



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Jane Howlett MP

Tuesday 18 November 2025

MEMBERS

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Chair)

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC

Hon Mike Gaffney MLC

Hon Casey Hiscutt MLC

Hon Meg Webb MLC

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. JANE HOWLETT MP

Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Racing, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence.

Tourism, Hospitality and Events Portfolio

Minister's office

Vince Taskunas

Chief of Staff

Camilla Tomas

Senior Adviser

James Temple

Senior Adviser

Events (Output 5.4)

Craig Limkin

Secretary, Department of State Growth

Brett Stewart

Deputy Secretary, Creative Industries, Sport and Visitor Economy, Department of State Growth

Kate Mackie

Acting Director Events Tasmania

Andrew Johnson

Director of the Secretary, Department of State Growth

Angela Conway

Deputy Secretary, Business Services, Department of State Growth

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Angela Conway

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Chief Reform Lead, Keeping Children Safe Reform Group, DPAC

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Tegan Dwyer

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Anita Yan

Deputy Chief Operations Officer

Sofia Pashev

Senior Finance Analyst (Budget Services)

Sean Carrol

Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner

The Committee recommenced at 12.24 p.m.

DIVISION 11

Tourism Tasmania

Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events

OUTPUT GROUP 1

Tourism

CHAIR - Welcome, minister, for our second day of Budget Estimates. I will introduce the members of Committee Estimates B at the table. I'm sure Mr Edmunds will be back shortly. We have the Honourable Luke Edmunds, member for Pembroke; the Honourable Michael Gaffney, member for Mersey; Honourable Rosemary Armitage, member for Launceston; the Honourable Casey Hiscutt, member for Montgomery; and the Honourable Meg Webb, member for Nelson. We also have secretarial support from Julie and James, who's not here at the moment, and we have Gaye from Hansard. This is our team at the table, minister. I invite you to introduce your team.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much, Chair. To my left, I have Brett Stewart, deputy secretary, Creative Industry, Sport and Visitor Economy, Department of State Growth. To my right, I have Sarah Kingston Clark, chief executive officer of Tourism Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you. I invite you to make a short overview as well, but we'll also possibly give you some questions on notice. The committee will consolidate the outstanding responses to the questions and provide them to you for a written response. If you now could provide an opening statement and the committee will then have some short questions around the overview before we proceed to line items.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and thank you to members of your committee today.

Chair, I feel absolutely privileged to take on the Tourism, Hospitality and Events portfolio. Tasmania's visitor economy is one of the state's success stories, contributing 10.8 per cent share of gross state product. Results from the Tasmanian Visitor Economy Survey show there were 1.35 million visitors to Tasmania in the past 12 months to June 2025, an increase of 3.6 per cent from the previous year. These visitors spent \$3.6 billion, which was also up 3.6 per cent on the previous year and up 41.7 per cent on 2019. It was Tasmania's second highest annual visitor spend, exceeding \$3 billion for the third time.

Tourism supports 50,800, or one in six, Tasmanian jobs, making it one of our most valuable sectors and drivers of our economy. Through Tourism Tasmania and the Department of State Growth, we're working collaboratively with government and industry partners across the visitor economy ecosystem to continue to deliver actions in the 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy.

The interim Budget is delivering for our tourism, hospitality and events sector. Our event strategy 2023-2027 continues to deliver a strong return on investment to the state, and the Budget continues its support for events. The strategy focuses on the three pillars of economic, social and brand, and also supports the objectives of the premier's Visitor Economy Advisory Council in relation to events supporting Tasmania's visitor economy.

PUBLIC

Events drive visitation to Tasmania, especially through the quieter months, building local community and culture and supporting our tourism and hospitality businesses. In the 2024-25 financial year, the government supported a total of 155 events. This support brought over 129,200 to Tasmania and generated over 742,700 bed nights. The Budget also provides funding over 2025-26 and 2026-27 for important major partnerships, including the Hawthorn Football Club agreement renewal.

This Budget also includes ongoing support for Hospitality Tasmania and the hardworking hospitality business operators across our state. In 2024, we committed \$8.4 million over three years to Hospitality Tasmania through the Hospitality 2030 Strategy to deliver initiatives to build and grow the job-rich hospitality sector.

These include the great customer experience, HOSPO Health, and programs focusing on business sustainability and workforce development, like the Women in Leadership Scholarship program. There is continued support for the Tasmanian Hospitality and Tourism Academy to address skill and labour shortage. Our support reflects our commitment to the hardworking hospitality business owner-operators across our state.

The Budget includes \$10 million for tourism marketing for the next financial year. This provides Tourism Tasmania the certainty to secure critical media contracts to deliver the award-winning Come Down For Air and off-season campaigns. 90 per cent of our visitors' mode of departure is by air, and through our aviation attraction fund, we're driving increased visitation to Tasmania. It was great to recently announce that we've unlocked a brand-new direct route between Hobart and Newcastle in partnership with Hobart Airport and Jetstar. It will soon begin on 2 December, adding over 26,000 seats.

