to the ownership of Aboriginal heritage and cultural land. How is the government helping Aboriginal communities with this issue and ensuring that these disputes don't interfere with Aboriginal heritage and cultural land being returned to the Aboriginal people?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's a big question. Again, as we discussed a little earlier in response to one of Mr Willie's questions, Aboriginal people sometimes ask me why, when we go to parliament, that Liberal, Labor, Greens and independents don't get in the room and agree on how to do things and why we always seem to be arguing. They sometimes point out that in any group of people there are different schools of thought and ways of approaching things. So mustn't we expect that Aboriginal people are any different to anybody else? There's always going to be disputes and differences of opinion and approach between them.

As a government, our approach has always been that we will listen to and work with everyone who will work with us. We will not exclude people from the discussion and we'll seek to be inclusive in all of our processes. It has to be said in the context of the *Aboriginal Lands Act*. Some of the amendments that we're proposing there are a direct response to people feeling that the current legislation and the way it's been enacted doesn't enable their voices to be heard and represented, and we want to be sure that any state legislation serves all of the people that it's meant to serve and provides opportunities for them to have voice and be heard and be represented. This is a challenging area. We have to be sensitive to it because as a non-Aboriginal person I'm dealing with complex interactions between family groups and organisations that have been happening for a lot longer than I've been around and it makes it a sensitive area to work through at times. We need to ensure that we're doing so in a way that doesn't make people feel unsafe in dealing with government and working under the legislation that I'm responsible for.

That's a broad topic, and I gave you a broad answer to it. If you have any more specific examples that you'd like to speak about, I'm happy to take them to.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - I wanted to ask a question about the Blue Lagoons on Flinders Island. Is there any prospect of that land return happening?

**Mr JAENSCH** - You may be referring to an area that I'm familiar with, which has been referred to as The Lagoons, which I understand is one of the precursor settlements to the Wybalenna settlement on Flinders Island. We have been engaging with the Aboriginal Land Council over a couple of years now and with the assistance of the Parks and Wildlife Service as well, we try to identify the location of that historic, important site and where it sits in the landscape there, either on private property or in a reserve area.

As I understand it, despite a fair bit of research from the Aboriginal Land Council and others, that the general locality seems to have been able to be identified, but not specific sites because of the nature of the country and then the sorts of remains of a settlement or evidence of a settlement that might have been there, including graves.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - That's correct.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In the absence of being able to determine specific sites, the discussion is now centering around a representative location, the extent to which that is on Crown land and maybe able to be subject to a management agreement or a future land return proposal. That's work that's currently in progress.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Thank you.

**Mr FAIRS** - Minister, in the Budget, there was a commitment to develop a Tasmanian Aboriginal heritage consultant training program. Can you update the committee on plans for that, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Mr Fairs. As I said before, we're bringing the new legislation forward. The Tasmanian Heritage Register is part of that story, but the other critical element is the role of Aboriginal heritage consultants who deliver an essential service in providing authentic and qualified Aboriginal cultural heritage advice. Consulting archaeologists undertaking Aboriginal heritage surveys and assessments must be accompanied by an Aboriginal heritage consultant whose key role is to provide or facilitate the cultural significance assessment in consultation with Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

The issue we're facing is that there are currently only 11 registered Aboriginal heritage consultants in Tasmania with the appropriate specialist training and skills and not all of them are actively or fully engaged in providing those services at the moment. Nor have they received any regular training or upskilling, in a formal sense, for quite some time.

The review of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* that we undertook and our ongoing discussions with Aboriginal people and people in the planning and development community have identified that we need to address this and some priority actions need to be undertaken to ensure that we have a pipeline and a workforce in the Aboriginal heritage consultant area. The 2024-25 Budget, therefore, includes \$1 million to develop and deliver a new training package that will support Tasmanian Aboriginal people to upskill and build their knowledge to become Aboriginal heritage consultants.

There is work being done at the moment and Steve may be able to speak with far more knowledge than I can about the approaches being considered to deliver that training through TAFE and/or university courses as well as working with community. If we can do that, we'll not only enable developers and those encountering Aboriginal heritage as part of their work to have ready access to qualified people to assist them through that and to help them get it right, we'll also be heading towards one of our Closing the Gap targets. That is, to have more Aboriginal people qualified and working in areas in relation to protection of their heritage and culture as well for their communities.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania will work with the Aboriginal Heritage Council to design and scope that program. That work is anticipated to be wrapped up before the end of this year so that we can start recruiting and training next year. Steve, do you have anything to add?

**Mr GALL** - We are looking at various models for what that training can look like, whether or not we go down that path. We already have existing traineeships within Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. They're focused more on the internal works of what we need to do as

regulators and administrative legislation, but we can tap into some of that training that's already been provided.

We're looking at what could be provided through the TAFE. There isn't a lot of strong training at the moment in Aboriginal cultural heritage that actually is specific to that. It's more about land management so we'll also be looking at some packages that are provided by universities more broadly.

Also, to give them some field experience, we're looking at the program running placements with consulting archaeologists' firms and Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, where they can learn about the state and the level of information required for registrations and to feed through that and navigate the heritage assessment process. That will give them some insights into that and help inform them about the level and quality of information that's required when they're in the field.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, you encouraged Reconciliation Tasmania to apply through the budget process for funding to recognise their important contribution in Tasmania, but they were unsuccessful. They're the only state reconciliation council in the country that's not supported by their state government. What's the explanation for that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Willie. Yes, we did receive a budget application from Reconciliation Tasmania and, unfortunately, in this budget process, it hasn't been able to be supported. They're not alone; there are a lot of bids that I put up into the budget process that also didn't get funded. We work through every budget to ensure that we're investing our resources on the highest priorities we can and that we're supporting as many organisations who are doing good work as we can.

In this case, I had correspondence from them, I wrote back to them, and I understand that we're setting up a meeting with them shortly to talk about their needs, their work program, and the next budget process, which is coming up. Noting that this budget that we've just seen now is also an unusual one, given its timing and that there have been priorities around things like the commission of inquiry and specific commitments that the government has needed to cover as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, I see you and other ministers at the reconciliation breakfast when there are events on and things like that. You're quite happy to go to their events and things, but when they call upon you to support them in the wake of the failed referendum and the important community education and things that they need to do, you don't support them. Don't you acknowledge that the work, particularly in the wake of the failed referendum, is very important?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I do, and we do support the work that they do. In this instance, their budget submission wasn't able to be met. We've made arrangements for me to meet with them again soon to catch up on what the consequences of that are for them and what their planning is for a submission to the next budget process, which will be opening soon.

**Mr WILLIE** - The consequences are they're going to have to significantly scale back the work that they're doing in the community. I'm a young-ish man at 40, and I can tell you, some of the things I learned at school were utterly false, so I think this work in the business

community and in schools is very important to correct mistruths that have been circulating in the community for generations. Yet, you're not supporting that work.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I wouldn't like you to portray that we are not supportive of that work and the importance of it, but we also support the Aboriginal Education Services, the Aboriginal Land Council, the protection of Aboriginal heritage, the training of new heritage officers, and the development of new legislation. We have a range of things that are important for us to support and fund in my portfolio. We have to prioritise those and we have to put them up against all of the other things that every other sector wants from our budget each year.

On this occasion, Reconciliation Tasmania was not successful with their budget application. They're not alone; there are many other things that I also put up that I didn't get a guernsey for. We'll continue to work with them, support the work that they do, and understand what their priorities and needs are, so that we can assist them to shape their next application for consideration in the next budget.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, your department's review in 2021 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* identified it, correctly, as the worst Aboriginal cultural heritage law in the country.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Did it?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes. Matthew Groom, when he was the Heritage minister in 2016, said it was shamefully disrespectful of Aboriginal people and woefully outdated. You've talked about an exposure draft finally coming. Other documents, like the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan, have identified cultural landscapes for Aboriginal people as extremely significant and deserving of protection. The current act doesn't countenance protections for cultural landscapes and it's stuck in an antiquated archaeological approach, which some members of the Aboriginal community have called a sticks and bones approach to protecting Aboriginal culture. Will you commit? Does your exposure draft countenance protections for Aboriginal cultural landscapes and seascapes?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for the question. There is a wide range of matters that are covered in the successive drafts of the new legislation and the matter of Aboriginal cultural landscapes has been given a lot of consideration, as have other things like intangible cultural heritage, to the extent that the two are different. Some of the matters that we're working through still - one of the reasons this isn't straightforward and quick work is that we need to not only protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in its various forms, but also to provide people interacting with the legislation with clarity and certainty about what that means, what their obligations are, and how to manage for them and around them.

We need to be careful that we don't create uncertainty when we introduce into legislation protection for things that are new ideas or concepts that arguably have a subjective assessment of significance built into them. We don't want to end up creating confusion, or even resentment and hostility towards notions of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

One of the things that I've been very consistent with in briefing, and being briefed by, my department is to look closely at what happened in Western Australia when they introduced new Aboriginal cultural heritage protection legislation within the last couple of years, then withdrew it.



**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes. They went back to a very dark place.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. In the process there were a lot of people who weren't terribly deeply engaged with the subject matter who weighed-in on arguments there. It has set back Aboriginal affairs, the discussion, the acceptance, and the reconciliation journey because it introduced fear and uncertainty where that was not needed. We want to avoid that wherever possible. We want to make our new legislation robust in terms of the the way it protects Aboriginal cultural heritage. We need to make sure that it is clear to everybody how that works and what their obligations are. There may also be issues that, ultimately, we would like to have considered and protected through this legislation that we'll have to decide whether we spend another year trying to refine and polish to make sure they're absolutely watertight, or if we set them aside and put them to further work while we get on with the things that we know we can get right. Cultural landscapes may be in that latter category. We've not yet finalised the draft. You'll see it when it comes out and we'll take your feedback when you see it.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I'm sure you're aware that cultural landscapes is the issue that Tasmanian Aboriginal people continually raise as the area which is -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Aboriginal people raise lots of issues all the time, it's not my -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Can I just finish my question, minister? The issue that Aboriginal people continually raise as the kind of gross failure of our legislation in being able to protect ancient Aboriginal areas. It was the west coast of takayna that was protected in 2012 as the Western Aboriginal Cultural Lands that would tackle the western -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Landscape.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Landscape. Because of its hut depressions and high density of midden deposits, petroglyphs, and burial sites, amongst many other incredibly important cultural factors in that living landscape.

Your government has continually supported four-wheel driving in that area and in the Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area. The Parks minister has put out a draft West Coast Off-Road Vehicle Strategy. I know you're aware of it. Can you see the harm that would be done to that extraordinary living landscape if four-wheel driving was expanded as is proposed under this government initiative? It's a \$10 million funded initiative for mainland four-wheel drivers to come to Tasmania as part of a north-west tourism strategy.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think you've put your own ribbon on that to suit your narrative about what the purpose of that strategy is.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is stated in that document.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Another perspective on it is that, post the closure of tracks south of Sandy Cape, due to their impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage, which haven't been reopened, undertakings have been given to ensure that the existing track networks are maintained, managed, and used in such a way that they don't cause further damage to the environment and its natural values and heritage values as well, whilst continuing to provide opportunities for people to access and enjoy that landscape that people have been accessing and enjoying for tens of thousands of years. This is very important the modern-day communities of the

north-west of Tasmania and those who visit from elsewhere as well. It's part of their culture and their heritage that they can visit and interact with that environment.

I don't see there's anything wrong with that. I think it's a very healthy thing that we have people out in these landscapes enjoying them and enjoying traditional pursuits there. I've got no concern. I'm glad we've got a strategy coming together to govern how that area is used and protected in the future with a particular eye on protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage. It's wrong for you to suggest that the government is promoting unregulated four-wheel drive access and people driving over Aboriginal heritage, as you often do. It's quite irresponsible to continue to do so.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Your own Aboriginal Heritage Council in their recent update said:

In June the AHC lodged a submission regarding Tasmania Parks and Wildlife's draft West Coast Off-Road Vehicle Strategy. The AHC were strongly opposed to the strategy and detailed several key concerns relating to appropriate management and protection for Aboriginal cultural values.

Their words, minister, your council's. Not ours.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And again -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Can I finish and ask the question? Why are you deaf to listening to the Aboriginal community about the necessary protections? Isn't this basically about pandering to developers and making sure that you can provide clear pathways for development approvals, like for Robbins Island that the Aboriginal Heritage Council was so concerned about, like for kunanyi that they were also so concerned about, and that fell on deaf ears to you?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm not sure which part of that is your question. I think you've given a speech which reiterates -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You're not listening to the community, to your own council.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - your narrative on a range of topics there.

In terms of the Aboriginal Heritage Council, I do listen to them continuously on a wide range of matters there. Putting out a draft strategy is precisely to get input and advice from a range of different perspectives, including from the Aboriginal Heritage Council. They're performing an important part of that process.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Did you back it up to the Parks minister with your view as well?

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The other thing I need to be clear about, is that you're asking questions and making assertions around a wide range of areas of government activity which are outside my portfolio responsibilities.

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**Dr WOODRUFF** - Maybe they shouldn't be: that's our point. Maybe you should take more ownership of your portfolio.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's a matter you can take up with the Premier in terms of where portfolio allocation should lie.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We try on a regular basis.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Did you want to try to bring that down to a particular question, or is it just a general of -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The question is are you going to put cultural and seascape protections into the new legislation? If it doesn't, it's utterly failing the needs for Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I've had a discussion about Aboriginal cultural landscapes. I have my own understanding of different layers of what Aboriginal cultural heritage landscapes are about. I would like to see them somehow recognised and recorded because it's part of us being able to read the human history of our state through our landscapes. That's a really important thing for us to be able to do.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - What about protecting them as well as reading about them?

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's a different thing to work out how to protect that in legislation, in a way that's consistent and clear to people who may come up against it.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It's your job.

**CHAIR** - Order, Mrs Pentland will go next.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll do that to the best of our ability. You'll see what our proposed approach is when we release our draft legislation.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Rebecca Digney from the Aboriginal Land Councils of Tasmania has informed of her concerns about the outstanding \$20,000 in council rates on the sacred land at Saltwater River. This land transfer can't happen before the rates are paid. What is the government doing to try to rectify this situation? Do we expect the Aboriginal Land Council to flip the bill on this in order for that land transfer to happen?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's a matter that we've been engaged with the Aboriginal Land Council on for some time. We understand it has to do with a land that was held under a previous organisation, and the transfers of title to the Aboriginal Land Council as the most equivalent existing body to hold that land in trust for Aboriginal people.

Generally, we understand that the issue is mainly to do with the federal government's treatment of those properties and outstanding rates and other encumbrances on those properties. We've been advocating on behalf of the Aboriginal Land Council to the Commonwealth and the federal minister's offices to find a way to pay those bills so that the Aboriginal Land Council

doesn't have to. We've raised this with the federal minister many times, including the new federal minister, including as recently as last week. We'll continue to do so. We recognise it's an issue for them.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - I heard in the committee before about the indexation of what's been given to community groups as far as the budget goes. I guess they really wouldn't have the scope to pay that \$20,000, given -

**Mr JAENSCH** - We understand they've got limitations there. We think it's actually the feds who have a responsibility here. We'll continue to argue for them to assist that transfer and to wipe those outstanding rates.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Okay great, thank you.

**Mr FAIRS** - You've spoken about Closing the Gap and our commitment as part of the National Agreement. Can you give us an update on how the Tasmanian government is working with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to build their capacity as part of that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm certainly happy to do that. We are committed to better life outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and for them to have greater control of the services that they rely on and decisions that affect their lives. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap commits to a new way for governments and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to work together to improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

Previous attempts to close the gap nationally and at state level haven't worked, despite significant funding and effort involved from both governments and service providers. The new approach developed with Aboriginal people aims to capture the insights and understanding needed to ensure that the services provided to close the gap, meet their client needs through full involvement of Aboriginal people in the decision making and the delivery of the services, not just receiving them. It recognises that Aboriginal people are often the best place to determine what service is needed and how they should be delivered to meet the needs of their own people and their communities in culturally appropriate and effective ways.

A key element of the first Tasmanian implementation plan for Closing the Gap was to invest \$5.3 million into Tasmanian Aboriginal Community controlled organisations to build their capacity, including skills and organisational capabilities, to co-design and deliver services for Aboriginal people in areas like health and well-being and education and housing.

From that investment we've seen the melythina tiakana warrana (Heart of Country) Aboriginal Corporation supported to embark on organisational change to transition from a volunteer-run entity to a fully operational organisation with four paid staff members. Appointment of a general manager enhanced organisational capacity, the ability to secure additional funds from a range of sources and successfully manage projects of its own.

The increased capacity has supported them to implement projects such as an Aboriginal Youth Hub and the Tebrakunna Ranger program and development of an amenities block and other services on their land in the north-east and their enhanced capacity to operate effectively and secure funding and build relationships. They're foundations that will set them up for the long term to continue to provide opportunities particularly for their young people and upskilling them in areas like land management and potentially they're the sort of organisation that might

be able to partner with and invest in further upskilling so that we have new Aboriginal heritage consultants as part of that group and based on the start that they've been given by MTW.

**Mr WILLIE** - That's a good lead into my question. The Premier says that Closing the Gap is his greatest priority and all governments around Australia keep failing when it comes to Closing the Gap in key areas. We don't even collect data in some areas that is Tasmania-specific. I'm interested in the implementation plan that's currently in a draft form. How are you going to address that data collection specifically and also Aboriginal sovereignty around data?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's a good set of questions. Closing the Gap is an absolute key priority for us and across government. This is a whole-of-government commitment. The national agreement is signed by the first ministers of all jurisdictions and the federal minister as well. Around our Cabinet table, all portfolio ministers have responsibilities to deliver in terms of Closing the Gap.

In terms of progress, just an update based on most recent dashboard from March 2024, and this is the Productivity Commission's data. Tasmania has improved so far on eight of the Closing the Gap targets, including babies born with a healthy birth weight, enrolment in early childhood education, children assessed as developmentally on track, attainment of year 12 or equivalent, completion of tertiary qualifications, engagement in employment or education, adult employment, and over representation in youth justice have all seen improvements. There's a lot of work still to do to keep those heading in the right direction to further close the gap, but it'd be wrong to say that there's not been progress.