The Budget also enables us to continue delivering on our Spirit Support package. This package includes the highly successful Eat Local, Stay Local program. Since the program resumed, more than 19,000 voucher claims have been paid, with recipients spending more than \$5.7 million on top of the voucher amounts.

Finally, given its significance, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Macquarie Point Precinct project and the opportunities that it will generate for our visitor economy. This project has received ongoing support from the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania, Business Events Tasmania and Hospitality Tasmania, and I thank them for their support and unwavering advocacy.

As the Treasurer stated last week, just think of the new job opportunities this precinct will afford our tourism and hospitality professionals, directly and indirectly: the front-of-house staff, the event organisers, the cooks, the chefs, the suppliers, and the list just goes on. This project will drive new investment and deliver flow-on benefits right across the Tasmanian community, including most importantly in our regional areas.

Chair, I welcome the committee's questions.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Mr Gaffney has the lead question.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you, minister. It's very impressive, and the return on investment is very good, as you've just outlined. Therefore, the question would be, in 2027-28, there's a \$10 million decrease once the 2024 funding initiative was announced. I'm wondering,

PUBLIC

according to me, because there's been so much work being put in and there's been such a return for the investment that's been put in, why do we see that? Why is that \$10 million not there anymore? Why hasn't it been allocated to continue the good work of Tourism Tasmania, because the benefits are coming through the visitation? I'm trying to understand that.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much. Chair, I thank the honourable member for his question. This is an interim Budget and does provide funding for events into the future. As of 11 November 2025, the Tasmanian government will provide over \$25 million in 2025-26 to events, with an existing agreement.

Mr GAFFNEY - What I'm asking is why is there the decrease between 2026-27 and 2027-28? There just seems to be a \$10 million decrease. That's the question. Thanks.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. That's right. It's important to note that this is an interim Budget, and we're treating as an interim Budget to provide supply at the expiration of the current supply agreements. This Budget contains significant investment in our visitor economy. Funding priorities across tourism, hospitality and events that are not in this Budget will be considered as part of the 2026-27 Budget development process. I'll hand over to the CEO of Tourism Tasmania, Sarah Kingston Clark, to provide more.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Ms CLARK - Yes, thank you. Through you, minister. You are correct. The forward Estimates do show the decrease. However, that will obviously be addressed as we go through the budget cycle. The important thing - and thank you for recognising the return of investment that tourism delivers and the importance of tourism to the state - we will be able to deliver our core program over this year and next year with the available funding that's been provided in this mini-Budget. As we go through the new budget cycle, we will look to ensuring that we can secure and continue that work from Tourism Tasmania.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. Through you, minister, how do you identify what programs or initiatives you've put in place have a better return for investment than some that may not have proven fruitful?

CHAIR - Grand Tasmania?

Mr GAFFNEY - Grand Tasmania, about the German film crew that's here, and it'll go to 190 million audience. You can say that's good bang for your buck because it hasn't cost us other than getting them here and getting them organised. How do you then at the end of that thing go back to the government and say, 'We need \$4 million for this because we thought this was really good. This one didn't do as much.' How is the evaluation managed and moving forward?

Ms CLARK - That is a great question, through you. We track our campaigns very closely. At the start of every campaign we set KPIs for what we would like to achieve with the dollars that we invest. Then during the campaign we monitor that, especially with a long-term campaign like Come Down for Air. After that campaign we have a closure report which assesses all of the different KPIs and how we tracked against those.

If we're going to be doing another campaign for, say, Come Down for Air again in the next year, we'll use the information that we receive from how that's tracked and iterate that for the next program as well.

We also track a long-term brand score, which is available through our tourism information monitor, which is publicly available on a quarterly basis, where we look at our demand power score. That's currently sitting at 10.2, and as we put a new campaign in market, we track how that scores over the time.

Since we've launched the Come Down for Air campaign, we've seen the awareness of Tasmania as a holiday destination rise by 14 percentage points. We also are tracking for our level of awareness at 37 per cent, which is only second to Queensland, which is 46 per cent in Australia.

We really track those metrics very closely, both from a brand perspective, but then also when we go into our conversion campaigns. We work with the likes of airlines and also travel agency partners, and we can track the bookings there because we don't actually book through Tourism Tasmania. It's all either a lead to industry where they book directly, or we work with the airline or travel agency partners. There are a number of different metrics that we track, and we're constantly looking at how we can get a better return on investment.

Mr GAFFNEY - Being an island state is that tracking much easier than in other places?

Ms CLARK - Yes, we also have the Tasmanian Visitor Survey, which is unique to Tasmania. Because we are an island, as you say, we can track the people coming in and out. You may have seen the kiosks at the airport. It is also online now. We get some very rich data as to the experience that they've had on the ground.

We have an NPS of 80, which, for context, Disney is about 40. So we have very good customer experience and satisfaction. That means that we have a high repeat visitation rate as well, which is really important for us because we target both new travellers who haven't been to Tasmania and repeat visitation. It is really unique to us, that visitor survey, and it gives us very rich data.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. I will come back to the ships. I know other people may ask some questions, but my last one, I'll go to you, minister. You said with the Macquarie Point Stadium, there's going to be - you know, the wealth is going to be spread across Tasmania, or words to that effect. What modelling have you done, and can you provide that for us, please? You can table that, because I'd be interested to see that in written form: how you've done that and the process you've used to say that the Macquarie Point Stadium is going to spread the wealth across Tasmania.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, sure. Just through Business Events Tasmania and the data that they have, we know that when we have business events here in Hobart or in Tasmania, they're spread around the state through Business Events Tasmania, and we know that they're a much higher yield spend. We know that they bring their families here and they get out and they disperse into our regions. Obviously they taste our wonderful Tasmanian produce that we have and experience our parks and everything that we have to offer.

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Mr GAFFNEY - I'd suggest to you, minister, there's the other side of things that when you have a conference centre like is being proposed at Mac Point Stadium, that will actually take, or has the potential to take, other events that might have been organised in Launceston and bring them into the centre. So it's actually not bringing in new events; it's actually replacing those conventions or events, consolidate that here in Hobart, actually taking them away from the regions. I'd be interested to hear your opinion or your voice about that.

Ms HOWLETT - I understand what you're saying, but I respectfully disagree with you. Those events in regional areas of Tasmania are smaller events, typically around the 500 to 600. The Macquarie Point precinct will see a much higher event conference facility focusing on around the 1200 to 1500 capacity.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, I know. My point would be, say the Lions Club wanted to run an Australian convention, 500 people in Launceston. Yes, terrific.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, absolutely.

Mr GAFFNEY - They do that. 'Hang on, 1500 seat venue in Hobart. Let's run our Lions convention down there next year because we can attract more people, more Lions members.' Therefore, that conference will not be in Launceston. That will be in Hobart. So in that situation, that conference is taking away from that immediate environment of Launceston and putting it into Hobart. That's been suggested not by me, but by quite a few people who have contacted me about that possibility. It is a threat to regional Tasmania; it's not an advantage to regional Tasmania.

Ms HOWLETT - Look, I understand what you're saying, but Business Events Tasmania will still have a strategic focus on business event conferences right around Tasmania, on the north-west coast, in Launceston and smaller events in Hobart. I'll pass over to you, Brett, if you would like to add any more?

Mr STEWART - Thanks, minister. The only thing I probably would add is that we are actually doing some work to look at increasing the conferencing capacity in the north of the state as well. So this isn't necessarily about just focusing on the advantages that having a larger capacity facility in the south will bring.

We're also, in complement to that, doing some work in the north, including a feasibility study for a potential larger conferencing centre in Launceston. So recognising that this is really about growing the pie, not splitting the pie north or south.

It's fair to say, and I think Business Events Tasmania, the evidence that they've provided to the Planning Commission was pretty strong in that it did show that there were quite a large number of events that Tasmania, regardless of whether we're talking about north or south or north-west Tasmania as a whole, is missing out on because we simply can't host it. That's the bit about growing the pie. At the same time, we're also trying to make sure that Launceston and the north have better capacity to host conferencing events.

CHAIR - Just a follow on from your question, a question of capacity. We're talking about the new, you-beaut conference facilities at Macquarie Point. I'm assuming that the 1200 to 1500 can actually be sized down or there will be other areas. I mean most of these, they might be - I know I've looked at Optus Stadium and some of the others. They have the really large ones,

PUBLIC

but they can also be cut in half. They can be made 500, 600; they can be made a different size. I appreciate you talking about the north, but what is there to prevent someone wanting the new, you-beaut facility? It won't just be the 1200 to 1500. Can you advise? So it will be smaller conferences as well, I believe, at Macquarie Point.

Minister, my question is that smaller conferences will be able to be accommodated at the new Macquarie Point Centre, not just the 1200 to 1500. I take Mr Gaffney's point that even some of the smaller conferences won't want to be in Launceston at somewhere they've been before and they consider tired. They'll want to be at the new, you-beaut, regardless of whether they've got 500 or 600, or whether they've got 1200 or 1500. The question is, it will accommodate the smaller conferences as well, won't it, the new Macquarie Point? It won't just take the 1200 to 1500. You will be able to have smaller conferences, the rooms cut down or other rooms as well.