There's been some poorer performance on a few of those targets, including appropriately sized housing, but I do understand that Tasmania has met the national target in that one. It's just that our performance isn't continuing in the right trend. We have to turn that around. Adult incarceration and over-representation in out-of-home care are areas that have seen deteriorating statistics for Tasmania and they include areas that have significant focus in our out-of-home care reforms and our youth justice reform priorities right now in government. I'm confident that we can align those with the Closing the Gap challenges. There are some others where data is not reported because of very small numbers in some of those areas -

**Mr WILLIE** - Like life expectancy?

**Mr JAENSCH** - things like - life expectancy? I don't know if that's a small numbers issue or if it's something else, but suicide rates and other. For Tasmania, as a small jurisdiction, we're getting into an area where it may be possible to identify people if very small data sets are shared. Do you want to speak to the numbers?

**Ms GRAY** - Through you, minister. In relation to data and data sovereignty, we're establishing a data sovereignty reference group with the Coalition of Peaks partner and Tasmanian government agencies on a whole-of-government basis so that we work on collecting in innovative ways and ways that partner in new ways around data to collect, and be able to report on some of those ones where we're not reporting. Then at a national level, there is a number of policy partnerships underway that we sign up to by virtue of being part of the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap. They are in the areas of justice, early childhood education, care and development, social and emotional wellbeing, languages and housing. They've been established between 2021-22 and each agency works through the national architecture of Closing the Gap to progress those. There is a data sovereignty policy partnership

coming online as well, so there'll be work undertaken at a national level as well as the work that we're doing locally with our Coalition of Peaks partner and all Tasmanian government agencies.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have a few more questions Chair. You've just identified some of the areas the state needs to improve, particularly around justice and child safety. How are you going to bring Aboriginal people in to help get that trending in the right direction?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In relation to this - it is really a youth justice and child safety portfolio, which is also my hat -

**Mr WILLIE** - It's a Closing the Gap one too.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's alignment there, but we have reference groups established and we're actively consulting with and involving Aboriginal people in the processes of designing those reforms in those different areas.

We also have an Aboriginal person on our expert panel for our youth justice reform process, Rodney Dillon, who's had a long history of working with Amnesty International on issues like raising the age of criminal responsibility and the welfare of young people in the youth justice system. We will continue to work with Aboriginal people through consultation, but also in the design of new diversionary programs, early interventions, and through care solutions for young people who are moving through our youth justice and out-of-home care services as well. The Change for Children report, our fulsome response to the commission of inquiry's recommendation does name up Aboriginal children, their wellbeing and your approaches to supporting them as a priority for the state.

**Mr WILLIE** - They're not building the northern prison. There's probably a good opportunity here to do things differently in supporting Aboriginal people in the community to reform their law-breaking ways. I've been to South Australia and I encourage you to have a look at that. That's the only state that is trending the opposite way when it comes to recidivism. They were going to build this billion-dollar huge jail and they decided not to and they're doing more community correction stuff that could be Aboriginal-informed and culturally appropriate. What are you doing when you look at some of the things that are happening there to get some of these things moving in the right direction?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I visited the Kurlana Tapa, the new youth justice facility development that they have in Adelaide, and we have the manager of that facility on our expert panel as well for youth justice reform.

**Mr WILLIE** - I am talking here about the adult correctional facility there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll learn from every other jurisdiction. I can only speak about the youth justice. I'll speak on youth justice in particular and I'll defer to my colleague, Madeleine Ogilvie, regarding adult corrections. She has Closing the Gap targets that are aligned to her work as well which she's responsible for delivering on and you could direct some questions to her.

We think that we have a unique opportunity right now with the priority that's been assigned to youth justice reform, particularly recognising the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in our system and the supports needed in the community, led by

Aboriginal service providers to support them. We probably have the best opportunity in a generation to reset that and to set that on a new path. I'm excited by the work that's underway. It is directly relevant to Closing the Gap targets, as it is to our commission of inquiry targets and that's a very useful alignment in terms of things like Budget resources that are going into it.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Minister, can you give us some information about what I understand is occurring, that Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania will be moving from DPAC to NRE to be located with Heritage Tasmania? I believe that's what was announced this week by minister Ogilvie. That is, if it's true and if you could give us some information about it, a very long way from your government's commitment previously to creating a whole-of-government division for Aboriginal affairs to coordinate the government's Aboriginal affairs agenda, informed by Aboriginal people and remaining within DPAC. Can you talk about what's happening with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll provide a quick overview. I will ask that Ms Gray speaks to the operational aspects of it.

There have been a couple of machinery of government changes over the last few years involving Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and Aboriginal Affairs portfolio more broadly. You are right that previously the Aboriginal land and heritage work sat in the context of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, partly because it deals with a lot of land management issues and databases, spatial data management, planning and interaction with Parks and Crown Land Management as well as the resource management and planning system. So, there's a lot of very functional alignment between the heritage and lands aspect, Aboriginal heritage and lands and the work of NRET.

You're right, there was a decision taken to consolidate Aboriginal affairs under one roof in one agency with DPAC a couple of years ago and there was a progressive move of people and systems from NRET into DPAC. I understand more recently DPAC itself has been reconsidering how it specialises more in whole of government and policy development work and that delivery of services and policies is better handled by other agencies.

There is change underway at the moment which, as I understand, is at the end of October or around then.

**Mr GALL** - 1 November.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, 1 November. We'll see Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania having another change of postcode but the team has still been working together and will continue to. This is not an enormous government. We have the ability to work across some of those agency boundaries, but when it comes to things like the new heritage protection legislation, land management, the issues around things like cultural landscapes that you're talking about, there's an enormous alignment there with the workflows and the operations of NRET that I believe does suit Aboriginal land and heritage as well.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Before you answer, I wanted to delve a bit more into that, because I suppose they're the concerns that people are raising. In this hearing we've talked about three things which you said that you can't really give comment on because that's better under another minister. You mentioned it on the Macquarie Point Development Corporation - the

removal of the Truth and Reconciliation Park commitment - you said that's another minister. When I was talking about Parks and their push for tourism and four-wheel drive track increases in the western Tasmanian Aboriginal landscape, you said that was the Parks minister. When you were talking about Ms Ogilvie just then, you said in relation to Corrections and Closing the Gap commitments, ask those questions of that minister. That is the concern with the way Aboriginal issues are being split up. The commitment was to bring them together so that there's a whole-of-government approach.

Now what you're doing is taking Aboriginal heritage, putting it with colonial heritage, and that seems to -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, no. Just because you say it, doesn't mean that it is true.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Just wait. Well, it is my view and it's the view of other people. It reinforces a concern that you're going to stick with an old sticks and bones approach to protecting Aboriginal heritage and not take on cultural landscapes and protection of the seascapes. Can you see that people are concerned at this move of putting Aboriginal heritage with colonial heritage?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I believe you're quite committed to a narrative of your own on this and I would like to dispel it. First of all, in your preamble, Closing the Gap is everybody's responsibility. I'm very pleased and proud that we have assigned targets to every relevant portfolio minister to meet under Closing the Gap. This is not something that is the responsibility of the Aboriginal Affairs minister alone, and shouldn't be.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Why can't you answer questions about it as the Aboriginal Affairs minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - People like Pat Turner have been very clear with us that they don't expect this is something which is driven by Aboriginal Affairs ministers trying to change everybody else's portfolios. It's an all-in and everyone has responsibilities to serve.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - But who takes responsibility for the outcomes at the end of the day?

**Mr JAENSCH** - When you raise the issue about - I'm referring to everybody else. When you're asking me questions about tourism and you're asking me about -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Parks.

**Mr JAENSCH** - about Macquarie Point decisions, I can speak to the aspects of that that I have input to. I reject your assertion that I'm farming out or neglecting my responsibilities -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You just don't have any engagement with that. That's the problem.

**CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff. Please allow the minister to answer.

**Mr JAENSCH** - When it comes to the functions of Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, Aboriginal land and heritage, they will still report to me as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs directly. I'm not responsible for Parks. They won't be subsumed by Parks. I'm not responsible



for European heritage. There's no suggestion that someone else is going to stand between me and Aboriginal heritage.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So, they won't sit under Ms Ogilvie?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. Aboriginal heritage is still mine as minister responsible. It just has a different administrative home in the structure of government. When it comes to the processes of land management, working with our Heritage Register, interacting with other spatial datasets, that's not stuff that DPAC is good at. That's stuff that NRET does all day. There are good connections there to get better outcomes for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal heritage. Critically, the oversight of the whole-of-government process of Closing the Gap, and right now, things like the intensive focus on our youth justice reforms, including Aboriginal youth justice, as a lead in DPAC as appropriate, because we need to draw in the involvement of many government agencies. That's what DPAC is good at.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Given that a disproportionate number of young people who are in Ashley Youth Detention centre are Aboriginal, have you funded a bail hostel safe home facility so that Aboriginal young people won't be sent to Ashley when they should instead be bailed and going into a home? I think you haven't done that, minister. I think you've not actually funded a home as promised.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You've asked me the question, and you've told me what the answer is in your view. My version of that is that we desperately need more options for diversion, for bail, and for alternatives to sentencing and detention for all young people. Aboriginal people, as you point out, are disproportionately represented in that population. That's why we are working with non-government organisations of a range of kinds, including Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, about what roles they can take in providing supports and wraparound services for young people who may be at risk of entering our youth justice system, or who are exiting it and need those supports outside of it.

Our picture of that, at the moment, is more of individualised case management with wraparound services for young people, rather than building a home to put them in, which -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Will it allow children to be bailed, which is the point of the bail hostel?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It will enable children to be bailed, which means -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - At 11.00 p.m. on a Friday night, instead of them getting put in the back of a paddy wagon and taken to Ashley, will they have a home to go to so that does not happen?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. That's the intention, for as many young people as possible.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Funded by you?

**CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I speak to your question, please? Stop interrupting me.

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**Dr WOODRUFF** - Well, are you paying for the house, or are you paying for someone else to do that job?

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, please cease interjecting and allow the minister to finish. We only have a minute to go.

**Mr JAENSCH** - What I'm trying to put across to you is that you are talking about a house where we put children. We are talking about -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes, it's called a home.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I give up.

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, please stop interjecting.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - But you're not doing the thing you promised.

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, please allow the minister to finish his answer.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Right across the state, wherever a young person, through their behaviours and their circumstances, is apprehended by police and is to be brought before a JP or a court, we need there to be supports and solutions in their community where they live that can support them to meet conditions of bail in the system as their matters are being delivered. It's not necessarily a building built by the government where we put young people. That's what Ashley has become, and it's not a good thing. What we are trying to do is to take a service response to this in the first instance, which can be far more -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - That is absolutely shameful. That is completely dishonest.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You promised something and you're not delivering on that critical thing.

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, order. Please allow the minister to finish.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The commission of inquiry recommendation, that was. You're not fulfilling the commission of inquiry recommendation.

**CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The commission of inquiry's recommendations align very strongly with our Youth Justice Blueprint -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - 12B, I believe.

**Mr JAENSCH** - which involves there being a 24-hour bail service available across the state. That doesn't necessarily mean a building where we take young people to, but it may mean that we have relationships with a wide variety of service providers - some of whom provide accommodation, some of whom provide accommodation with other supports, some who provide supports to people who provide accommodation - so that we can have an individualised

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response to young people across the state, flexible, tailored to their needs. Not a building where we put young people, because that's what Ashley is.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It's not a building, it's just a place for children to stay safe.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You keep saying 'building'.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes, it is a home. That's why children don't get bailed. It's because they don't have a home to go to. You know that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for your advice. Sometimes it's the home they're getting away from.

**CHAIR** - The time for Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has expired.

The committee will resume at 1.00 p.m.

**The Committee suspended from 12.06 p.m. to 1.00 p.m**

### MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

**CHAIR** (Mr Wood) - The time being 1.00 p.m the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Children and Youth will commence. Welcome again, minister. There's no one at the table.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm sure they'll turn up. We need the committee's guidance on where you'd like to start. We've got different teams for different components, Children and then Youth Justice, or vice versa. I have an overview statement which covers both. Then we'll bring a team to the table depending on where the questioning starts. In your hands.

**Ms ROSOL** - Are they all in the room here?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes ma'am.

**Ms ROSOL** - They could just come as we ask the questions and we can go where we want to?

**CHAIR** - It might be less clunky though, if we just decided.

**Ms ROSOL** - Could we start with Youth Justice, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy either way.

**Ms BROWN** - I had different places to start.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm in the hands of the committee as always. I'm happy just to take a few minutes now while you work that out.

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**CHAIR** - In light of that, maybe we could start with Children?

**Ms BROWN** - Yes, please.

**CHAIR** - Ms Rosol, are you happy with that?

**Ms ROSOL** - Sounds like I have to be.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We'll start with Children.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Chair, I welcome to the table Sue McKerracher, acting deputy secretary, Keeping Children Safe; Ms Claire Lovell, executive director, Children and Families; and Mr Jason Sowell, deputy director, Finance and Budget Services.

**CHAIR** - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Children and Youth is three and a half hours. Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Very much I would. There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of Tasmania's children. I am pleased to be here and proud to be Minister for Children and Youth in Tasmania.

I thank our staff, not only those at the table and in the room, but across our child safety, out-of-home care and youth justice systems for their extraordinary work. They work with children and young people who have had trauma in their young lives. They build trust, advocate for them, ensure their safety, and provide them opportunities. This is a challenging job. In undertaking it they exhibit great integrity and service and professionalism.

On 1 December 2023, our government released Keeping Children Safe and Rebuilding Trust, our response to the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, including the acceptance of all 191 of the commission's recommendations. Our clear focus is now to use the commission of inquiry recommendations to build on the work that we have already done in ensuring safety for children and young people. Accordingly, \$174.89 million has been allocated over the 2024-25 Budget and forward Estimates for commission of inquiry initiatives across the Children and Youth portfolio. This includes significant reforms in the out-of-home care and youth justice services.

The Child Safety Service continues progressing the reform agenda to elevate and accelerate the delivery of a whole-of-government approach to implementing relevant commission of inquiry recommendations. We will also enhance the after-hours service model across our three regions. These enhancements will deliver greater capability for responses to emergencies, improve timeliness of service and support resolving complex issues.

We are implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement principle. This includes tailoring assessments, placement and care planning to address the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, as well as establishing the role of Executive Director for Aboriginal children and young people.

We are developing a whole-of-agency complaints management system to achieve a robust, consistent and transparent complaint management process resulting in timely and

relevant reporting of information. We are prioritising the transition of out-of-home care to non-government organisations as part of ongoing reforms to the out-of-home care system. We continue to prioritise the recruitment and retention of our highly valued child safety advice and referral line, and youth justice workforce across the state.

In Youth Justice, we've released our Youth Justice Blueprint. We are delivering a comprehensive reform of our entire system in line with commission of inquiry recommendations. This includes building a new therapeutic youth justice facility and delivering services that better respond to the needs of young people at risk. It's important to acknowledge that achieving the outcomes set out in the blueprint is more than just building a new facility and closing an old facility.

We remain committed to closing Ashley Youth Detention Centre as soon as possible. We are also redesigning the whole service system so that fewer young people end up in detention and there are fewer crimes in the community. Our investment in a therapeutic approach reduces reoffending. We have established a Youth Justice Reform Taskforce to accelerate and enhance the actions underway, particularly those elements of the Youth Justice Blueprint that require cross-agency cooperation. We are engaging with our expert panel, community engagement group, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders as we progress this important work. We maintain our focus on increasing safety and supports for those young people in Ashley Youth Detention Centre now and our future facilities by strengthening leadership and enhancing our therapeutic capability and case management approaches.

The Tasmanian government remains committed to funding and implementing reforms that are making a real difference in the lives of Tasmanian children and young people. I will do my best to answer the committee's questions about this important work. Thank you.

**Ms WHITE** - I want to start with the services for children and families. There has been a significant amount of interest in the work that your agency is doing, particularly in regard to their commission of inquiry work. The allocations across the forward Estimates for this particular line item are a bit lumpy. I was hoping that you might be able to provide an explanation to the committee, particularly in relation to some of the changes that are happening in 2026-27 for the decrease in expenditure.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Decrease in expenditure in 2026-27?

**Ms WHITE** - There's a significant uplift for the current financial year, which is explained in the footnote to relate to the commission of inquiry. Then there's a decrease over the next two years.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There are a couple of initiatives in the Budget and in the work program that are either winding up or are funded for an initial period and will be subject to future budget processes. For example, there is a decrease in 2026-27 that reflects the funding profile for our child safety workforce package. We have \$4.52 million over the next couple of years as part of that system of payments and incentives and relocation, settling in payments for new workers in Child Safety, Youth Justice and the ARL. That is an example of a one-off, time limited allocation.

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I understand that the Under 16 Lighthouse Project also concludes its planned term of being funded for this stage of works in 2026-27. There are also a couple of services, including the Intensive Family Engagement Service and the Transition to Independence programs, which are funded out to the end of 2025-26 under an existing allocation. We will be looking at their future funding in future budgets.

**Ms WHITE** - Is it possible for you to table for the committee, or I can put a question on notice to you, about the different programs that are ending over the next year or two that explain that significant variation?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Some will be projects that have a defined life and did have from their outset and some will be services that are funded periodically as well. Which time periods and funding changes do you want to target for that?

**Ms WHITE** - This financial year there is an allocation of \$189 million and next year it's \$180 million. The following year is \$177 million. I would like to know why there's a decrease over the forwards for those two next financial years. What programs are ending, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm just going to ask Mr Salter if there is a table in the budget papers that would have more of those line items mapped out under the years so that the committee could refer to. Table 2.2 on page 54.

**Ms WHITE** - Yes, I'm looking at that one. I'm very keen to understand because we've heard from other hearings this week that there are black holes in the budget where programs just suddenly drop off a cliff and there's no provision made for how they're going to be funded in future budgets. I'm keen to understand what that means for your agency. I'd like to know if I can place a question on notice to you so that you can come back to the committee at a later date with the details of those programs that end in the next two to three financial years, please.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The advice I have is that for the time period you're talking about and those line items, the examples I gave you account for the majority of that change and I confirm that I expect that we would have in future budgets new bids for things like the Intensive Family Engagement Services and transition to independence for future funding for those.