Ms HOWLETT - I believe so. In relation to the honourable member's previous point, I'm happy to get Marnie Craig from Business Events Tasmania to table the evidence that they gave to the TPC.

Mr GAFFNEY - We've read the evidence, and there are three different sections that it can come down to, but -

Ms HOWLETT - Or any further information that she has.

Mr GAFFNEY - I think the honourable member's correct. When an event has been coming to Launceston for 10 years, and then they see Macquarie Point saying, 'Yes, 500, that would be great. Let's go there' - that will have a negative impact on regional.

Ms HOWLETT - I know that Sarah would like to talk to that as well.

Ms CLARKE - Thank you. Through you, minister. I might just add that the opportunity, as Brett said, was that we are missing out on conferences and events at the moment. For some of even those smaller conferences and events around the sort of 300 mark, you really only have one or two options in - let's take the Hobart area as an example - and if those venues are booked, then we miss out on the conference as a whole because they usually have pre-set dates. So what we're missing out on, we'll be able to get with the extra facilities.

Also, hopefully, it will lift our overall conference offering because it's really competitive out there in the market. So potentially if, you know, a conference has been in Launceston for 10 years, if we don't have the facility in Hobart, we won't necessarily lose the conference just to Launceston. We'll lose it to Tasmania because they'll go to Adelaide, or they'll go somewhere else. We need to continually invest in overall conference facilities so that we're really competitive in the market.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt, you had a question?

Mr HISCUTT - Yes. I note that most of my questions for events have now been taken from me.

Ms HOWLETT - There's still a couple.

Mr HISCUTT - There's still a couple. Particularly, just a Budget line item on page 287 of the Budget paper 1 volume 1 in the statement of comprehensive income. I'm happy if this needs to be taken on notice.

I recognise the fact that there is a drop in appropriation of \$10 million in the 2027-28 year. However, there seems to be a drop of \$12 million in supplies and consumables that year as well. Surely that \$10 million wasn't going towards pencils and stickers. Could I have an explanation of what that \$12 million drop in one year in consumables is? Page 287. Budget paper number 2, volume 1, the big one.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. We'll just seek some advice.

Ms CLARKE - So that's the \$10 million. Yes.

Mr HISCUTT - That's \$12 million that it drops. So there's still an extra \$2 million there.

Ms CLARKE - Yes, thank you. You're referring to the \$10 million that we just discussed that was dropping.

Mr HISCUTT - I was just saying that that's there in the appropriated revenue, but in the supplies and consumables, there's a \$12 million drop between 2026-27 and 2027-28.

Ms CLARKE - Yes. That includes the marketing and advertising dollars that we just discussed, which was \$10 million drop. As you see up in the top section in the other revenue, there's a \$2.2 million that goes down to \$700,000. That is the ending of the first \$12 million of the 2030 funding.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you for the answer to that. In Tourism, do you have any specific regions, internationally or domestic, that you're planning on targeting into the future, any specific areas that you think are likely to be - thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, we do. Obviously, we're always looking at unlocking new routes. That's something that we're very passionate about. I'll let Sarah talk more to that.

Ms CLARKE - Through you, minister, we are quite heavily reliant on our domestic market. So 85 per cent of our visitation comes from the rest of Australia. Around 15 per cent comes from our international markets. We're yet to fully recover in our international markets which is in line with the rest of the Australian states. Our key markets there are the US, which is our number 1 market at the moment; the UK, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and New Zealand. We're actively working in those markets.

We are also looking at India as an emerging market. We tend to follow a bit of a trend as what works well in Australia. We're a few years behind that, and India is performing really well in that market, and we have the opportunity to really tap into that. We just need to make sure that we've got the right product offering. We're working with our industry to ensure that we can offer the right product to the Indian market.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, that's exciting.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, it is.

CHAIR - Mr Gaffney has a follow up - sorry.

Ms HOWLETT - No. I was just saying that we've just had the recommencement of our new direct flight from Auckland to Hobart as well. That unlocks opportunities into the US market as well.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Mr Gaffney, quick follow up.

Mr GAFFNEY - Interestingly enough, when we heard before from Brand Tasmania, they said that - I think it was Germany, Austria, Switzerland, with a film crew to expose our tourism potential to 190 million Europeans. That's being shown in May of next year - April/May of next year. Is Tourism Tasmania flexible enough and mobile enough to be able to say, 'Here's an opportunity. They're going to be showing that there in April. We don't want to wait for three years because we've done the UK if that market's there and they've had a taste of it'?

It was like when the Chinese president travelled around Tasmania. They were all travelling that same path watching him pick up purple bears and stuff, and the pies from Ross. I'm wondering is there flexibility in the Budget and the organisation to take advantage of that in Germany and Europe next year?

Ms CLARKE - Through you, minister, absolutely there is. We do work in the German market. The markets that I mentioned then are where we do have some representation. However, we just don't have big enough budgets to go in every single market or to resource it, and so we work closely with Tourism Australia. We're a part of their campaigns in the German market and we also have relationships with travel agencies there.

We definitely have flexibility. We look at it each year. We assess what's happening in the international space, especially at the moment because it is moving quite quickly, and we will allocate our budget accordingly to look at what's happening in the market and where we will get better traction.

I definitely know that the German market does spend longer amounts of time here. They're typically into hiking and really experiencing our natural environment, but it's not necessarily an opportunity for a large volume. That's why it's not necessarily a tier 1 market.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any other questions?

Mr HISCUTT - I have further questions, but happy if someone else wants to ask.

CHAIR - Yes, Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thanks. Minister, it was a few weeks ago you brought in a number of key stakeholders in these portfolios to address members across parliament. I don't mean to ask a Dorothy Dixier, but one of the key bits of feedback they gave was about being quite nervous about cuts to things like advertising in a tight budget environment. I know you've recently

PUBLIC

answered the member for Mersey's questions about that, but can I get some reassurance about that budget drop off in the last two years that that isn't a real cut and that there is money expected in May?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, for your question. Of course, this interim Budget, the \$10 million in the interim Budget, was necessary to make sure that we had our marketing locked in place for various campaigns and things that we have. We've worked closely in consultation with TTAS when we've developed this interim Budget, and TTAS have advised that the supply and interim Budget provided them with the ability to enter the necessary media buys and contracts to deliver the marketing activity for Tasmania.

Mr EDMUNDS - Then it'd be a matter of next May when the more longer-term surety is provided.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right. Would you like to speak more to that?

Ms CLARKE - I would hope so, absolutely, and I would hope the work that we can continue to do which results in the visitation here for Tasmania. Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, all right.

Mr STEWART - If I can add, just from a complete governance perspective, if it may assist the committee, through the minister.

We have a very strong collaboration set up through existing governance structures. The Premier's visitor economy advisory group, T21, which just sits off to the side of that, allows us - and when I say us, State Growth, Tourism Tasmania, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania as well, and Brand Tasmania and the Office of the Coordinator-General, who are all members of those governance groups - to engage with our peak bodies so that we can hear directly from them the importance of investments, the return on those investments, key priority areas, both on the demand and supply side. Then that gets fed directly via the minister into the Budget process.

Mr EDMUNDS - I guess to read between the lines, you've done that engagement about why the Budget paper has a drop-off, but to reassure that's because of the fact that we have another Budget coming next year.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. This was an interim Budget that the Treasurer delivered in November.

Mr STEWART - If I can also add, there also is just a natural, normal, mechanical situation where, in particular, in those last couple of years of the forward Estimates, there is usually a drop-off because current programs cease, and then it's up to future budgets for the consideration of continuation or new programs.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Appreciate it.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Gaffney.

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Mr GAFFNEY - I think it should be in the table, the impact of the ships not getting here when they were scheduled to get here. What impact did that have? Has there been any modelling from Tourism Tasmania on that? I did notice in the Chair's statement there was no mention of the ships and whatever, and I think that four or five years ago it would have been, 'In 2025 or 2026 the new ships are going to be on board and that's going to have a positive impact.' Now, that hasn't happened. I would have thought that there should be some acknowledgement through that process of, 'Look, this is what's happened.' Or is that not part of Tourism Tasmania's purview to make comment on that sort of thing, about the negative impact that has had on the industry?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for his question. Under the tourism and hospitality support package, including the Spirit Preparedness program, we've delivered most of the components of the package. That includes subsidised passenger fares to boost demand and provide for additional day sailings, air and hire car packages, Tasmanian festivals and events support package as well.

We've delivered on our election commitment to recommence the Eat Local, Stay Local voucher program. As I mentioned, since the program resumed, we've had more than 19,000 vouchers that have been claimed. That proves that that's working and it's stimulating our visitor economy. As a primer to the voucher scheme, Tourism Tasmania led an interstate marketing campaign as well to showcase what's on offer and encourage more Tasmanians to enjoy what our state has to offer.

Before I hand you over to the CEO, I want to say how incredible the new ship actually looks. I had the opportunity to go on board and have a look, and it's going to be a new visitor experience for tourism in Tasmania. The details in the ship - it's just absolutely beautiful.

CHAIR - We've done tours.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. So it's - wow. We're very much looking forward to it being here next year and sailing. I'll hand you over to Sarah, to say some more.

Ms CLARK - Through you, minister. We get around 10 per cent of our visitation from the *Spirit of Tasmania*. Obviously, a big focus of our program is also via air. It is a really important traveller that comes via the *Spirit of Tasmania* because they've got their own car and they will, hopefully, spend more time in our regions and more nights here in Tasmania.