**Ms WHITE** - Is it possible for you to quantify the amount of money you'd need to continue operating those programs?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We would review that in the formulation of our budget bids internally over the future budgets. I wouldn't want to under sell that.

**Ms WHITE** - Could I ask then, and it might be a question on notice, could you provide for the committee the years each of those things ceased, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The Intensive Family Engagement Services and the Transition to Independence are both funded for 2024-25 and not in the budget beyond that. That's an existing allocation that concludes in this financial year so we would be due to revisit those for the next period.

**Ms WHITE** - And the Lighthouse Program? You said that was 2026-27.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - That was 2026-27.

**Ms WHITE** - Then you talked about the incentive payment to staff. When does that cease? Is that a one-off for this financial year only?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, I think that extends through to next financial year as well.

**Ms WHITE** - So 2025-26.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That extends out to 2027-28 with a tail on it there. And the out years - the last two years - reflect the component of the workforce package which is scholarships.

If you're aware, there is a market allowance. There was a payment of \$10,000 to eligible staff market allowance for the north-west relocation and settling in payment for the north-west and university scholarships and TAFE fee-free places that will extend out to 2027-28.

**Ms WHITE** - Yes, but the incentive payments just a one-off financial year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, I think they go in to 2025-26 as well. Yes, because there was a second payment component of those.

**Ms ROSOL** - Minister, I understand what you were saying about having different teams here, but there's five empty seats at the table. I've got quite a lot of questions I'd like to ask about Ashley and I'd like to start with them, so could I ask some of those questions, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm in the committee's hands when it comes to the order of your questions. I'm not going to determine that.

**CHAIR** - I got the distinct impression the will of the committee was to start with Youth.

**Ms ROSOL** - I think I made it clear that I would like to start with Ashley and there is room at the table if that's if that's possible, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, we can bring more people to the table.

I'm bringing to the table Jenny Burgess, associate secretary and acting secretary for the Department for Education, Children and Young People; Mr Craig Woodfall, director, Community and Custodial Youth Justice for the Department for Education, Children and Young People; and Courtney Hurworth, who is chief reform officer in DPAC.

**Ms ROSOL** - Minister, could you provide a breakdown of the ages of children held in Ashley Youth Detention Centre during 2023-24, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't think I have an age profile in my folder. I'm happy to see if the department can look that up while we're at the table. If you have another question you'd like to proceed with, we could return to that one when they have an answer ready for you.

**Ms ROSOL** - Yes, can do. In the budget papers, it shows the average number of children in Ashley Youth Detention Centre each day has grown by 79 per cent in two years. In that time, the centre's gone from an on average detaining nine children per day to over 16. That's despite

stark warnings from the commission of inquiry of live and current risks of abuse and human rights violations and the former commissioner for Children and Young People's warnings that more children there leads to greater risk. Why have you allowed for the number of children at Ashley to increase so much? Do you accept that this has increased risks to children at the centre?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The number of young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre fluctuates daily. Typically, within the range of 10 to 16 or so has been normal over the last couple of months. I understand there's 15 young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre today.

The number of young people that we have in there is a reflection of the decisions of courts and magistrates regarding where young people need to be held in relation to their offending behaviour, and also the extent to which they presented with suitable supports to enable them to be bailed outside of the detention facility.

The number does fluctuate. It has stabilised over the last couple of months, which has been very welcome. There is ongoing work to intercept those young people earlier in their offending behaviour, but also to provide more options when young people have offended and are presenting for the first time to someone who makes a decision about what happens to them next.

Our clear aim and significant investment in in this Budget of around \$16 million is directed to various forms of intervention and diversion for those young people. This includes addressing their behaviours in the community before they offend, and developing partnerships and procedures with organisations that can support our police and community youth justice services to provide bail plans and options, sometimes including accommodation for those young people. That way we can present courts and JPs with sound bail plans that meet the needs of those young people and they are not defaulting to detention when there are other options. We need to develop more of those options and be able to deploy them very quickly in response to a young person's offending.

**Ms ROSOL** - I understand that and I understand that it fluctuates, but the average has gone up over the two years. Then, looking in the Budget, you have an aspirational target that there will still be, on average, 15 children in Ashley until at least the middle of next year, which is essentially the same as current levels. Despite all the action that you talk about and that it's a court decision, there is no change in the average number over that time. I'm interested in the word that you've chosen, you've said 'aspiration' rather than 'projection'. Do you have a projection that it will be even greater than that? Is that why you're aspiring to only have 15?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask someone else who knows how the budget papers are put together. Maybe Mr Salter can talk to us about the choice of words and conventions regarding projections and aspirations, targets, et cetera. Clearly, our aspiration is to have no young people in detention. Back from that, only those young people who were sentenced to detention should be in detention. Beyond that, only those who a court determines are a great risk to themselves or a community and cannot be held in some other more suitable form of accommodation should be in in detention. There is a process for the purposes of a budget that there is a conservative estimate of what we need to be able to budget for or around to ensure we have provision in the event that the current trend continues.



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Our policy and operational response that we're talking about here today, largely with the commission of inquiry, our Youth Justice Taskforce, and the work of many, many people who are on this right now is to drive that number right down to its lowest possible level.

**Ms ROSOL** - I'm asking because previous years have used the word 'projection' and this Budget has changed it to the word 'aspiration'. I'm trying to understand that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Mr Salter if he can comment on that or Ms Burgess, because it's a convention in the construction of the papers.

**Ms BURGESS** - We've changed the way that we've approached our targets for the budget papers across the entirety of the department. When we became a new department back in October 2022, there was a conscious decision to make those targets more aspirational and not just solely based on statistical calculations. As you see there, for that one where the average daily young people in youth justice detention, by way of example, there, if you did a trajectory from 13.6 to 16.3, you would have that going up and you'd have confidence intervals around that. What we've done is we've drawn the line of best fit based on that statistical calculation and said, 'No, that's not good enough. We want to be reducing the number of children in detention'. Therefore, while the statistical calculation might be higher, we've said we need to make sure that we are working to a reduced target of number of children in detention.

**Ms ROSOL** - Wouldn't you want to reduce it to what it was a couple of years ago and be even more aspirational than just what it is now?

**Ms BURGESS** - We would like to be aspirational. As the minister indicated, there are a number of factors that are outside the control of our department. A number of those decisions are made by the courts and not by our department. We receive them, look after them, case manage them, and try to get them out as quickly as possible.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're doing everything we can to put different options in front of courts, so even the most conservative after-hours JP can be presented with some solutions for young people that don't involve them defaulting to remand.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Before I start my question, I want to thank Craig, who took the time to take Miriam and myself on a tour around Ashley Detention Youth Centre. Craig, I want to commend you. Your passion and dedication to those kids is remarkable, so thank you for what you do there.

I want to ask a question in and around the commission of inquiry's Aboriginal youth justice recommendation 12.29, which includes funding for the recruitment of a full-time Aboriginal liaison worker to support youth in the justice system. Has this critical position been filled?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mrs Pentland, for your question and thank you for recognising the passion of our staff. Anywhere across these services dealing with young people, you'll find that same heart for the work. It's difficult work and it relies on people who are motivated to turn up every day to make a difference in the life of children, so thank you.

Funding for a one FTE Aboriginal liaison officer role to be established at Ashley, and any future youth detention facility, has been provided for in the Budget. It'll include facilitating

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cultural support and involvement in case planning, case management and exit planning. There's an allocation of \$492,000 over four years for that. I understand that planning for that position has commenced. I might ask Mr Woodfall if he can update us.

**Mr WOODFALL** - We have developed a SoD, Statement of Duties, in a draft form, and the next step is to consult with Aboriginal organisations to make sure that they're comfortable and have been consulted appropriately. The position, pending consultation, will have a strong focus on supporting young people in Ashley for things like the yarning circle, general support, cultural safety, all of those elements that we want. We're also hoping that we'll position it to informing our policies and programs, both at Ashley and across Community Youth Justice. That's the intended direction of the SoD, pending consultation, which we're now moving towards.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I note as well, that appointment is one of a number of important leadership roles that are contemplated in the reforms based on out-of-home care and youth justice across our system, including an Executive Director, Aboriginal Children and Youth in DECYP, and a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Could you give a breakdown of the funding allocated in the Budget overall for those positions?

**Mr JAENSCH** - For those positions?

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Yeah.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay. What I might do is ask that between my advisers, who've been looking at some of this already, and the department, if we can put a summary together at the table here for you. If we can do that today, we will, otherwise we can take that on notice. I think we have some numbers to respond to the earlier question.

**Ms BURGESS** - We do, we have that data. Craig's just finding it again. He just flicked to something else.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Sorry, I thought we were being very smooth there.

**Ms BURGESS** - Just checking that I'm answering the right question: that was 2023-24, the distinct number of young people by age:

- 10-year-olds, none
- 11-year-olds, none
- 12-year-olds, none
- 13-year-olds, five
- 14-year-olds, 11
- 15-year-olds, 16
- 16-year-olds, 25
- 17-year-olds, 20
- 18-year-olds, none.

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**Mr WOODFALL** - It's less than five, so we don't stipulate it.

**Ms BURGESS** - We have a statistical thing because of the identification of the young people. That one is not reportable.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Minister, can you update the committee please on what is being done to increase the focus on early intervention and diversion in line with the Youth Justice Blueprint's and the commission of inquiry's recommendations?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much Mr Behrakis, very happy to do so. We are committed to developing a youth justice system that achieves better outcomes for young people, their families and the communities they live in and that keeps them safe. The Budget provides a total of \$15.85 million over four years in line with the commission of inquiry recommendations and our Youth Justice Blueprint's focus on intervention and diversionary services.

That funding breaks down as follows: \$2.1 million over four years for an additional six Community Youth Justice staff or FTE to work with children and young people to meet the conditions of their community service orders and reduce offending behaviour through community-based diversion and rehabilitation programs; \$6.5 million over four years for outcomes-focused community diversion and support for children and young people in the community as well as assisted bail and supported accommodation; \$3.7 million over three years for JCP Youth's innovative model that offers a community-based response to at-risk children and young people; \$2.3 million to support innovative local initiatives and partnerships that target the root causes of youth offending in local communities, like some of those you'll be aware of in the south here, Mr Behrakis; and \$1.25 million in 2024-25 allocated to the Department of Premier and Cabinet as part of the Youth Justice Reform Taskforce to commence the establishment of assisted bail and transition from detention services.

Our 2030 Strong Plan investment in JCP Youth and in local place-based initiatives seeks to divert and prevent young people from offending and reoffending, so there's a recidivism aspect as well. JCP's BEAST Program delivers statewide interventions for children and young people by providing outreach and mentorship that's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It helps at-risk children and young people build the life skills they need to be happy, healthy and positive members of their community.

Additionally, by investing in other new local initiatives and partnerships that offer responses to local circumstances associated with antisocial and offending behaviour, we're targetting the root causes, not just the community safety aspects of the situations in the south of the state that you've been bringing to our attention. The department has also commenced development of a youth justice diversionary services framework that will identify criteria and measures for diversionary programs to ensure they are effective, evidence-based, and regularly monitored and evaluated. This aligns with the commission of inquiry's recommendation 12.13 that the government develop such a diversionary services framework and begin delivering programs under it by 2025.

While diversionary options such as informal and formal cautioning services and referring young people to community conferences are valuable and available now, and they'll continue to be used, the government will increase the number and range of approaches that are available to assist more young people and their families. This includes ensuring that Aboriginal children

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and young people have access to Aboriginal-led diversionary services as we recognise that, while we seek the same outcomes from diversionary services for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people, the approach we take to divert them from the youth justice system in partnership with Aboriginal community organisations might be different. This significant service system development will see young people being diverted through an increasing number and range of programs, initiatives and services grounded in evidence that are regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure that they work. Thank you for your question.

**Ms WHITE** - Seeing we're on Justice, I'm not going to ask you to shift your people at the table.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're all here now, everyone's here.

**Ms WHITE** - How cosy! In the joint House committee hearing on the commission of inquiry recommendations earlier this year, the committee was informed that the model of care for the new youth justice facility would be finalised by the end of September. Are you able to share with the committee whether that's on track and whether it will be made public?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. I understand that there is considerable consultation happening at the moment on the elements of the model of care that have been concluded so far.

Is that one yours to speak to, Ms Hurworth? There are so many people here.

**Ms WHITE** - It was Ms Hurworth who gave the evidence at the committee.

**Mr JAENSCH** - If you want to lead in on this one, I'll be very happy for you to do so with an update.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes, it is on track. We have just finished incorporating all of the feedback from the youth justice expert panel on the model of care and our intention is that it will be published publicly. It is a model of care for the whole youth justice service continuum, which makes it unique. Tasmania is the first jurisdiction to try a model of care that goes across the whole continuum of services and so, yes, our intention is that it will be public and to be published imminently.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You spoke about it going across the continuum, minister; is it still?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I beg your pardon?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I didn't ask the question because I knew you were taking advice.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Is it still your government's intention to build five new youth justice facilities?

**Mr JAENSCH** - When the Youth Justice Reform Blueprint came out, we prepared another piece of work which we referred to as a facilities plan, which indicated what our intention was to support fewer young people being in detention in the future, and that was to ensure that more of them had the opportunity to be supported under a bail arrangement while

awaiting the outcomes of their court processes rather than being in Ashley. More of them were able to be supported as they exited detention to rejoin the community and be supported to not reoffend after a period of detention.

The initial model that we put out envisaged a single smaller detention facility at the heart of that and establishment of one or more assisted bail and supported accommodation facilities either side.

Further work on that and discussion with the NGO sector in particular indicates we might be able to get a better outcome more quickly by working with some of the service providers. So, instead of building a bail house somewhere in the state or in two or three locations, another government institution set up to house young people as part of our correction system or our youth justice system, we might do better by the young people by being able to support them in their communities through the use of some existing providers and facilities and services that are already there but brokered to meet their individual needs.

We do have organisations like 54 Reasons, Colony 47, JCP Youth, Anglicare, and others who already work with some of these young people or people in similar situations to them, who also may be involved with provision of things like special care packages in their out-of-home care system. Our initial focus is working with them to see how we build their capacity and their capabilities, not necessarily as a one-stop shop, but as a component of a brokered package of supports that we can put around a young person that enables them to stay in the community with support rather than being remanded in the detention facility.

If we find ultimately that there's not enough capacity there, we need to build more physical facilities that are suitable for providing a bail house, then we'll do so, but first we wanted to exhaust the capacity of the NGO sector to work with us around packages individually tailored to the needs of young people. The difficulty we have is each time we create another building and put a number of young people with complex behaviours in it, we run into the same issues that we have in Ashley. After all, we're dealing with some of the same young people in a different setting. We need to do better by them.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, you've just confirmed that you're looking to use existing non-government organisations to provide services like a bail house facility, for instance.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Bail services, we'll call them services.

**Ms WHITE** - Why on earth can't you remove those young people in Ashley on remand now to those types of services? This is exactly what the community has been calling on you to do and you've refused to explore that, and now you tell the committee that it's something you are open to.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, we're doing it already and so there is work -

**Ms WHITE** - Why have you been so reluctant and pushed back on the time lines? Your government announced that it would close Ashley by 2024, saying there was no alternative, and you've just confirmed that there are possible alternatives that exist today.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You've conflated a few different things there. We're unlikely to be able to create an NGO solution for young people who were sentenced by courts to detention for their crimes -

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**Ms WHITE** - I'm not talking about sentencing, I am talking about the kids on remand who have not been sentenced to detention.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For young people who are in detention on remand now we have processes underway within Ashley that are intensive case management that include working with those young people's families and legal representatives to create applications for bail, including brokering accommodation if needed, and wraparound supports for those young people so that they can be released from detention and supported in the community.

**Ms WHITE** - Shouldn't that intervention happen sooner though? The courts should be able to have those options available to them so they're not sending kids to Ashley, but instead sending them to the bail services.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Where we talk about our diversionary framework that I mentioned in my overview statement, that's about establishing those systems and those relationships with service providers of different kinds so that we can offer that at the point a person is brought before a court and decisions are made about where they need to go. That work is underway now and there's money in the Budget that I've just described to buy those services, where they exist.

We also have young people who are already in the detention facility on remand, and we're working with them and their representatives as well to identify where there are opportunities for them to be bailed under certain conditions that a court will accept and after the fact, if you like, so that they don't have to be in detention as well. Sometimes those cases and the behaviours that underlie them are extremely complex and those young people are sometimes very difficult to place in a community setting because of the nature of their behaviour and offending. We're working at a number of different levels through our reform task force, with our expert panel and with our reference group of community service providers as well, to identify where the capabilities exist in our sector at the moment and where there are gaps.

There are gaps, particularly in terms of young people with violent behaviours and there being suitable premises and staffing arrangements to be able to provide for their care. Our ambition though is to grow that capability so that we can offer more of those solutions for more young people.

The pushback that I have expressed before is when people have asserted to me that we can close Ashley tomorrow and place all of the young people there now. That may come in the future in the care of community service organisations and that they're ready and waiting to take them now. My meetings with individual organisations, and with them in groups, they clearly don't expect that that can be done straight away. We need to grow the capacity of the sector to do that and the capacity of our service system at intake, if you like, when young people are identified as being at risk of entering the youth justice system to broker a set of services that can help be an alternative for them to go into detention. It doesn't happen overnight, but there is work underway right now and there's resources in this year's Budget to buy those services and put them together. There are people working on the case management of individuals in Ashley right now.

**Ms WHITE** - You have \$1.25 million that's gone to DPAC for youth justice to try to build the capability.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - No, more than that, there's \$2.45 million I think, and \$1.25 million is for purchasing those diversionary services and interventions.

**Ms WHITE** - It's in your press release, it says \$1.25 million.

**Ms ROSOL** - I was wondering if we can go back to the projections and aspirations and the calculations that were done around that? What was the statistical model that was used? What were the calculations that were used to produce those figures and projections?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd ask Ms Burgess if she could speak to that.