It's not so much that there was a negative impact. It's just we weren't able to see the increase so it hasn't had a negative impact. We're really excited to get the ships. We know that when we saw the new ships, however many years ago that was, we saw a big boost because it was something new, and people wanted to go on those ships. So we're working very closely with the *Spirit of Tasmania*, with Chris and the team, to make sure that we can really maximise that opportunity when they do come.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. If we have no further questions on Tourism, we will move to item 5.4, events, and Mr Hiscutt.

DIVISION 11

Department of State Growth

Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events

OUTPUT GROUP 5

Cultural and Tourism Development

5.4 Events

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. Much of this has already been covered in the previous output, but I'll ask a more specific question. Has consideration been given to attract defence events into Tasmania, considering the advanced manufacturing sector that we have in Tasmania, bringing the primes to Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank you for your question in relation to defence. I'll hand you over to Brett.

Mr STEWART - Thanks, minister, through you. The department - through a different section that doesn't sit under my purview, but I'll do my best to inform the committee - a different part of the department, our advanced manufacturing and defence industries branch, is dedicated to engaging with our major defence primes and also sub-primes. We've obviously had the benefit for a number of years now of the connections that the Defence Advocate has been able to make in that space. We do routinely attend, through our defence team, our trade team and the Defence Advocate, events both nationally and internationally in this space.

I will say that the potential for a major trade expo venue would greatly help us in this space to attract this type of event. Typically, with advanced manufacturing and defence industries-type expos, they need a large space. They don't just need a conferencing space, they need an exhibition space. We currently don't have that space. Certainly, the prospect of us to attract that sector from a conferencing perspective exists and could potentially be improved. From a trade expo potential, it would be greatly improved.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes. I should imagine if the Indo-Pacific event had an event in Tasmania, it would be amazing.

Mr GAFFNEY - To follow on from that, it's interesting, usually a big event like that would take some planning, especially if you're looking at 1200 to 1400 delegates, which is fine. That could be two or three years down the track. The AFL don't put out their football fixtures until November - middle of November - the year before. Does that mean for the whole AFL season, our international conference centre here will be out of capacity because we don't know the forward projected football games? So you can't hire that event at that time. Therefore, our international conference can go from November to March because the football season doesn't have their AFL rosters worked out?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. I will ask Brett Stewart to speak to that. That's an important question. I know quite often Business Events Tasmania bid 12 months in advance for a lot of these events.

Mr STEWART - Thanks, minister. I've also had some involvement in the sport portfolio, so we're sort of lurching over there as well. But it's really a good point, and I can do

my best to answer the question for the committee. In our pretty close dealings with Stadiums Tasmania around their content strategy, which has just been released, it is true to say that the scheduling of different types of events in a venue like what's proposed at Mac Point varies depending on the type of event. Something like a major trade show or convention could be a couple of years in advance. A concert might be six months in advance. The AFL fixture is routinely set around November, you're correct. It is usually the case that for multi-use venues - which clearly this one is being positioned as - that, for example, if we use the AFL fixturing as a really good example, the AFL does accept submissions from every club leading up to them finalising the fixture.

The final decision sits with the AFL, but every club has the opportunity to put a set of preferences forward. They might put 10 preferences forward. They might only get six of them, but they certainly have that opportunity. We've worked with both Hawthorn and North Melbourne in that space over a number of years so that we try to get information in the hands of the football club that they can then pass on to the AFL. If we had a major trade show that could be scheduled in during the AFL season, I think Stadiums Tasmania would go ahead and schedule that. Then that information, particularly if it's a couple of years in advance, would be fed into the AFL and allow them - with their flexibility around fixturing - to take that into account.

I don't think it would be the case that the venue would be quarantined for the whole AFL season for other uses.

CHAIR - Or you could play the game at UTAS.

Mr STEWART - Well, certainly, but -

Ms HOWLETT - They will be having games at UTAS, yes.

Mr STEWART - Yes. Correct, minister. Obviously, the plan is for a minimum of four games per year at UTAS.

Mr GAFFNEY - On that, just to throw into the mix, in the order - the TSO - there has to be a six-month waiting period for the TSO to be able to plan their program. November 19, for the AFL, six months, May 19. There are not allowed to be any football games there until the TSO have done their organisation. So that's another thing into the mix when you're looking at bands and conferences. So that's some of the concerns that we are hearing from people who contact us.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. And thank you, Brett.

Mr STEWART - Thanks, minister. Through you, I've also had direct engagement with the TSO through the Arts portfolio to assist with their discussions directly with Mac Point Development Corporation, but also with Stadiums Tasmania. The order sets out those minimum requirements and indeed, the TSO, their lead time is normally around that, at least 12 months, sometimes longer. That will allow Stadiums Tas to have, in most cases, really good notice of concerts at the TSO.