**Ms BURGESS** - I'd have to get my data and systems and insights team here to be able to take you through the technical side of those calculations. Are you specifically asking for those measures in the Budget?

**Ms ROSOL** - Just how you came up with those figures and how you calculated those figures? What were the inputs you were putting into it to determine that you had a projection that was heading up, but you had an aspiration that you thought was achievable? What were the inputs that you put in to produce that?

**Ms BURGESS** - I can certainly get my data team to get an answer to that.

**Ms ROSOL** - The question is about the projection rather than the aspiration. What was the projection based on the current trajectory? Do you have that figure? You went for 15 for the aspiration. What was the projection going to be?

**Ms BURGESS** - Are you comfortable if I take that, Mathew?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm comfortable for you to provide Ms Rosol with any information she wants on that. I just need to confirm that I'm not aiming for 15. There's a column in the budget papers and a formula for filling it, which I do sometimes find that they're a bit meaningless in some settings. It's a little bit different when you're talking about performance data on other areas where we're trying to hit a particular target for a reason.

With this one, our aim would be to reduce that number down dramatically, ideally to 0. What we do have to do is also make provision for things that are outside of our control, which might mean that our budget papers need to reflect a reasonable provision so that, ultimately, we have the capacity in our system to look after our young people in our care, no matter what circumstances.

**Ms ROSOL** - We can only go with what's written down on the paper, and it says 15.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, but it's not guiding our work to achieve 15. We don't get any reward for hitting that target.

**Ms ROSOL** - I have another question. You referred a couple of times to things beyond your control. At the election, your government announced a so-called strike force to crack down on youth crime. By the government's own measure, the goal of that policy is to arrest and charge more young people. Doesn't that mean that the government policy is to send more children to detention - if you've got a strike force policy that will result in more of them being

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arrested? It's in direct conflict with the goals of the Youth Justice Blueprint and with what you're saying in terms of aspirations. I can't figure out how those two things fit together. I'm wondering if you can shed some light on that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - One's about keeping the community safe from violent crime and damage to property. The other question is about what do we do with those young people to address their offending behaviour and help them to not become part of our youth justice and adult correction system. They can sit alongside each other quite well. One is about making sure the community is safe. That's the role of police. The question then is what happens to these young people? What we're doing at the moment is clearly not working, for the young people or for the communities where their offending happens.

That's why all of this work is so important - to address them earlier, address the causes of their offending, and prevent their offending and antisocial behaviour in the first place. For those who do end up committing crimes in the community, we don't not see that. We have to find better solutions for it. At the moment they're doing it again and again and again. That's no good for their community. It's certainly not good for young people. I see my job as intercepting them earlier and working out, with all of the skills we have and all of the best advice we can get, what we can do in the life of those young people that turns them around. If we can do that well, they'll be better off and their communities will be safer places.

**Mrs BESWICK** - I'd like to briefly add to Ms Rosol's questions on the targets of 15 people per day. She has probably covered it, but I wondered how many years calculated into there is actually sentenced versus remand. How many in sentencing, because you have to allow for a base number there per day?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for that to be taken up as part of that line of questioning.

**Ms BURGESS** - If I'm answering the question correctly, it's a question about how many young people have been detained in custody by their legal status, and their legal status is either by remand or by detention or sentenced?

**Mrs BESWICK** - Yes. I think in the calculations there -

**Ms BURGESS** - For 2023-24, of those young people, 55 were on remand and 22 sentenced.

**Mrs BESWICK** - In June you promised a laser focus on child safety workforce recruitment, particularly for the north-west coast. Since that promise, how many new child safety officers have been employed on the north-west coast and how many currently are there in vacancy?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will introduce Claire Lovell back to the table. Are you able to update us on those specifics - how many appointed and how many vacancies? I will try to reach for an update on the current recruitment process?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - How many staff members in the north-west currently, is that part of it?

**Ms BESWICK** - Yes.



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**Ms C. LOVELL** - In the north-west currently we have 39 frontline staff members in our establishment. Budgeted, 23.5 of those are child safety officer positions, and 15.5 of those are other frontline positions. They can be allied health professionals or other people directly there in those services working with children and young people. Of those, at the last pay period ending 11 September, we had 14.2 child safety officers occupied, and 20.6 of the other positions occupied. We had over our funded establishment for the other positions and under for child safety officer roles, which have been the hardest to fill roles in recent times.

**Ms BESWICK** - We have nine vacancies?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes. That doesn't factor in leave and workers' compensation absences. We had eight available child safety officers for that period and another 17 available staff members in other roles. We have had 25.6 staff over that period.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I add a little detail? The start of your question went to the recent recruitment blitz, and our workforce package which we announced. As I understand, the update that the first stage of that recruitment campaign resulted in 93 applications for child safety officer positions statewide. I'm advised that 51 have been interviewed so far. There are interviews continuing for positions in the south of the state. They're anticipating making offers soon for positions in the north and north-west, which would substantially meet the vacancies that we have for child safety, if they are successful.

There have some positive results also for the Advice and Referral Line. It would seem that that campaign has been a success. The incentives that we announced have been included in the recruiting process, so that the people who are making decisions about whether they can take this up will be aware of the market allowance, the payments, the relocation and settling-in payments, et cetera, that we've been able to put on the table.

We seem to have met the market there, but we need to keep recruiting. We know that with our workforce there are people who for their own lives and circumstances may need, from time to time, to not work full-time or take leave for personal reasons, to have a family, et cetera. There's a fair bit of coming and going in that workforce. We need to be able to recruit above what we call our establishment, our full complement of staff, so that we've got some capacity to fill vacancies when they occur in either short-term or longer-term.

We're very pleased with the response. We don't want to count too many chickens before they hatch. I'm very heartened by the advice that I've had from the department about the numbers. Particularly for the north-west, where there have been some big gaps to fill.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Can you please update the committee on how this government is working to strengthen leadership and culture in detention environments?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I can do that. An older one. Our government is committed to ensuring children and young people in youth detention are supported by a skilled, capable and supportive workforce that demonstrates the changes in attitudes and behaviours required for child-safe and child-centred practices. The commission of inquiry made several recommendations regarding strengthening leadership and changing the culture in our youth detention settings.

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We're committed to ensuring that we have the leaders in youth justice who have the skills and capabilities to lead a child-safe organisation. That's why we're providing \$3.4 million over four years to support and strengthen leadership and cultural change in youth justice. The funding is provided for four FTE to strengthen the leadership in the youth detention system now and into the future, and to support improved governance arrangements as well. An additional one FTE is provided for a Cultural Change Manager to lead the transformation of culture in youth detention services in line with the commission of inquiry's recommendation.

You would have noted through the inquiry's commentary that we need to amend legislation in some cases and we need to change practices and standards and guidelines and facilities et cetera in our youth justice system as well as in out-of-home care. But they kept coming around to this issue of changing the culture - building a culture which has a very clear focus on the rights of the child, the voice of the child, their role in decision-making that affects them, and the aim of what our youth justice and out-of-home care systems are meant to be doing for the children, not just what problem they're solving for society. I think that is a major shift and it does change the way that those young people experience their care and the systems that they interact with.

We're very committed to that. The department has translated those recommendations into changes to their staffing and management and leadership structures, and we look forward to the changes that they can bring in these settings. Thanks for your question.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, I want to go back to the line of questioning I'd started around the change of policy by the government to move away from building five new facilities in the youth justice space. How has that been communicated? Is today the first that the public knows of that changing policy?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We've been talking about this with the sector for quite some time.

**Ms WHITE** - It's still on your website that you're going to build two assisted bail facilities, north and south, and two support centres plus the new detention facility.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Ms White, we will if we have to, if we don't have the capacity around the state where we need it for suitable buildings, rooms and services that can be provided by others.

What we do have is a number of partners who we are already working with, who provide a number of the services that we need, maybe not all of them, and maybe we need to look at how we do that in different combinations. If we're going to get a result quickly and if we're going to accelerate our way to reducing numbers in detention, we need to maximise the services that are out there now, maybe use them in different ways. Maybe it'll be that we end up investing in partnership with some of those service providers to establish facilities that they own and operate and that we use on a needs basis when young people need them rather than us building another government building somewhere.

However, if the capacity or the interest in the NGO sector is insufficient and we have gaps in the market, we'll build them. What we want to avoid is just decanting young people for the sake of getting them out of Ashley, putting them into another building which feels to them just like Ashley.

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**Ms WHITE** - With all due respect, minister, you're not known for your speed and this is a project that's been dragging on for a long time and you still seem unclear about what your policy is exactly. Why have you been unable to decide whether you're going to proceed with the construction of new facilities - which is what you told Tasmania you were going to do - versus outsourcing to the non-government sector? How much longer do we need to wait before you actually make a decision?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, we're using partners in the non-government sector already and we want to grow that. We believe we can grow that faster than we can build new facilities that may duplicate things that are already out there in the market.

**Ms WHITE** - I wouldn't be surprised, given the slowness that it's taken so far.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for your character assessment.

**Ms WHITE** - It's not a character assessment; it's a critique of the policy.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think the other way you could look at it is that we're prepared to pull every lever available to us to find solutions for young people who need it rather than deciding that we're going to be on a one track to build a new bail facility.

**Ms WHITE** - When will you know that by?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll know that as we engage more of these services and see how many of the cases presented to us can be dealt with, with existing service providers and co-investment with them in solutions.

**Ms WHITE** - That doesn't answer the question. We have kids sitting in detention who are on remand who could be accommodated in different facilities. How soon will you know?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Maybe. Every one of those young people is different and they have different needs and it may be that for many of them, Ashley is the only suitable place to hold them because of their needs and their behaviours. I'm not talking about them being naughty. I'm talking about sometimes their extreme complex behaviours.

**Ms WHITE** - Regardless of the individuals - I don't need to talk about individual cases - I'm talking about your policy and I'm trying to understand when you will have clarity around the decision-making process for when a court is making a judgment about where they might send that young person, what their options might look like. How soon will you decide what the framework is, because your website says one thing, you've said something different today and I'm really interested to know when we will have a final decision made by you on this.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think it continues to evolve. We will use everything we can that works to reduce the number of young people in detention as quickly as we can. If we need to co-invest with the NGO sector, we'll do so. If we need to invest on our own, we'll do so.

**Ms WHITE** - Is there capital funding in this Budget for you to do that?

**CHAIR** - Order, please let the minister answer.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - There's funding for us to achieve solutions, funding of various kinds in there, including \$50 million for youth justice facilities. My hope is that we can focus that on the development of a new youth detention facility which we know we're going to need, hopefully for a smaller number of young people, with a greater investment in procuring services and partnering with service providers to provide those other non-detention settings for those who aren't sentenced. I think that's in the best interest of young people.

**Ms ROSOL** - Minister, just checking in on that projection information around the projection aspiration, is that available yet or is it something that we could put on as a question on notice if it's taking a while to find it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know who was looking at that. Ms Burgess, do you have an update for us?

**Ms BURGESS** - The team are still working on that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay, if we haven't got that by the end of our session today, we'll take it on notice. If we can provide it at the table, we will.

**Ms ROSOL** - Great, thank you. Just going back to what you were saying about the average daily number of children in Ashley: on DECYP's reporting dashboard, it has the quarterly figures for what's happening in youth justice. In December 2023 quarter, the average daily number of children in Ashley is 13.3, in March quarter it was 16.8, and in the June 2024 quarter it was 21.5. So, it's been going up, but you said it's stabilised and starting to reduce which is great. Do you have figures on that? I know that there's still a few days left in this quarter, but do you have any figures on how that's been tracking through this quarter given the trajectory was up, but you're saying that it has stabilised now?

**Mr JAENSCH** - At the beginning of the quarter, there was a period where we had some very high numbers for a period of weeks and the quarter that those numbers fell in will be an anomaly in otherwise a more consistent trend.

**Ms ROSOL** - It's likely to still be high, but that's reflected at the beginning of the quarter, not the later part of the quarter?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll just look to Mr Woodfall to help with that.

**Mr WOODFALL** - I'm just looking for it, but I do know it. Since that last quarter, certainly recent numbers have been averaging around 13, 15 in the last month or so.

**Ms ROSOL** - Just a question, we've obviously only got one detention centre in the state. What's the contingency plan for young people who are in the detention centre if Ashley was to face an unexpected event and it was unable to be used? What's the backup plan in that situation?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Do you have an example of what you mean by not able to be used?

**Ms ROSOL** - An extreme weather event or fire or something like that meant that it wasn't safe to have young people there anymore? Is there a backup plan for that situation?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd ask the managers at the other end of the table to give thought to the sort of risk strategies that you might have, but one of the things that I will comment on is that one of the advantages of the Ashely facility is that it was originally designed for a far larger number of occupants than we're currently using it for which means that the layout of the facility gives management some options in how we utilise the capacity to accommodate different groups to be able to keep, say females and males separate and to be able to separate older and younger people or those with challenging behaviours, and sometimes there are grievances between groups of young people and they need to be able to be kept separate.

There's quite a bit of flexibility within the site and within the range of buildings there. If, for example, one of those buildings was disabled by the roof blown off or some other failure, there is some capacity within the existing Ashley structure to redeploy it and use it in different ways. I think that happens from time to time and that's an inbuilt flexibility.

In terms of whether there is a contingency plan in case there was an inability to use the whole of the Ashley facility, I'd ask if Mr Woodfall or Ms Burgess might want to comment on that.

**Mr WOODFALL** - Yes, I am getting that information but what I do know practically, we have a weekly AYDC escalation meeting and that was instigated once we started working with DPAC on reform. We meet and we discuss and we've got a level of escalation which could be a variety of factors from staffing to numbers of young people to complexity of young people. There's a whole lot of variables where we feel like what is our current capacity and how are we travelling?

At the extreme case like an extreme weather event, we have a temporary agreement with the Launceston Remand Centre. That is in exceptional circumstances, but we're exploring those legislative changes around that currently. There is a temporary agreement in place.

**Ms ROSOL** - How temporary?

**Mr WOODFALL** - In that we would be able to house people there with our staff and support young people, but I think under the proviso that this isn't a long-term solution, that you're not closing actually and putting young people in the watch house.

**Mrs BESWICK** - Minister, the implementation monitor is due to be filled imminently. How is our planning for the actual reporting process for that going?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think this is a question that should sit with -

**Mrs BESWICK** - I mean as in for the department to report to that implementation monitor, not the other way around.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay, is that one for you, Ms Burgess? In terms of DECYP's responsibilities to report on commission of inquiry recommendations to the Independent Monitor when that role commences, what preparations are there for us to be able to meet our obligations to report? Is that for Sue McKerracher? Thank you.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We have set up a small team at DECYP, which is monitoring our response to the COI recommendations. We have teams that are actually doing the work, but we've got three or four people who are monitoring that and will be available to report.

**Mrs BESWICK** - My second question is, you've been talking about the framework that you're putting into place particularly around the youth justice options, are you going to have similar kind of outcomes and reporting mechanisms and measures that we were talking about this morning built into that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - For those who weren't part of the earlier discussion, we were looking at how we are tracking the performance of our other systems that we create to divert young people, reduce the number of young people in detention and I would say the other would be something like reduce recidivism and reoffending at the other end. What are the mechanisms that we've got to provide for that? Maybe the person who's writing the answers down could tell us - Ms Hurworth?

**Ms HURWORTH** - I was trying to be subtle.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I can see what you're doing. Let's not try to hide it.

**Ms HURWORTH** - The development of a specific outcomes framework for youth justice is part of the Youth Justice Blueprint. That work is ongoing, and it will be a critical focus of our expert panel, which is made-up of a whole range of experts internationally and Tasmanian, as well. It will similarly align with the framework that you were discussing this morning, including having a line of sight to the government's wellbeing framework- all of population wellbeing framework, that's currently in its final stages. That's very much a part of the youth justice reform work program. How that translates into changed performance measures in the budget would be a future stage of that work.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Minister, can you please update the committee on the work that the government is doing and how it is keeping children and young people safe in detention environments?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We are committed to developing a youth justice system, as I said before, that achieves better outcomes for young people and their families, and keeps our community safe. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is now leading the youth justice reform work, and that's the position that Ms Hurworth has been speaking from, to progress the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and everything that's required to make that possible. While that's happening, we need to ensure the safety and oversight of the care of young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and delivering a therapeutic model of care to support them. That's why the 2024-25 Budget provides funding of \$9 million over four years to ensure children and young people are kept safe in detention, both now and into the detention models that we make the transition to after Ashley closes.

The commission of inquiry makes a range of recommendations that will improve safety and security of young people in detention, through a comprehensive review of legislation, policy and procedures relating to personal searches, isolation and the use of force. The commission also highlighted the imperative for children and young people to be kept safe in detention, through developing policies and procedures to support the use of body-worn

cameras, and developing and implementing a policy for managing and retaining surveillance footage from CCTV and the body-worn cameras as well.

Funding is provided for five policy and project officers with communications and policy expertise relevant to this task to review these policies and bring them up to date. Further funding is also provided for operational staff at Ashley to ensure that these policies are operationalised and that there's proper monitoring of them as well, so that they are working for us. This includes additional youth workers and staff to manage security and safety in youth detention, as well as workplace health and safety for our workers there, and additional control room operators to ensure 24-hour operation of a CCTV control room.

The policies and procedures of that will move with us to new facilities in the future, given the concerns observed and made by the commission of inquiry and the community's interest, and the commitments that we've made to ensure that the things that have happened in the past in Ashley and in our system cannot happen again. Introducing this sort of technology and the rigour of this policy approach is all part of ensuring that safety.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, can you explain to me how that \$50 million that's in the line item for youth justice facilities is to be spent?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand that around \$400,000 or a little over has been spent so far. There is a range of other activities about to commence that will use a good deal more of that. The primary purpose of that will be to establish the new youth detention facility at the Pontville site.

**Ms WHITE** - Do you have an estimated cost for that project?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Not as yet.

**Ms WHITE** - When do you expect that you'll have a price for that project?

**Mr JAENSCH** - As we proceed further into the design phase and we can start to get quantity surveyors and potentially the builders involved in providing estimates on that.

**Ms WHITE** - That's not a very clear answer. It does appear that there's a significant spend allocated this year, \$3.7 million. What do you expect to use that money for?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Some of the initial stages are preparing the site itself for the building that'll be brought to it. We need to formalise the access to the site and the delivery of services including power and water, and whether sewerage is on site or whether it's into the network, landscaping and other site works. They'll be the initial stages of that work. Is there anything that you could add to that, Ms Hurworth?

**Ms HURWORTH** - In addition to the things the minister mentioned, we'll also be developing early works packages for the site. We'll be looking at moving into the master planning process in more detail.

**Ms WHITE** - There's a \$50 million budget allocated for facilities, plural. You've indicated the majority of that will go on a project you haven't scoped the cost of. Is there -

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's a provision.

**Ms WHITE** - Do you expect you'll need to make further provision?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll know as we proceed into it. What we're trying to do, as well, is shrink the facility. Since the facility's plan that you referred to earlier, our picture of what we're aiming for with the detention facility, part of that system, is changing as well. We're aiming for that to be as small as possible, taking into account, not only diversion and alternative sentencing, et cetera, fewer young people coming through the system who end up on remand, but, also, things like the commission of inquiry's recommended changes to the minimum age of criminal responsibility and the minimum age of detention. This will provide, structurally, another reduction in the number of young people that can be held in detention as well.

This is not a like-for-like replacement for Ashley Youth Detention Centre. It's a completely different thing. Just as our model for how we provide assisted bail and supported accommodation has evolved - and, I think, improved, and is more away from an institutional model to an individual case management model - so our picture of this detention facility goes from being a larger institutional to a smaller and more home-like structure for the young people who need to be in it. As it gets smaller, it becomes simpler and cheaper to build, as well.

**Ms WHITE** - What's stopping you using some of that capital allocation, which has not been assigned to any particular project, to purchase homes, now, that you could give to the NGO sector or lease to them so they could provide some of those bail services to young people today? Why can't you just buy a home for them to offer that service

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't think it's as simple as the 'just a home'. The ability to deal with complex behaviours, particularly for violent offenders is the big challenge with some of these cases.

**Ms WHITE** - We're talking about kids on remand, on bail, not detention.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I know, but they may still have committed serious, violent crimes. The fact that they have not yet been sentenced doesn't alter that. The behaviours that they present with are what anybody who is providing for their care and support needs to be able to deal with.

**Ms WHITE** - You're not open to using some of that unallocated capital budget to purchase a house for the NGO sector, and start delivering those services that you've been working on for yonks?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's not something that's been suggested to us or that I've had advice from my department as being a priority to use that money for. That is there as a provision for our detention facility, first and foremost.

**Ms WHITE** - You've had no advice about that at all.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No one's suggested we should buy a house.

**Ms ROSOL** - Does the department use private companies to transport young people to and from Ashley Youth Detention Centre?



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**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I get an update on transport of young people to and from Ashley Youth Detention Centre and who that work is done by now?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Yes. It's currently facilitated by Essential Security.

**Ms ROSOL** - It's a private company?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Yes.

**Ms ROSOL** - What's the cost of that?

**Mr WOODFALL** - We'd have to source that.

**Ms ROSOL** - Could I take that as a question on notice?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I do recall conversations that have been had from time to time. I think our preference ideally would be that that is a service that is managed by our staff, so that we can ensure some continuity of our approach to care of young people. We have had times where we probably need those staff to be where we have them to be focused on the care and operation of the centre, to ensure that we've got the staffing ratios and the cover that we need for everyone to be safe. One of the options is to be using an external provider for some of those functions.

**Ms ROSOL** - A question about the external providers - have they been assessed, safety assessed, risk managed? Do they have Working with Vulnerable People checks? What are the protocols in place for that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I ask the department to make a comment on that procurement?

**Mr WOODFALL** - They undergo training. All have Working with Vulnerable People checks, all undergo training and familiarisation with the centre, and our processes in putting cuffs on, for transport.

**Ms ROSOL** - Just to clarify, there's no centre staff going with them? They go with Essential Security staffed by the security staff?

**Mr WOODFALL** - That's a case-by-case scenario. If a young person is, say, taken into remand and appears before the courts at 10 p.m. on a Friday night, then Essential Security may make that. Where we've got young people going into appointments, or where maybe they're anxious or maybe we're buying new clothes, then often it'll be our staff who will take them out. Sometimes it's a combination. It just depends. We transported someone the other day and three of our staff transported the young person. No use of Essential Security.

**Ms ROSOL** - Is there a policy around that? Do you have a formal policy or is that ad hoc, depending on what's happening?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Essential Security is contracted to deliver that service when we require them to do so. It's risk-managed. Where it's just pure transport from a remand centre at a random time then they deliver that work.

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**Mrs BESWICK** - The Gender Budget Statement shows that over 10 per cent of our 15 to 24-year-olds are not engaged in education or work. What kind of focus do we have on this area?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's a few layers to that, there's the gender budget statement -

**Mrs BESWICK** - It just happened to be where the data was. Sorry, it was 14 to 24-year-olds, did I say 10 to 15-year-olds?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that the responsibilities for that would be under the Education minister and their associated legislation.

**Mrs BESWICK** - Not young people?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. In terms of engagement in education and work, that's an education act.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Can you please update the committee on how this government is supporting cultural safety for children and young people in detention?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're committed to working with Aboriginal communities in particular, to reduce overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system, and to ensure that the experience of the youth justice system for those who are engaged is appropriate for them culturally, and that we reduce the trauma of that experience in their lives. We recognise that Aboriginal people are best placed to ensure that we're getting that right, both in terms of the overrepresentation, and their experience of the system itself.

We're providing funding of \$1.7 million over four years to support Aboriginal youth justice. Specifically, the funding will enable an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, which we've discussed already, to be established at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and in any future detention facilities to support Aboriginal children and young people there. The role will include facilitating cultural support and involvement with case planning, case management and exit planning for Aboriginal children and young people.

The funding will also support commission of inquiry recommendation 12.23, Connection with Family and Community, by providing financial assistance to families and community group members to be able to visit Aboriginal children and young people in detention. It's not exclusive to Aboriginal children and young people. This is something more broadly that we want to be able to facilitate. The commission does specifically refer that we need to ensure that we're making provision that's appropriate for the circumstances of Aboriginal children and their communities to make that connection.

Commission of inquiry recommendation 12.29(c) outlines that the government should be

Working with Aboriginal communities to establish ongoing cultural programs for Aboriginal children and young people in detention, such as visiting Elders programs, on-Country programs and cultural mentoring programs.

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Currently the Ashley Youth Detention Centre engages with the Aboriginal Education Service, the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service to provide programs and services to Aboriginal children and young people in youth detention.

Funding from 2025-26 is also provided to allow the programs currently in place to be strengthened, and for the implementation of new and additional programs to support Aboriginal children and young people in youth detention. That's \$300,000 over three years. We are also working with Aboriginal people to implement commission of inquiry recommendations relating to the appointment of a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People as part of the new commission structure. We are also working on the development of an Aboriginal Youth Justice strategy created in partnership with Aboriginal communities, that's underpinned by self-determination, and focusing on prevention and early intervention and diversion for Aboriginal children and young people.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, you and I have both met with residents and businesses in proximity to the proposed site at Pontville for the new detention facility. They've raised a number of concerns that they have about that location. In the work that you're doing, you've said you've spent about \$400,000 to date on progressing that site as a preferred location. How do you plan to respond to the concerns that have been raised by the community and the businesses in that area?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We are acutely aware that we have neighbours and we want to be a good neighbour to those residents in that locality. We are also aware that in the absence of frequent updates, they'd be asking questions and perhaps be concerned that the project is getting more advanced without them having a clear line of sight of it.

The work that's been done so far has very much been around the suitability of the site and how we use it to locate services, access, and to look at the geotechnical features of the site at the presence of Aboriginal Heritage that needs to be managed in a certain way as well. That gives us an idea of where the footprint of buildings and roadways and other things will be on the site.

As that comes into perspective, we'll have that to share with the neighbours. It'll inform the landscaping that we do, the screening vegetation. We'll have a better idea of how our plan to use the site affects those who live around it and who interact with it. We want to be able to communicate regularly with them as that advances. That's starting to take shape now as the work that Ms Hurworth referred to is concluded. For those constituents of yours and neighbours of ours, we want to reassure them that, at this stage, we're looking at the ground and how we use it and how we're able to use it to best effect for what we need to do. We'll share with them more of the details of that as it takes shape.

Is there anything you wish to add to that?

**Ms HURWORTH** - No, thank you.

**Ms WHITE** - At the joint House committee hearing on the recommendations from the commission of inquiry, you indicated that you've been in discussions with the cannabis facility about a different way to manage their waste. Obviously there's quite a strong odour that comes from that facility. It is in close proximity to the proposed site, and that could be triggering for

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some of the detainees there. Can you provide an update on those conversations and if there's any changes that will be adopted by that facility?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Ms Hurworth, are you able to speak to that?

**Ms HURWORTH** - I can update that the discussions are ongoing. There has been discussion around composting. I can't update any further on the specific next steps. I do know that my team is in regular contact with that company that you're referring to.

**Ms WHITE** - In those conversations, minister, you may not know this, but I'll ask you -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Try me.

**Ms WHITE** - is there an expectation that there'd be some kind of financial payment made to that private company to support them to transition the way they manage their waste? I can't imagine they're going to, out of the goodness of their hearts, change to a new way of dealing with their waste if there's an additional cost they have to bear.

**Mr JAENSCH** - One of the advantages of things like the Landfill Levy, which you're aware of, I understand -

**Ms WHITE** - I am very aware of it, a terrible bin tax.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It provides a capability to invest in new solutions for waste. That's an example of the sort of thing where, if there was a waste solution that this company needed that was beneficial to our project to make this site work for the purpose of a youth detention facility, that might be where we could facilitate access to funding programs, et cetera, to get a solution for them, as an example.

**Ms WHITE** - Okay. There's obviously concern from Shene Distillery as well, and then there's the proximity of the rifle range. Have you had any further conversations with those businesses about those operations and the potential impact that might have on the detainees?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I haven't. I've had initial meetings and discussions with representatives of each of them. I haven't had an update. Maybe, Ms Hurworth could give us an update on any further engagement she's had with them.

**Ms HURWORTH** - There'll be official letters going out next week specifically to a number of organisations, including to the two that you mentioned. It will advise that the work on the Pontville site is ongoing, and will provide a specific contact person for those organisations to liaise with to raise concerns through the process - a specific individual, their name, contact details - so that we can have that continuous conversation.

**Ms WHITE** - Will there be a similar letter provided to the residents in the area?

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes.

**Ms WHITE** - Will that also be delivered next week?

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The overview is that anywhere that we are developing any facilities as part of our youth justice or adult corrections process is going to have neighbours. They're going to have advantages and drawbacks of any location. We need to work with those. We need to work with people respectfully, by keeping them informed, taking their needs into account, and doing what we can to address them, while also delivering a new detention facility that's better for young people than the one we have now.

**Ms ROSOL** - I'd like to ask some questions about the assisted-bail facilities and what's happening with those. I note that recommendation 12.14 of the commission of inquiry is pretty clear in outlining what assisted-bail facility should look like. It says in paragraph (d) that we should ensure the proposed assisted-bail facilities are small; homelike; and, subject to bail conditions, do not place restrictions on the movements of children and young people; have the capacity to deal with children and young people with complex needs; are designed to include wraparound services such as health, education, and employment; are culturally safe for Aboriginal children and young people; and include specialist therapeutically trained bail support workers to help children and young people attend programs and services and to comply with their conditions of bail.

That addresses quite a few things that we were talking about earlier when you were saying that if you built an assisted-bail facility, it might not meet these things. I think there's the capacity for it to be built that way. Not building the assisted-bail facility is a breach of one of the recommendations that the government's agreed to. Are you comfortable with stepping back from that recommendation? Is that what we're hearing here, that you are stepping back from that recommendation?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're committed to meet that need the best way we possibly can and as soon as we possibly can. That's why we established the Youth Justice Taskforce, which is led by DPAC and working across all relevant government agencies and departments to drive our responses to these recommendations and get things moving quickly. It's also why we have reference groups of all of our community service organisations that we work with, and an expert panel, which is chaired by Mr Robert Benjamin, who was one of the commissioners with a particular interest in this area. We can bring back to them, here's what we're planning to do or proposing to do, to get their feedback, modify our responses and models accordingly, and make sure they are meeting the intentions of those recommendations.

Ms Hurworth might be able to speak to us about the 24-hour assisted-bail model. That's the right terminology, yes? That addresses those commission of inquiry recommendations. That's a piece of work that's advancing now.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Through you, minister. What we're trying to do is leverage the smallness of our community to have a really integrated system for young people. What you would already know is that there are lots of organisations that provide services to vulnerable and at-risk young people. Some of what is described in that recommendation may already exist or does already exist. We're trying to integrate that into a holistic model that goes to some of the questions that were raised earlier about picking young people up at the earliest possible point and diverting them out of the system. The 24-hour bail support is part of that. It's about leveraging a whole range of options that meet the differing needs of individual children.

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**Ms ROSOL** - If you have all this work happening for this, how many staff do you have working on the Youth Justice Blueprint or on the implementation of the new facilities model? How many staff are working on that at the moment?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can you speak to that one directly? Thank you very much.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Through you, minister. A taskforce was formed by searching for subject matter expertise from across government agencies. The taskforce is 12 FTE - that excludes me - and that FTE represents expertise from all the major agencies - things like people who have worked in out-of-home care or youth justice reform for a period of time; someone from the child and adolescent mental-health system; and people with specific infrastructure delivery and development experience. That taskforce has come together for 12 months. In addition to the 12 FTE, we're working extremely closely with DECYP who have the day-to-day operational responsibility, and learning from them. That's on top of our expert panel and our community engagement group. I can't emphasise enough how engaged our expert panel is in our work, and how integrated their advice is to what we're delivering.

**Ms ROSOL** - Minister, has the cost of building the facility played a part in your stepping back and looking to community services, rather than building it yourself? And, if there was more funding and more staff available, would you still be looking at building the facility more quickly, not the department more quickly?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm learning about this as we go and taking advice from everyone who's providing it. What I'm seeing is that each one of the young people we're dealing with has individual and complex needs. They become more complex and the management becomes more complex when you start to put a number of them together because of the interactions between them and the need to be able to separate and manage their safety and their individual needs.

This is not about finding somewhere to put young people and hold them while they wait. This also has to be about actively managing their individual needs, and -

**Ms ROSOL** - That's everything I read out.

**Mr JAENSCH** - that's exactly reflected in that. Now, we could build a building, put six of them in there at a time, and try to manage that and keep them safe, as well as finding someone who wants to be a neighbour to a house that has kids who may have come freshly from violent offending. Alternatively, those young people might possibly be better dealt with in their own communities, by people who are set up to provide a service and a case-management approach for them. I believe the latter has the better chance of meeting the young person's needs, as opposed to the community's need to put them somewhere. I'm drawn to that in the best interest of the young people.

If we find that there is not suitable capacity out there, or we need suitably hardened facilities, et cetera, to be able to withstand their elevated behaviours and things like that, then we're on our way back to producing another little Ashley. I'm open to us being able to find something else, which is better for those young people and which carries that therapeutic model of care right from that point in the system.

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**Ms ROSOL** - I don't think anyone disagrees with that or thinks it's anything but complex. My question is more, if this was funded in a way that reflected the urgency of the need, would it be happening more quickly? If we had more people putting their attention into it, could we make this happen more quickly?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have a dedicated team of 12 people drawn from across government. We have several million dollars in the budget. We have -

**Ms WHITE** - You've had two years, as well, of funding. We still don't know what your policy is.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have a process that's being overseen by the head of the State Service. Let's say, for a typical day in Ashley at the moment, we have a dozen young people and nine of them are remandees, if a significant proportion of them, or six or so of those are young people whose behaviours are such that they may be able to be hosted and supported outside of a detention facility and courts, magistrates are prepared to bail them with support, then, we've maybe got six people at a time who we're needing solutions for.

The question then is, do we build a building in the middle of the state and staff it to look after those six young people? Or do we have service providers dotted around the state who are able to be brought together to provide a solution for that young person where they live, where they can still maintain their connection to family, supports, school and other things, while they are in their own community. The latter sounds more like a child-centred and a child-rights-centred approach than creating another more institutional environment. It's also something that we can potentially escalate to more quickly than acquiring and building and staffing another facility that would need to have all the oversight, mechanisms, and safety built into it. Maybe we can buy that as a service for those individual young people more quickly and cheaply than building a building and putting kids in it.

**Ms ROSOL** - Ms White's been asking questions about this, too. We're looking at the Budget, we're trying to work out what's happening with it. At some point a decision will need to be made about whether you're going to build that assisted-bail facility or not. When will you be making that decision like?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The work that the Youth Justice Taskforce is doing now is about answering those very questions, including what the capacity is to deal with the intake of young people that we're seeing and where the gaps are physically around the state, but also in terms of the nature of services, including accommodation.

**Ms ROSOL** - So, it's a big unknown at the moment? There's no timeframe for deciding and we have to keep waiting. We've been waiting for quite a while on quite a lot of things in this area.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You're waiting, but nobody on this side of the table is. We're working with all those young people and their individual case management every day, and we're working with service providers. We are buying services to support those young people. We'll do more of what works and we'll identify where there are gaps that we need to fill and how quickly we can do that.

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**Ms ROSOL** - It's not really me or us waiting, it's the children. They're the ones who are waiting.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And we are working directly with them.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Minister, can you please update the committee on how investment in the new Child and Youth Empowerment Office will benefit children and young people?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We know that involving children and young people in decision making on issues that affect them leads to better outcomes for them. This government has committed funding of \$1.6 million over four years through the 2024-25 Budget for child and youth empowerment in line with the commission of inquiry's recommendations that the department develop a participation and empowerment strategy for children in out-of-home care and detention settings. The Participation and Empowerment strategy will document, and build on, existing work across the department and include the development of an overarching and comprehensive guide that outlines best practice principles, ethics, and models for children and young people's participation at the individual and systemic levels.