An MOU - effectively a Heads of Agreement - is being considered between those parties as to how they're going to interact from an operational perspective so that, as good neighbours,

they can get on and they can cater for each other's needs as different types of events are scheduled.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms CLARK - May I also add, I guess the benefit of a business event working in harmony with a weekend sporting event is that business events typically are during the week. So obviously Monday to sort of Wednesday there won't be any football games either. I think there are a lot of examples across Australia and the world where scheduling is a challenge in stadiums. You know, it can be done, but I take your point, there's definitely an opportunity for them to work in harmony and complement.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Edmunds?

Mr EDMUNDS - It's actually okay. Yes, it's fine, thanks.

CHAIR - Do you have a question?

Mr HISCUTT - That's sort of been answered, but I'll ask it again in the Events space. I guess the answer's been given that we're just trying to grow the pie, but the question was about how do we ensure regional areas don't miss out on both events and tourism? What strategies are the government using to ensure that it is spread across and people turn right off the *Spirit*, and not just left?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really important question and that's one thing we are focused on - getting people out into our regions and dispersing and contributing to our visitor economy, and that's about getting them out and getting them right around our regions. Whether it be the north-west coast or down the Tasman Peninsula, we want them dispersed into our regions.

5.5 Visitor Economy Support

CHAIR - Thank you. If we have no further questions on 5.4 Events, we'll go to 5.5 Visitor Economy Support. I noticed you outlined already, minister, but a question with regard to the support package. What sort of feedback did you get for the Eat Local, Stay Local voucher scheme? Is there scope for this scheme to stay on any sort of permanent basis to keep the tourism and visitor economy supported?

Ms HOWLETT - That is a really good question. The program has worked incredibly well. It was a really important package, the voucher program. They helped stimulate our economy, incentivising Tasmanians to stay, eat, as well as explore their beautiful home state during the quieter shoulder season. Over 58,000 vouchers valued at \$100 have been distributed to registrants to the program to be redeemed on eligible accommodation, hospitality and visitor experiences. The hospitality industry alone employs nearly 8 per cent of the total Tasmanian workforce and tourism employs one in six people interstate. I'm not sure if Brett has a breakdown of the figures of what vouchers have been redeemed for experiences, accommodation and hospitality.

CHAIR - That was my next question: 58,000 given out, how many redeemed?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - We did do a media release earlier this week to state that participants have until the end of the month to redeem their vouchers as well. I'll pass you over to Brett.

Mr STEWART - Thanks, minister. I'm just looking for my information. I've got an update. Through you, minister, this is dated as at 10 November, so a few days old.

CHAIR - Yes, that's all right. It's reasonable.

Mr STEWART - There were 58,271 vouchers issued. They were obviously issued pre-election and then we had a bit of a holding period, and then the program was resumed. As at 10 November, 20,638 claims have been lodged out of that 58,000 which is about 35 per cent, which is very strong. The only experience we've had with this type of program previously was during COVID, and the overall redemption rate for the whole scheme was, I think, less than 70 per cent. So the fact that we've had 35 per cent uptake in the first few weeks, I think, is very positive.

We've paid 15,575 of those claims. We usually get those paid within a few days. It has generated \$6.77 million in total spend. The minister's point earlier around the fact that people will redeem a voucher, but they've actually spent, in many cases, a lot more than the voucher. In particular, during the off and shoulder seasons, which was the intent of stimulating activity for the program, that's very encouraging. The feedback we've had anecdotally from, in particular, our small regional operators, who usually suffer from the biggest variation season to season, has been very strong.

The other point that we would make is that, in terms of the part of the question around future opportunities, we have seen other jurisdictions - I think most recently South Australia has launched a similar program in response to their algal bloom, and we'd like to think that they've modelled themselves off our program.

We will do a comprehensive review of the program once we've completed it and we'll provide that advice to the minister for consideration with respect to what types of these types of stimulus activities could be undertaken in the future.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Did you have a question?

Mr EDMUNDS - I was interested in - with that number about the extra spend - if there was an average per claim from the receipts that you knew.

Ms HOWLETT - The additional spend was \$5.7 million on top of the voucher amount, and I'll pass over to Brett to see if we can get an average.

Mr STEWART - I'd have to get my calculator out, sorry.

Mr EDMUNDS - You can take it on notice, come back later?

Mr STEWART - Yes, I can probably get that for you.

Mr EDMUNDS - Or we're just about to take a break.