A Rights of the Child educational campaign that builds awareness and understanding of children's rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. A lived-experience advisory model to establish advisory groups for functions and the community of the department that include out-of-home care, youth justice, students, parents and carers. All of this work will be developed in parallel, using the same consultation and opt-in co-design process with children, young people, and the community.

Funding will support the recruitment of three FTEs to strengthen and expand child and youth participation and empowerment across the department. The department has recently appointed a Director, Child and Youth Empowerment and established the Child and Youth Empowerment team and this has grown from the child-advocate function and now comprises a total of four FTEs. That team is led by Sonya Pringle-Jones, previously a child advocate in DECYP.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, are you the final decision maker on the policy that your government will get to, at some point, on what the new youth justice facilities model looks like?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I'm responsible for it.

**Ms WHITE** - The website still has the proposed youth justice facilities model that was released in late 2022, which is, as described earlier, the two youth bail facilities, the two support facilities, and the one detention facility. You've now said you prefer a different approach, which is essentially a policy shift. When did you start to have that view that you wanted to move away from the policy position that's published on your website and publicised to the one that you've articulated to the committee today?

**Mr JAENSCH** - You're very keen to find a situation here where I've somehow tricked everybody or moved the goalposts or something.

**Ms WHITE** - I'm more keen to know when you're going to land on a final decision and do something.



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**Mr JAENSCH** - We're doing something now to match young people and service providers as best as possible to get better results for them. I'll keep doing that and I'll update you and answer your questions when you ask them. I also have, at various times, people saying I should close Ashley tomorrow because the community services sector can take all the young people and look after them and everything will be fine. We've followed that line of inquiry and confirmed that there isn't the capacity to take all those young people or a readiness to do that. It may also be very difficult legally to go and farm people who the courts have sentenced to detention out to an NGO, and maybe those NGOs don't want that responsibility and they're not set up for it. What we do is we continue to look at the whole landscape of solutions and find the best ones that we can bring online as soon as possible for young people.

If we need to invest in further built facilities to put young people in and manage them through this period, we will. If we can do that in a better way with people who are better set up to deal with them closer to where they live, we'll do that because it's better for young people. That's why we have question time in parliament, why we have briefings that we offer, why we have consultation, why we have expert panels and reference groups, so we can have that conversation with them about evolving this model, which has the potential, I think, to deliver best practice in Australia at least, if not the world, because of the small numbers that we have. That's why we have experts with international experience advising us on what we do.

I don't want to say to those experts, 'No, we can't do any of that because I published a diagram a couple of years ago that we're stuck with because that's our policy'. I'm going to continue evolving the policy. I'll take it off the website if it -

**Ms WHITE** - If it's no longer your policy, perhaps you should, but you haven't confirmed that or not.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But the issue, Ms White, is that -

**Ms WHITE** - The issue is that you're not doing anything.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The issue is that that diagram shows a system whereby you have one smaller detention centre because you found other ways of dealing with young people pre and post their engagement with the youth justice system and divert them. Whether that's a building or if it is a service that does the same thing the outcome for the young person is what that diagram represents. The description of whether it's one or two buildings and whether they're ours or somebody else's, or where they are in the state is, is somewhat secondary to that and we need to make sure we're delivering the outcome as soon as possible because that's what affects young people.

**Ms WHITE** - Can you confirm at the moment, minister, there are no other buildings, whether they're owned by you or other people and the courts have no other option except to send kids to Ashley?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, there are buildings all over the state. We have a service-level agreement between DECYP and Homes Tasmania regarding -

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**Ms WHITE** - And the courts can send kids there?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's not just an address that the court sends them to. There needs to be -

**Ms WHITE** - No, answer my question, please.

**Mr JAENSCH** - supports around those -

**Ms WHITE** - Can you confirm that the courts have any other option except for Ashley Youth Detention Centre at the moment to send a child to?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, and a very large number of young people are bailed and -

**Ms WHITE** - What? Bailed to their home address? I'm talking about services -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Or to other services.

**Ms WHITE** - Like what?

**CHAIR** - We're going to have a break because we need a break, so we're having a break for five minutes, and then we'll come back. I'm happy to pick up on that same conversation when we get back.

**The Committee suspended from 3.00 to 3.09.**

**[resumed from short break]**

**CHAIR** - Minister, thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I was in the process of responding to Ms White, and a conversation over a few questions regarding assisted bail, and the needs, what options are out there, and what we're providing. I'd like to ask Ms Lovell to help us have an understanding for this conversation about what some of the elements are of a placement outside of detention - not to talk about individual cases, but what's involved beyond an address, and the sort of supports and some of the work that is being done now to broker those options for young people.

**Ms C LOVELL** - I want to begin by mentioning that a lot of the young people who we're talking about here also have child safety involvement. Some of them will actually have a guardianship status but for many other young people in Ashley, the Child Safety Service know of them and their families. They may have previously been in out of home care, they may have younger siblings who are working with one of our Intensive Family Engagement Programs. We certainly know of them.

Last year we commenced a pilot Intensive Case Management Program for those young people, recognising that the young people who were in Ashley at that time - and that was a time where there was an unusually high number. We recognise that if we drew upon all of our resources collectively across the Child Safety Service, youth justice and the broader support system, that we may be able to create some innovative responses that individualised to the needs of these young people. So far, I believe, it's six young people who have been intensively

case-managed. That includes them having a care team with all of the supports around them, and us inviting additional members into that who could provide support.

It also includes reaching out to the young people's families and engaging them. Often in these circumstances they've been disengaged for a long time, or their engagement in their parenting has been patchy. There is a very strong family finding aspect to it as well.

We have found that we're able to establish some individualised plans that have enabled young people to be successfully released from detention. It won't always be successful, knowing what we do around recidivism, but we still believe that we see progress when that happens. We're bringing in supports that weren't otherwise involved and progressing goals that hadn't previously been progressed.

Some of the options that we have used are identifying a family member who hasn't provided care to a young person before. These are young people -

**Ms WHITE** - Can I seek a point of clarification? Are you talking about releasing people from detention at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and these are some of the solutions that you found?

**Ms C LOVELL** - Yes.

**Ms WHITE** - This is really useful information and I thank you for it, but the question to the minister was actually what options do the courts have as alternatives to Ashley for children who are awaiting sentencing?

**Ms C LOVELL** - Part of what we are doing is also testing which of the options we have found suitable at that end of detention, that we could actually have in place to avoid young people coming into detention. An example of that is that, in the out-of-home care system, we've had very limited options around where young people can be placed when they have committed a violent offence. We haven't had emergency contingency there. We have established that. We've established a new care type which is an emergency-salaried care arrangement. We have placements available in the north-west and the south to facilitate that.

That has been a gap in the system and we'll be trialling that for the first time. That may become a feature of the new service system that could provide supported bail.

**Ms WHITE** - Thank you.

**Ms C LOVELL** - I could mention just one other example. We do have housing stock available to us in services for children and their families. We have utilised that for some of our older adolescents, where they have been able to reside semi-independently with outreach services from our existing provider network. We've found some success in doing that. Each of these is an individualised package, very much based on the age, stage and capacity of that young person. We are very aware that each time we create one of these responses, we are testing something new that may be expanded and built into the system.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's why, in terms of what options a court has, they are probably better described as what options can we present a court to choose from based on a knowledge of the child's needs. The court can then take confidence that there's a responsible adult or

service provider or family member who is going to take responsibility for the young people and provide some evidence they're going to be able to appropriately manage their interests, and help them to make any other conditions of their bail. That's an important factor. It's not the court coming up with options; it's about what options they've got to choose from.

**Ms WHITE** - Yes, of course. Have you got any examples where you've been able to present those options for the court yet?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that happens every day. That's part of the role of our community youth justice system, to do that work with young people. The ones we're talking about are the ones who end up being sent to detention.

**Ms WHITE** - Yes, and thank you for sharing that information. It's useful to understand what options are available for children exiting Ashley or how you might support them to return to their community.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Or getting them out of Ashley, which was the issue that you were talking about before.

**Ms WHITE** - It was earlier, but the question that I asked you before the break was what options are available for the court? You said there are plenty, then I asked you to detail what the programs are and what the organisations are that you have available to you to present to the court, and you've just explained to me that you are piloting some that you might one day be able to present. Is that right?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that more to the point, in terms of what options the courts have, courts every day are seeing young people with support and plans to get them bail. I would say the majority - I don't know who's best to speak to that, maybe Mr Woodfall?

**Mr WOODFALL** - I can add that courts can bail, which is not a sanction. They can put in place community service orders, that might be a choice. They can put in place community conferences whereby you would meet with the victims of crime and there'd be a lot of work with our community youth justice. They're the options before they either remand or sentence to detention. They are the options once Community Youth Justice are involved.

With working with children and families, if there are any other barriers in place, we work with children and families. We've got a group called the Youth Justice Collaboration, until we find a better name, where we bring some of those cases where we say, 'Look, Community Youth Justice have concerns about a particular set of circumstances around the young people,' and we discuss and say, 'Well, what other things could we put in place?'

We have had cases where we've put in special care packages. For example, we've leased properties for a young person to make sure everything was in place. In those particular cases, we've also had that same young person, who's had a curfew, not return to the house that night with all the supports we could possibly put in place, and been picked up for breaking curfew and then gone back to court and then remanded. Sometimes all those supports can be in place and the young person can still be remanded.

**Mr JAENSCH** - When we're talking about our youth justice system, the ones who are involved in custodial youth justice are a very small proportion of the overall population of

young people engaged in the youth justice system. We're very much talking about the pointy end here, and a small number of very complex cases and extreme offending behaviour in most cases. We're trying to work out what else we can do for them so that fewer of them end up in detention, because we know that detention, however good it is, has an impact on the life of a child, their record and their future. We're working at that intake end, as well as working with the young people who are in Ashley now who may have the ability to apply for bail and get it with the right supports in place.

All of this is about getting the numbers down, having more diverse options available that configure differently. Not just one solution of a building or a bail house, but customised individual care of the types that Claire's been speaking about, and doing more of that for more young people.

For this immediate 12 months, DECYP's doing this work with its combined resources, including reaching across and using the expertise from the out-of-home care and child safety system. There's also \$1.25 million applied to DPAC to proactively go out and acquire some of these diversions and services and supports as well. The aim being that as we're working on policy and putting extra resources into individual case management, by the time we get to the end of this 12-month initial period, we'll resolve that model and be able to repatriate that activity to DECYP for its ongoing delivery. We're supercharging it with the work of the taskforce, the whole-of-government approach and extra dollars as we go.

**Ms ROSOL** - Minister, we've talked about the taskforce and there's 12 FTEs on the taskforce. We've heard that they're also relying on DECYP staff to progress their work. Is there a dedicated team in DECYP that are working on the facilities model implementation? If there is, how many staff are on that team?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Wonder who's best to show that navigation. Do you want to lead that discussion?

**Ms HURWORTH** - There are staff in DECYP facilities area that are collaborating with us, but also Infrastructure Tasmania (ITas) will be one of our key partners in State Growth and they're supplying a specialised project manager to be embedded in the taskforce. That's in addition to the FTE that I mentioned to work with us so that when we get to the stage of construction and delivery Infrastructure Tas will seamlessly pick that up and run with it as the part of government that has the expertise to deliver major infrastructure.

**Ms ROSOL** - So, there is no dedicated taskforce within DECYP? Not taskforce, but dedicated staff. They're just working with the taskforce as needed?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's DECYP staff in the taskforce as well.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes, that's correct. We also have a dedicated executive director whose focus is infrastructure in the youth justice space. She's sitting in the taskforce. She works with DECYP facilities team who obviously manage the day-to-day of Ashley but also had the pre-planning work that we've talked about and a project manager from ITas will be appointed to her and she will lead that work.

**Ms ROSOL** - Has anyone in the taskforce or in DECYP working on this raised with you that they believe more resources are required or that more resources would be beneficial?

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**Mr JAENSCH** - The Budget that you see in front of you today reflects a process whereby the secretaries of our agencies together assembled a set of budget bids for the resources required to deliver on the commission of inquiry priorities. That was part of the budget process and there's substantial alignment with the out-of-home care and youth justice reform work that was underway anyway. They've been brought in together and made priority projects. This Budget delivers the resources that have been sought to make these changes.

**Ms ROSOL** - A question because there is a change of direction here in the assisted bail model that we're looking at.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's a change of how we deliver it. The aim is consistent all the way through that. What we want to do is divert more young people who don't need to be in detention from being in detention and given the care that they need. Who builds and runs the house is a different argument. We're looking at the best ways of doing that.

**Ms ROSOL** - Which is a shift that has come to light this week through the Estimates, I think yesterday and today, with more questions today. Do you believe that the parliament and the community deserve to be told when there's a major shift like that? What date did you first start considering this shift in emphasis, moving away from building it yourself to having community services providing that instead? When did this alternative option come on the table? When did you start thinking about it? When were you going to tell the public that there was a shift?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is no secret we've been talking with the sector about it as we go. This is something which is evolving rapidly and will continue to over 12 months. We're undertaking significant reform. We're engaging with expertise from around the world. We're bringing in new information all the time and we've got magnificent collaboration with the sector. There was a date, probably we could find a few weeks ago or months ago, when the Greens in parliament demanded that we close Ashley straight away and put all the kids into community -

**Ms ROSOL** - That is a misrepresentation of the question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - into community service organisations care and demanded that I explain why I wasn't going to do that.

**Ms ROSOL** - I'm sorry, minister, you're misrepresenting the question that I asked. I asked when it was going to close, not is it going to close immediately.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It wasn't you that I was referring to. It was your leader at that time. But I'm seeing that we've made any change in policy. What we've got is a perhaps a better way of delivering it sooner and I think that's what people expect us to do.

**Ms ROSOL** - You're misrepresenting the questions that are being asked by the Greens. There's been a shift in the assisted bail - the way that's being structured and funded and provided. There have been multiple delays in Ashley Youth Detention Centre closing, so it's difficult to trust what's being said. It's difficult to trust what we're being told. Would you stake your reputation on Ashley Youth Detention Centre being closed within the time - I actually don't know what the time frame is. Would you stake your reputation on that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I do that every day and I get people saying things about me and calling me names and attacking me for their job every day on this stuff. At the moment I am absolutely focused on delivering the reforms to the youth justice system that we're committed to, and I think we've got the best opportunity this state has ever seen and may ever see to undertake massive change to this system and to do it better than any other state in Australia has ever done before. Because of our very small numbers, we do have the ability to implement a reform in youth justice which is very much focused on the individual needs of young people and the causes of their offending. Early intervention, individual case management, therapeutic approach and through a therapeutic model which prevents their reoffending.

I think this can have immense effects on our future prison population as well and the safety of our communities. And I'm absolutely dedicated to that. And if that means that over a period of a couple of years, we change direction in how we're doing that because we found a better way, I'll take it. I mean, we found a better way from what the premier Gutwein at the time announced in 2021 that we're going to close Ashley and build two smaller facilities, one in the north and one in the south doing exactly the same job. I think we can get to a better result than that - one smaller facility for a far smaller group of young people, raise the age of detention and criminal responsibility, invest far more heavily in individual responses to the needs of the young people who are at risk of entering that system. I think that's what everyone wants to see happen.

And if that means that we learn as we go and find the best way to deliver that, I'm not going to sort of put the brakes on that because of something that someone said two years ago. What we need to do is clearly keep more people who are interested up to date with where this is going. That's why we've got our reference group with 20-something members of the community who provided input to the Youth Justice Blueprint when it was originally created, who are keenly interested and who are going to be part of the system that delivers the reforms ultimately, rather than it being more government institutions where we put kids to get them out of the community.

So, I think that stay in touch with that room full of people. We are, we're talking with them frequently, we're meeting with them through our various parts of our department in my office weekly. And this is a rapidly evolving and developing program of work and I'm really confident that there's never been this much work done with this intensity before. And it's already yielding some new solutions like the work that Claire told you about this before.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you please update the committee on what the government is doing to support children and young people in child safety and youth justice with a disability?

**Mr JAENSCH** - As we've been talking about, many of the children and young people supported by our out-of-home care and youth justice systems often experience multiple complex needs. That's why we're investing \$1.47 million over four years for three new disability liaison officers to support children and young people with disability in out-of-home care and in youth justice settings. These roles will ensure children and young people have access to regular holistic assessments across the seven wellbeing domains, including advice from multidisciplinary teams. Establishing these disability liaison specialist roles for children and young people in out-of-home care and youth justice ensures that services actively nurture and support the children. This fosters children and young people to reach their aspirations and their full potential in life. Each child entering out-of-home care already receives a holistic

assessment through the out-of-home care paediatric clinics being expanded across the community as kids care clinics. These assessments include behavioural health screening and making any necessary referrals and recommendations regarding appropriate care and ongoing supports.

The department is also currently expanding its range and number of specialist support functions and roles to further support children in out-of-home care and in the youth justice system. This is targeted to areas where we know that children and young people can benefit from extra support. These roles can be members of care teams such as: transition to independent workers who help young people to have what they need in place when they become young independent adults; youth workers who walk alongside young people helping them with practical things, especially when their lives are unpredictable; disability specialists who help young people access assessments and assistance they need to manage their disabilities; and legal officers who help with the legal and court work to keep children safe and progress their case goals.

The department will continue to implement care teams and care planning as the approach to meeting a child's needs across all wellbeing domains which incorporates the voice of the child. We'll also continue to engage with the Department of Health, including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Paediatric Service and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, in relation to ongoing reforms and the needs of children and young people in care.

Thank you very much for your question. I also think I can have some updates available now on a couple of earlier questions that were asked, Chair, if you're happy for me to get them in. Ms Rosol's question regarding private transport contractors, Mr Salter, do you have an answer there?

**Mr SALTER** - Yes, thank you. There's a new contract with essential security under negotiation at the moment. The estimated contract value for that contract is \$240,000 per annum. It's a one-year contract with a one-year extension, so the total value is \$480,000. While that's being finalised, a deed of variation has been agreed to extend the previous contract.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There was previously a question, I think it was Mrs Beswick who asked it in relation to the overall investment in the Budget regarding Aboriginal children and young people. I think the update we have is that in the youth justice area, the total of investment in the Aboriginal Youth Justice range of activities is \$1.7 million over four years. There is also the office of Aboriginal Policy and Practice and implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, for which, together, the Budget is also \$1.7 million over four years, a total of \$3.4 million over four years.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, I wanted to further explore the community orders that you mentioned, one option to support young people who are engaged with the youth justice system. Can you explain how many staff provide that service across the agency given that, in Community Corrections, we know they're dealing with some serious challenges around workforce? Does that affect the work that happens in the youth justice space? Do you rely on the same probation officers to support the work of Community Corrections? I presume if children are on orders, they are supervised in the community. Is that the same as in the adult system?



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**Mr JAENSCH** - There were a few questions built into that. Do you want to just zoom in on the last bit?

**Ms WHITE** - You've talked about community orders, that these were an option for courts to use if they were making a decision about a young person engaged with the youth justice system. Who supervises those young people who are on those orders?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask Mr Woodfall if he could give some answers to that.

**Mr WOODFALL** - Youth Justice Services is made up of the Office of Youth Justice, Custodial Youth Justice and Community Youth Justice and the Community Youth Justice Team, which are based in the south, north and north-west. They support young people who come into contact with the courts. They're the team that supports community service orders through a variety of organisations and the community conferences.

**Ms WHITE** - Thank you. Can I be provided with an update on how many staff you have available in that division within the agency, and are there vacancies?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask if Mr Woodfall can bring that forward. While he's looking at that, there are a couple of things that I'd add which go to the same issue. In the Budget I've referred to the \$15.85 million over four years with a focus on early intervention and diversionary services. That includes \$8.6 million over four years for community youth justice and early intervention and diversionary programs, including funding for six FTE in Community Youth Justice to provide further skilled practitioners and outcomes-focused community diversion and support programs, funding to support those early intervention and diversionary services, as well as assisted bail and supported accommodation. That's all within the \$8.6 million and then there's JCP Youth, which I know you're very familiar with.

**Ms WHITE** - I am talking about corrections within your department, not other services.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But they do partner with these various providers as well.

**Ms WHITE** - Does JCP supervise young people on their orders?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask Mr Woodfall to refer to that, but there may be service providers and providers of programs like JCP that are part of the management and the care and support for the young people who are on orders.

**Ms WHITE** - I know what they do. I am asking if they are different.

**Mr WOODFALL** - We have 26.4 FTE in the Community Youth Justice funded and we're currently at 24.39. There's a vacancy of 2.0.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And the Youth Justice workforce is included in the recent recruitment and workforce incentive packages?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Six additional positions and the two vacancies that we have, we've successfully been able to fill those over in the south but now we've got six additional.

**Ms WHITE** - Are they regional teams?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Yes, they are regional teams.

**Ms WHITE** - And can you tell me how many you have in each region, please?

**Mr WOODFALL** - I would have to get that.

**Ms WHITE** - I'm happy to put that as a question on notice or you can provide it by the end of the day.

Minister, I'm also keen to understand why it takes so long for some young people to have a date for their case conferencing. I've spoken to people who explained what a disaster that has been. On occasions where a young person has a date for case conferencing, it takes forever to get all the parties involved. They show up and they're for a particular offence, but in the time that it's taken for them to actually have that case conference, they've racked up a whole range of other offences. What are you doing to improve that process? It has huge merit if it's used well, but I've had a lot of feedback that it's failing these young people terribly at the moment. What focus do you have on improving that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think this was a question that was also asked in yesterday's session in the Legislative Council and I understand that some of the issues that are affecting the timeliness of those case conferences include higher numbers of cases and case conferences needing to be organised, and also increasing complexity, including offending that involves a larger number of young people - not just individuals, and possibly multiple victims or people impacted by their offending behaviour - so the complexity of bringing all that together and keeping everybody committed to scheduled events in the case conferencing process adds to complexity there. Mr Woodfall might fill in some gaps there.

**Mr WOODFALL** - In 2022-23, there were 91, and in 2023-24 it went to 146. There was a 62 per cent increase in the number of community conferences. In some ways accessing that is a good thing, but it's put extra pressure on the system.

**Ms WHITE** - Did you say 146?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Yes, 146.

My teams have reported back that the complexity of conferences, as the minister said, has increased in relation to groups of co-offenders who may have committed multiple offences. That substantially increases the preparation time as all the young people and their families have to be interviewed. It's much like that restorative justice process that we go through. The preparation is as important as the event.

Whilst we supervise that, we have facilitators who not only hold community conferences, but also family group conferences. We have had a reduction of available facilitators for those conferences due to leave and so on. We're now continually looking to recruit more of those. Notice that the facilitators are outsourced. We supervise and we arrange to do the preparation, but it's actually done by a professional facilitator.

**Ms WHITE** - Can I ask one further question? I accept that you've lost facilitators, and that's been something facilitators have shared with me. They are fed up with how terrible this process has been. They are refusing to work anymore in the service because they are distraught

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on behalf of the young people. They're sharing stories with me of showing up to case conferences that they've been working on with this young person, and the different people around the table who've had responsibilities to take actions haven't done it. They don't do their job. I'm assuming that you're -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Who? Who didn't do their job, in this case?

**Ms WHITE** - Someone in Education, someone in the Health system - whoever it may be, who had a responsibility around that table to take an action on behalf of that young person, has not done that thing. The facilitator is frustrated, and the case continues to drag on. It sounds to me like your Community Youth Justice team is the supervisor in that room to make sure that everybody is supposed to be on task. Is that right?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WHITE** - What further powers can you provide to them so they can actually have those other agencies - who are supposed to be working to support that young person's restorative justice pathway - actually fulfil their obligations?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd ask Mr Woodfall to confirm what the arrangement is now by which those coordinators or those staff engage with the other services. It sounds to me like, if there has been a failure of individuals to perform their duties, if you wanted to refer any of those or the facilitator to us so we can follow that up in those cases, we'll -

**Ms WHITE** - I think it has been well reported. People are banging their head against the table.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll do that.

Mr Woodfall, can you speak to what the authority is in someone who is managing or coordinating a case conferencing process, to call on the various participants to fulfil their roles?

**Mr WOODFALL** - The only information I have on that is I know that Tasmania Police are required to attend conferences. I am not aware of those challenges that we have. It's not what has been reported to me.

**Ms WHITE** - Do you do any exit interviews with the facilitators? I'm pretty sure they'll tell you exactly what their problems are.

**Mr WOODFALL** - I'll seek to find that out.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just so that there's resolution there - I don't want to leave that hanging - if there are facilitators who, through you, or directly to me, wanted to raise concerns, so that we have some ability to follow up actual cases, we need to make sure that these processes are doing their job and that they're working, and to see what impediments there might be to people being able to play their part in making that happen.

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**Ms ROSOL** - I asked earlier about resourcing, and whether the task force or DECYP staff have directly asked you for extra resourcing, and whether they've said that would be beneficial for urgently progressing the work that they're doing on the youth justice facilities. You didn't answer the question and you instead went to talking about the Budget.

Can I take from that, not answering the question, that resourcing levels have been raised with you as an issue, and that you've diverted attention away from that? Have your staff asked you for extra resourcing so that they can urgently do the work to develop alternative models and facilities?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Nearly every conversation I have with my department around the priorities and the urgency of work we're doing comes down to a discussion about resources. This is particularly over the last six months or so, with preparation for budgets and dealing with the commission of inquiry and how we're resourcing all the things we have to do there. Sometimes we talk about little else for days on end, how much we need and what priorities we have to spend on a whole range of things, and also where we're going to get the people and the skill sets that we need within our department to do these things. That's why we've ended up with this new authorising environment for youth justice reform where we've got an all-play model which is overseen by the head of the State Service to be able to draw in the talent from across government that we need to deal with some of this complex area of rapid development of policy, legislation and reform.

That has been funded with a new entire allocation of \$174.89 million to ensure we're delivering on the reforms associated with the commission of inquiry including out-of-home care and youth justice. Every part of government, every one of my children, my own and those I'm responsible for, could use more resources to do more things. We've got more resources than we've ever had before invested into this work now. Our challenge is going to be to use the resources that are budgeted now, within a very limited period of time, to drive massive change. I think this is our moment in these areas to achieve significant reforms.

Has my department asked me for more resources? My department has presented me with budget bids. We've taken them into the budget process. We've come out with a version of what we went in with, and then we apply that as responsibly as we can to deliver the jobs that we've been given to do. We'll keep doing that.

**Ms ROSOL** - It sounds like more money, more funding would have been useful but in the context of broader government decisions, there have been other priorities and choices made in allocation of funds.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I can see where you are angling this to. In a context of a budget Estimates hearing, you could go to this table or any other table for any committee and ask any department, would it be okay if you had more money? Could you do more stuff? And they'd all say yes, absolutely, every single time.

**Ms ROSOL** - I'll move on to some other questions now. I've got some questions about child safety services and out-of-home care. How many -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Don't feel neglected.

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**Ms ROSOL** - You've had a good run. How many positions in the child safety service and ARL are currently occupied, and how many are currently vacant?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are you able to speak to that one?

**Ms ROSOL** - There's kind of two questions there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond to that. We will just date stamp this answer as well, because there's recruiting underway right now and these figures could be quite different within a few days.

**Ms BURGESS** - I wonder, minister, whether you wanted to cover the breakdown of Community Youth Justice before you move to - or do you want to wait till the end?

**Ms ROSOL** - I'd prefer it if I could get an answer to my questions on child safety services.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We won't miss you. Sorry, keep going, Ms Rosol. I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond to you. We'll come back to those other justice numbers just now.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - For statewide, we have 104.9 child safety officer positions for the Child Safety Service, that's budget FTE, and 78.3 other. We have 183.2 positions in the Child Safety Service, and 191.6 of those are occupied.

**Ms ROSOL** - Can you say that again, please? I don't know if my brain's not working, but you said there are 183.2 positions, but 191.6 of them are occupied?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes, that's right because we're over our establishment at the moment with our support roles. The youth workers, the non-child safety officer positions - we've employed a lot of non-additional support people in recent times.

**Ms ROSOL** - What are the vacancies with the child safety officers?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - For the Child Safety Service, current vacancies just for child safety officers - for the north there are 25 budget FTE, and 24.4 of those occupied. For the north-west, 23.5 budget FTE, and 14.2 of those are occupied. For the south, there are 56.4 budget FTE, and 43.9 are occupied.

**Ms ROSOL** - In terms of the advice and referral line, how many positions there are currently occupied and how many are vacant?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I believe there are 13 vacancies currently. I don't have that data in front of me. I'm going off updates being provided around the recruitment campaign, which indicates numbers of applicants are so significant that all vacancies will be filled.

**Ms ROSOL** - Is it possible to take that as a question on notice, around the current figures on that, please, minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, current vacancies for ARL.

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**Ms C. LOVELL** - The advice and referral line is made up of government and two non-government partners. I can get those figures.

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

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll see if we can get them while we're here, if that's possible.

**Ms ROSOL** - How many practice managers are employed at the moment in child safety services and the ARL respectively?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I might need to think about which report provides that breakdown. That might be one that you have there, Jason.

**Ms ROSOL** - I have one more question around staffing. How many staff are in each of the teams that manage children and young people through a teams-based approach?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - The teams-based approach, I'll find that for you.

**Ms ROSOL** - How many teams are there, and how many are in each of the teams?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - There are two teams in the south which provide a team-based approach, known as case management team 7 and case management team 10. I'll look up those numbers for you around the staff members in those. They do vary. We allocate as many available staff as we can to those teams on any given days. I'll find the right page for you and give you the exact positions and how many for each.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you. There are two teams in the south, there's one in the north-west, is that correct? Or one in the north?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - No. In the north and north-west there are no teams with that specific focus. The children there who aren't allocated their own child safety officer are what we call service-managed. That's where all available staff from that service provide the services that the children need.

**Ms ROSOL** - Not CSO level?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes. They're not allocated directly to their own child safety officer.

**Ms ROSOL** - If it's a service team, what are some of the staff roles that might be working in that team?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Youth workers are an example of that role. Our new youth workers work with a number of young people each, so they become really their direct primary worker when that happens.

**Ms ROSOL** - They don't have a social worker having any oversight of them because there's no CSOs available in that team. Is that what you're saying?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - All of the social workers, including the managers from that service, provide oversight. A lot of those children have a care team. The care team will be collectively

providing oversight, but depending on what their need is, managers will keep making a summary of the children who need a particular thing.

For example, if some of those are in their late teens, the focus for them will be on transitioning to independence. The managers of those services know who those children are. They make sure that they're allocated to either a youth worker or a transition to independence worker and that those services are being delivered as required.

**Ms ROSOL** - It's like, there's a level missing? A CSO is missing and then they have the youth worker and the transition worker and a manager, but not a CSO.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - That's right, they're not directly allocated a CSO, but if they do have a need that a child safety officer needs to respond to, a child safety officer from that service will attend to that need.

**Ms ROSOL** - Who has their own caseload already and redirects to that child?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes, they do share that responsibility across the child safety officers who are there and the practice leaders and practice managers. It might be that delegation is required to give permission for a child or young person to engage in an activity, something like anybody who's available from the service can provide that authority.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Minister, on the topic of staff, can you update the committee on the government's commitment to attract and retain staff across child safety, ARL and youth justice workforce?

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is directly relevant and topical. We've touched on it briefly earlier in response to continuing high levels of vacancies, particularly in the north-west of the state and these services. The government announced a \$4.5 million workforce package for child safety, the advice and referral line and Youth Justice employees, particularly in the north-west region.

The workforce package includes a payment of \$10,000 for each eligible allied health professional employee and manager statewide, a 15 per cent market allowance for frontline employees in the north-west, which commenced on 1 July, and relocation incentives for employees moving to and remaining in the north-west region. Also added to that was an allocation for what's termed 'impact days' for non-allied health professional frontline staff.

The Department for Education, Children and Young People is currently working with unions to finalise the agreement. I understand that there is good agreement in principle to that and it'll proceed to the Tasmanian Industrial Commission for consideration shortly.

We're also progressing short- to longer-term strategies to build our child safety workforce and give it some more resilience in the longer term, including scholarships and fee-free places in both university and TAFE into qualifications in child safety roles; delivering a children and families workforce strategy, which was also recommended under recommendation 9.10 of the commission of inquiry; and establishing a child and youth workforce round table to consider other immediate and longer-term workforce shortages.

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A nationwide recruitment campaign was kicked off in August off the back of this package for frontline child safety positions and attracted a very strong response. I'm advised that there were, directly relevant to the last question, 93 applications for child safety officer positions across the state; 51 have been interviewed so far. There are still interviews to be completed for applicants for positions in the south. We don't have the final outcomes of those interviews yet, but we anticipate being able to make offers in the north of the state initially, which will go a long way to meeting the current vacancies in a number of those roles.

The advice and referral line is similar and we're very glad to have been able to, hopefully, turn a corner in terms of staffing and get back to more full staffing levels, which means that our current systems can work as they should. We can reduce pressures on our individual staff and we thank them for going above and beyond during the last few months, in particular when staff numbers have been very low to make sure that we can continue to provide and prioritise services to the children and families who need them most.

Once we've got our service operating in a more sustainable manner, then we can be building on it with the reforms that they're committed to under the commission of inquiry to evolve those services even further. It's been difficult to do while we've had a workforce under pressure and we're very grateful to those who've shown an interest in coming to work for us and being part of the reforms. I have been told by some people that the reforms in youth justice and in child safety are, in themselves, something that people want to be part of and see this as a good place to be working in these systems because of the directions we're taking.

Thanks for your question and thank you to the department, also, for all the work that's gone into making that package and that recruitment effort work well. Do you have some more information for us?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I have a lot of information here in front of me. There was a question, minister, regarding the number of practice managers.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Could I clarify practice manager as being our Allied Health Professional Level 4? That is yes. Okay, we have in the northern region, 5.17 paid, in the north-west, two, and, in the south, 11.09.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you. Is that across child safety services and ARL respectively -

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I don't have the Advice and Referral Line figures yet for their practice managers.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - You're pointing me to the vacancies in the Advice and Referral Line, which is a different question. It looks like there are 14 government vacancies, two for Bapcare and one for Mission Australia.

**Ms ROSOL** - Out of how many positions? You gave me that before, didn't you?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Out of 30 positions.



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**Mr JAENSCH** - How many applications do we have for the Advice and Referral Line? Would that be the applications? Interviews are underway. There were strong applications for those ARL positions, as well. I think 37 applications there. They're interviewing now.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I also have the figures here for staff allocated to 7 and 10.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, happy for you to provide those.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - For Team 7, in the south - apologies, I did have that handy. In Team 7 in the south, we have an Allied Health Professional Level 3 practice leader, two unit-coordinators, one support worker currently working at 0.5, a youth worker, and up to six child safety officers depending on their availability. For example, yesterday they had three of the six.

Team 10 currently has a practice leader, a unit-coordinator, 1.6 support workers, and 7.8 child safety officers.

**Ms ROSOL** - Is that Team 10 or Team 7?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - That's Team 10.

**Ms WHITE** - Was there an answer to your question about the regional breakdown?

**Mr WOODFALL** - Community Youth Justice South funded 11.85 and they were the team with the vacancy and they've filled 1.0 of that vacancy. Community Youth Justice North, 6.95 and Community Youth Justice North-west, 7.6. The vacancies are 2.0 and they've filled those positions.

**Mr JAENSCH** - If there are two vacancies and they've been filled, are they still vacancies?

**Mr WOODFALL** - I'd say they haven't started their appointment. They have signed the panel reports and they're due to start.

**Ms WHITE** - You'd be familiar that the St John's Park facility for Child Safety Services South is a pretty old building. It leaks, it's quite musty. There are some security concerns there when they've been locked down. What progress has been made on finding different accommodation for the staff who are currently working from that site?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have current briefing on that specific matter. I will check who else might be able to make comment on it. Are you happy to?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I can make some comments unless Mr Salter would like to comment.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Salter, is this something you would be able to shed some light on? St John's Park staff accommodation strategic plan?

**CHAIR** - Mr Kane Salter is attending the table now. He is deputy secretary of Business Operations and Support Services.

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**Mr SALTER** - It is a known need that medium and longer term would like those staff to be in alternate locations. The work that Children and Families is undertaking on their service delivery model is a key component that will support what those accommodation needs should be into the future so that we just don't go into accommodation that isn't fit for purpose in the long term. We also want to make sure, as an agency, that the services in Children and Families, Youth Justice and Education are more joined up. That work is ongoing as well to see where we can progress towards more co-located accommodations that supports families and young people.

**Ms WHITE** - Do you have a site in mind where that might work?

**Mr SALTER** - We don't have a site in mind where that might work at the moment. We'll continue to work through the support model and then present options to the minister and government.

**Ms WHITE** - Do you have a timeline for when you'll do that by?

**Mr SALTER** - We are continuing to work on both the support model at the moment and there isn't a specific target date, but it's a key element of work for us to have that clear service delivery model to define accommodation needs into the future.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, you would appreciate that keeping staff in good accommodation is one of the keys to retaining them in the job, and I'm assuming you've been out to visit that site so you're familiar with some of the challenges around it. As an alternative site, what are you looking for? Are you looking for a piece of land that's currently owned by your agency? Are you looking for other Crown land options? Are you looking for an existing building? Are you looking to build a building? Do you have any answers to those things?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I haven't been briefed on that strategy in detail. I'd be seeking advice from my department regarding facilities and what accommodation was needed for our teams. That would be something that I would -

**Ms WHITE** - Can I encourage you to get a briefing? These staff deserve to know what their future looks like.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Our staff are very valuable to us and we do need to look after them. Absolutely we do. We need to build facilities and services for children in need. We need to work right across our system. We have pressure and we need to make sure we're using our resources wisely. I haven't had a specific briefing on plans for new accommodation for our office functions recently. I'll take it on as a thing to learn more about.

**Ms WHITE** - You'd be familiar with the fact that the staff have walked out of those office buildings previously, and the union has been very vocal about the substandard accommodation provided for those workers. I find it a bit frustrating that it's not registering more with you as a priority project and that you don't have a current brief that you've been provided around what the alternative options for accommodation might look like.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, probably my focus has been on the services we're providing to children and young people and their families.

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**Ms WHITE** - Can't do that without good workers.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We need both; I absolutely agree. Our workforce package and recruiting more people to fill vacancies, and we need to ensure that we've got fit-for-purpose facilities for everyone to work from. You'll have no argument from me on that. I'll seek more advice from the department.

**Ms ROSOL** - I've got some more questions about child safety. Before I ask them, were you able to get that projections information? If not, could I put that question on notice please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Was that with regard to the Ashley numbers?

**Ms ROSOL** - That was a projection about the average number of children, the actual projection, not the aspiration.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Was that what Mr Woodfall was signalling to me about earlier on? The updated answer to regarding the projections in the budget papers for -

**Ms BURGESS** - We have an answer on how the current data has been calculated.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. Could you bring that?

**Ms ROSOL** - Yes, I asked that, and then what was the projection?

**Ms BURGESS** - I'm advised that the aspirational targets have been calculated as the average of the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial year targets.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you. Are you able to provide the actual projection, not the aspiration that was calculated for this?

**Ms BURGESS** - I haven't got that with me at the moment, but I can see if they can find that out.

**Ms ROSOL** - Would that be something I could put as a question on notice as we're getting close to the end?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd only ask that we can provide it if it exists. If there hasn't been a calculated projection then -

**Ms ROSOL** - And you could let us know that it wasn't calculated?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms ROSOL** - On Child Safety Services, how many children in out-of-home care are currently in special care packages?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Do you have that data to hand? I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I have the figures for 2023-24. Salaried residential care is 49.1 children, and therapeutic residential care is 22.7. They're the two salaried care types.

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**Ms ROSOL** - What's the cost of a special care package?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I don't have that with me at the moment. It would be an average cost that we could provide, because there's a considerable range depending on the intensity of that package.

**Ms ROSOL** - Is that something I can put as a question on notice given we're getting near the end?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you. You've talked about 'just family-based carers', which is quite an offensive way of speaking about it because there is no 'just' a family-based care. Then you've talked about the special care packages and then you're going to put the salary to carers in between. Is that in operation already, or is that the right term for it? Salaried carers or the professional carers? Have you already got people in those positions? How much are they paid for doing that caring?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - We do refer to it as intensive foster care at the moment. It was a very limited trial, and it's for very young children. It was put in place to step them down from where they are in salaried care arrangements with a roster of carers. It's likely to be expanded. I don't have information with me at the moment about the specific numbers and costs -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Care to Thrive?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Care to Thrive. We can provide that.

**Ms ROSOL** - Is that something you take as a question on notice?

**Mr JAENSCH** - What was the specific question be then?

**Ms ROSOL** - How much are the intensive foster carers paid per child in care?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Would that be about the cost of a package, or is it about the remuneration for an individual who is involved in delivering it?

**Ms ROSOL** - Does it happen as a remuneration, or does it happen as a package if it's with someone in their home?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - It happens as a package, because a lot of the intensive support is actually delivered by the foster care agency.

**Ms ROSOL** - Okay. The question on notice then would be around the cost of the package. Can I ask what the base reimbursement rate is per child in a home-based care placement?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - The annual subsidy rate varies depending on the age of a child. The standard board payment for children aged zero to four is \$12,532 per annum. For children aged 5 to 11 years, that's \$14,326 per annum and children aged 12 to 17, that's \$16,488.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you. I would comment that every single child in care is deeply trauma-affected and has very complex behaviours that are difficult to manage. Carers are caring for those children at great personal cost. Providing support for carers so they can manage and cope with difficult behaviours will be a cost-effective way of sustaining placements. Will the child safety reforms that are happening at the moment provide additional supports to carers to help them continue with placements? What might some of those supports, and the level of those supports be?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The review of the supports required for carers is part of the reform process being undertaken now. I'm happy for Ms Lovell to speak to that if she's able.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes, I can do. The reforms of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service are relevant here because there'll be special services for children in out-of-home-care. We recognise that they often have these additional needs and challenging behaviours associated with their trauma experience, and that their carers do need support to look after those children. That's under development currently.

We also have recently commissioned a review into family-based care subsidies. That has shown us that we do need to remodel the way that we currently fund, so that it's easier for carers to access the support that they need. Our current model is that we have the standard payment, the subsidy rates that I just read out, but also on top of that there's higher rates for children and young people with more complex and intensive needs.

In addition to that, the Child Safety Service reimburses carers or directly funds additional services, but there are a lot of different ways currently in place to provide funding and support. There are ways that we can streamline that, make it more transparent, more efficient and take some of the work out of it for carers in needing to build a case for support. In undertaking assessments which forward-plan what the needs of a child are going to be over that period, it may be an annual period, and it should be made sure that the supports are already approved to streamline that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll note for the purposes of the committee and the Budget that the Budget includes \$120 million over four years to address increased costs of out-of-home care in relation to fostering kinship care, respite, salaried care, special care packages. The reviews, the engagement strategies, the reviewing of the financial model and supports required for family-based foster carers and others and new layers of intensity of care - having an extra \$30 million a year up front in the Budget allows for us to better plan for how we'd deploy those sort of reforms.

**Ms ROSOL** - Can I finish by requesting that you please not refer to family-based carers as 'just' family-based carers?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay. Where was that reference made?

**Ms ROSOL** - There was an answer to something somewhere along the way. I don't know if it was intentional. I doubt it was intentional. I believe that family-based foster carers put their heart and soul into it, and they're not 'just' carers.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely. I know. I will be mindful of that.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Can the government please update the committee on how the government is prioritising the statutory elements of case management to ensure timely responses for children, young people and their families?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're ensuring that staff who support children and young people in out-of-home care are appropriately supported by expert professionals to enhance the work that they do. We've allocated \$2 million over four years for critical case management. This will enable four legal officers to support child safety officers to deliver their statutory responsibilities, which include preparing legal applications and supporting evidence to secure protection and to progress case goals for children. This aligns with commission of inquiry recommendation 9.22.

The statutory functions that the legal officers will undertake will significantly increase child safety officers' capacity to focus on the needs of children and young people, such as spending more time with them and prioritising care teams in case planning. Prioritising these legal tasks will also ensure that children and young people experience greater stability in their care. The Child Safety Service is establishing an individual care team for each child and young person in out-of-home care. Care teams play an important role in collaborative decision-making and planning for and with that child. The legal officers will play an important role in facilitating actions for children and young people on behalf of their care teams, specialising in legal duties and statutory responsibilities of the Child Safety Service. That's using our child safety officers for what they're best at, and bringing in specialist skills to support them in those roles where they're needed.

**Ms WHITE** - You'd be aware that the St Johns Masterplan is due to be released this year. It's the end of September, so it must only be moments away. The workers in the Child Safety Services south team, need to be moved out of that building to progress those building works once they commence. When will that happen?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have an answer in my briefings on that at this stage. Is someone else involved with the logistics of the master plan who could provide an answer to the table? We've got Shane Gregory who was able to speak to this in the capacity as associate secretary, DPAC.

**Mr GREGORY** - Yes, and former associate secretary, Department of Health, that's running the masterplan.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay. So, speaking not only out of position, but also out of portfolio at the moment.

**Mr GREGORY** - The St Johns Park Masterplan has been released as a consultation plan at the moment. There's significant work still to be undertaken to work through that and complete that plan. I wouldn't anticipate that would be completed this year. There's quite a bit of work to do on that plan.

**Ms WHITE** - I thought the final was due this year.

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**Mr GREGORY** - I'm not aware of that. I don't believe so.

**Ms WHITE** - He's here for a reason, minister. He obviously wasn't just hanging around for the fun of it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Come the moment, come the man.

**Ms WHITE** - Perhaps I could put a question on notice to you in relation to what your department's understanding is of when your staff might need to move out of the building they're currently using on that site?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll get what advice I can on that.

**Ms WHITE** - I appreciate that, thank you. Can I ask about the Advice and Referral Line? Of the notifications received in triage by the ARL, how many are waiting for or currently undergoing further investigation to determine the appropriate level of follow up or intervention required?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond, if she's got data with her on that.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - All matters that are referred to the advice and referral line receive immediate assessment and triaging. Many of those are acted on immediately. There are some matters which don't require an immediate response. Some of those matters await allocation or it waits for some administrative activity prior to closure. Can I clarify that that's the data that you're seeking?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have a couple other numbers that are also important around the way the ARL works for context. Since it was introduced in December 2018, the ARL has had a steady increase in demand and calls coming to it, which is a positive in many ways because it is intended not only for people to report concerns, but also to seek help and advice. That seems to have been a transition that's been made and a very healthy one in the culture of seeking help for particularly parents and carers for young people.

The ARL handled approximately 2000 phone and online contacts per month from January to July in 2024. It's around 2000 calls a month. Typically, more than two thirds or 68 per cent were handled and closed the same day that they were received and 5 per cent resolved or escalated within a week, 11 per cent within a month, and 21 per cent were in the system for longer, mainly for lower priority follow-up actions, for example, awaiting admin reporting and closure. Importantly, in 2023-24 across the year, as I understand it, the ARL resolved 20,440 contacts. Only 1.6 per cent of which, 323, were referred to the Child Safety Service for assessment.

That reflects on the ARL and, when we're talking about the load there and the speed at which cases are moved through, the stand-out for me is that more than 98 per cent of calls are dealt with without requiring a child safety specific assessment. It's doing exactly what it was designed to do, rather than having those 20,000 contacts clogging up the resources of the Child Safety Service, we're assisting people with other referrals, support and information that can help them, whilst triaging out those that the Child Safety Service needs to deal with urgently.

**Ms WHITE** - Of the 21 per cent that took longer, can you provide further information about those numbers? I haven't done the maths, but you gave a figure, then you talked about percentages. How many calls are we talking about in that 21 per cent and what was the longest time that somebody needed to wait before their matter was dealt with?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The 21 per cent applied to the approximately 2000 calls per month between January and July. The advice I have is that the majority of those were mainly lower priority follow-up actions such as awaiting admin reporting and closure of files or cases as opposed to there being an outstanding need for support, help, or intervention in the care of a child. I have some more details here if that helps. Thank you very much. Characterising low-priority matters are those which require little or no follow-up, held pending allocation to an ARL worker, or consultation review for potential closure, as I said before. I'm comfortable with that answer. If you have any further questions, happy to take them on notice.

**Ms WHITE** - I would be keen to know how it compares the similar time last year.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We could do that.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Daily average contacts awaiting allocation at ARL during the quarter ending 30 June 2023 compared to 2024, so there was a daily average of 1058.9 contacts awaiting and that's compared to 390 during the same period in 2023.

**Ms WHITE** - What percentage are referred to child safety services for investigation or intervention?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Of conversations, 1.6 per cent of conversations at the Advice and Referral Line.

**Ms WHITE** - That's from this financial year, is that correct?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That was 2023-24.

**Ms WHITE** - Okay, thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's extraordinary, though. That's 98.4 per cent of the contacts that arrive through the ARL don't end up being child safety business. It's fantastic.

**Ms WHITE** - It's good that people are raising them. How do you, then, communicate back to those people who've notified, if they're not anonymous? I know that's something that is raised, people have made a notification and they don't hear anything else about it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No feedback loop, yes.

**Ms WHITE** - Is there a way to do that? Are you solving that problem?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - The Advice and Referral Line certainly strives to provide feedback to callers. A lot of the contacts that they receive are not from callers, they're system-generated contacts. There's a lot of data from Tasmania Police, for example. When it is a caller, they do strive to give feedback whenever that's possible and appropriate.



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**Mr JAENSCH** - I note that in some circumstances, there's limited information you can provide about matters that have proceeded to police or legal or others without - to provide details of other people's lives and legal matters is a little limited.

**Ms WHITE** - I appreciate that. At the very least, being able to go back to someone who made a notification to say, 'We've investigated, there's nothing to worry about', or 'We're investigating and it's ongoing', would allay a lot of concerns people have.

**Mr JAENSCH** - To know that it's registered?

**Ms WHITE** - It sounds like you're doing that. You're confident that in the majority of cases, where you have an individual who's raised a complaint, they do get feedback about that?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I'm confident that's what ARL strives to do. I take on board that feedback that that may not be satisfactory to every caller on every occasion. Advice and Referral Line, though, as the name indicates - it is there to provide not just protection to children, but advice to callers. So, the feedback loop is very important to Advice and Referral Line because that really is a measure of their success, the quality of the advice, and satisfaction of the caller.

**Ms ROSOL** - A question about the ARL as well, or the process. If a call comes in and the ARL assess that a child and family would benefit from an IFES (Intensive Family Engagement Service) worker, does that go via Child Safety Services, or is that immediately referred to the community-service organisation that provides the IFES?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes, that can go directly to IFES without needing to go to the Child Safety Response Team.

**Ms ROSOL** - How many children referred by the ARL for IFES support are referred back to the ARL due to incomplete referrals, and how many are referred back due to lack of capacity in the community-service organisations?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I don't have that granular level of detail around IFES referrals and those outcomes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is that a failure of referral that you're mentioning? I'm just wondering if it's something we count.

**Ms ROSOL** - Do you count the referrals that bounce back when they're not accepted by an organisation?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Referrals don't necessarily 'bounce back'. IFES is a very intensive family support service right at the tertiary end, where sometimes if a family doesn't engage with IFSS, then the Child Safety Service will need to intervene. It might be that IFES undertake an assessment and find that that family aren't suitable, they're not ready for that type of service intervention, and it does need to progress to the Child Safety Service. It might bypass IFES, rather than bouncing back to the Advice and Referral Line. It might be that IFES determine that a less intensive service is appropriate, in which case they can refer it into our Intensive Family Support System.

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**Ms ROSOL** - Are you aware of any issues with capacity for IFES, where they're not able to accept referrals because they don't have the capacity?

**Ms C. LOVELL** - I don't believe there are capacity issues at the moment.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you. Around that, whether IFES is to provide crisis support or preventative support. My understanding is, that originally it was developed to provide preventative support so that we're helping families early before the issues become so significant that child safety services need to be involved.

What we're hearing from the community is that organisations are receiving more and more intense referrals that go beyond what they can provide for preventative support. That means, while they're funded to provide preventative support, they're actually providing crisis support, which is much more intense, expensive, and difficult for them. Are you aware of that situation and what will you do to address that shift towards crisis level rather than a preventative level of support?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have heard some similar comments, possibly from speaking with similar providers in the market. I haven't had specific advice as to whether there's a change in the complexity of the cases being referred, or a different threshold being applied for those who might be sent through for an IFES assessment. Clare may speak to that.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes. I want to make sure we're using the correct terminology. What you're referring to I believe is the Integrated Family Support System (IFSS), which is a less intensive public-health model than IFES.

**Ms ROSOL** - My understanding is that it's an issue for both across the board.

**Ms C. LOVELL** - Yes, we have recognised that. When we've been working the integrated family support providers to map the nature of need that they're responding to, we are finding that they are responding to a higher level of need than what was originally intended through that model. We have the opportunity to remodel so that there's a different approach to families who have higher needs than what IFSS was intended for, but aren't yet at that IFES level. We're doing that modelling at the moment and working with those providers around what that might look like.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think it's been doing its job though, as part of the system, the ARL, and IFES have contributed to fewer cases progressing to a statutory intervention statistically over time since they were introduced.

**Ms WHITE** - Minister, how many staff are on workers compensation in child safety services at the moment and what's the average amount of time they're on workers compensation and what's the longest length of time please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask Jenny to please provide those figures if we have them.

**Ms WHITE** - If we run out of time can I place it as a question on notice?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

## **PUBLIC**

**CHAIR** - We are about to run out of time.

**Ms WHITE** - Can I place it as a question on notice?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I'll take that on notice.

**CHAIR** - The time for estimates of the Minister for Children and Young People has expired. The committee will now adjourn.

**The Committee adjourned at 4.39 p.m.**