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Ms HOWLETT - I know speaking to Lucy at St Albi's on Friday, she mentioned that she was getting customers who wouldn't usually go to St Albi's. They were using their voucher and getting multiple couples with vouchers in the restaurant, using them at the table, and it was bringing new customers into the restaurant that hadn't been able to go in before, yes.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. If you'd like to put the question on notice, Mr Edmunds, and we will provide it. The time being 1.14 p.m., if we could now break and resume at 2.15pm with Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. I thank Julie and Gaye from Hansard as well for their time today. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Could we cease the broadcast? Thank you.

The committee suspended from 1.14 p.m. to 2.15 p.m.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister, and I look forward to continuing this afternoon. We'll be starting with the minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, 1.4.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. Before I begin, can I please clarify something from the previous session? The Tourism Tas CEO that the Tasmanian Visitor Survey measures data from people coming into the state as well as out. I want to clarify that the TVS only tracks exit data. Thank you.

DIVISION 10

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

CHAIR - Thank you. Did you have a short overview you'd like to make before we start with Women and Prevention of Family Violence, or shall we go straight into questions?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I do. I welcome to the table - with me to my left, I have Courtney Hurworth, chief reform lead, Keeping Children Safe. To my right, I have Sam Gunner, reform group from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Thank you very much.

Chair, I recognise the deep history and culture of this island, and acknowledge and pay my respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, their elders past and present. I pay respect to and acknowledge the devastating impacts of family and sexual violence in Aboriginal communities and recognise the ongoing leadership role of Aboriginal communities to prevent and address this violence.

I acknowledge the resilience and courage of victim-survivors of family and sexual violence. We pay our respects to those victim-survivors, their families and communities that all feel the devastating impacts.

Women and the Prevention of Family Violence is now combined under the one portfolio and budget output. The two are fundamentally linked. We know that women disproportionately experience family violence and that improving gender equality fosters safer environments for

women and girls. Combining the portfolio into one output aligns our government's agenda with the national agenda of the Women and Women's Safety ministers, focusing on gender equality, economic participation and women's safety.

The government has made significant strides in advancing women's participation, and I'm pleased to announce that we've met our target of 50 per cent of women on Tasmanian boards and committees. We also continue to exceed our target of 50 per cent of women in the senior executive of the State Service as well

While we have made progress, persistent gaps in economic opportunity, leadership representation, safety and health care access reminds us that our work is far from complete. Our priorities include strengthening response to gender-based violence, promoting women's leadership across sectors, and ensuring reproductive health services remain accessible and comprehensive, for example, including our recent commitment to enable women to access the contraceptive pill through pharmacies

We recognise that women's experiences are diverse. Our policies must acknowledge and respond to their unique challenges. Eliminating family and sexual violence is a key priority for our government. The government's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-27: Survivors at the Centre is supported by funding of \$140 million over five years to deliver actions, which include Arch Centre fundings since the action plan commenced.

There are many examples of these innovating approaches the government is taking. Some include we have national leading electronic monitoring programs not only holding perpetrators to account and addressing risk and safety, but also providing victim survivors with the option of a discreet monitoring device that alerts them when their family violence offender is nearby.

The multidisciplinary Arch Centres in the north and south of the state are delivering a survivor-centred, holistic and integrated response to family and sexual violence. We're delivering a third Arch Centre in the north-west, which is expected to be operational in early 2026.

We have established the Family and Sexual Violence Victim-Survivor Advisory Council to enable an ongoing voice of victim survivors to the Tasmanian government. Our new peak body, the Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance, is now in operation to work towards strengthening the capacity of the community sector by improving coordination. I thank the Alliance CEO, Bree Klerck, for her leadership.

The Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence team within the Department of Premier and Cabinet takes a highly collaborative and coordinated approach across the sector, including the community sector, government agencies, as well with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions. I also attend and advocate in my role on the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council. Tasmania supports a focus on prioritising key areas in 2025, including men's behavioural change, risk assessment and management, and expanding the specialist FDSV workforce, which are critical to strengthen services and outcomes in our state.

In the short and medium term, we know that family and sexual violence reporting rates increase as more victim survivors gain trust in formal support and response systems, as well as increasing understanding about the nature of family and sexual violence. To inform further

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work in this space to drive long-term change, we will evaluate Survivors at the Centre and consult with the sector, including victim survivors.

We remain steadfast in creating a Tasmania that is free from violence, with a broad range of measures in place to prevent families and sexual violence, and respond to and support victim survivors, and hold perpetrators to account.

Thank you, Chair and the committee members, for the opportunity to provide some opening remarks.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. To open the question, we have Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. Thank you, minister, for that. It makes sense to have these brought together in one portfolio. Just to pick up on something you mentioned which I'd like to congratulate the state government on is reaching those gender equity targets for women on boards and also in senior roles in the State Service. It's really good to see that progress made, so congratulations.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - The first area I wanted to put some questions around relate to the gender budget impact statement. As we're both aware, the interim Budget we're scrutinising doesn't include that statement. I wanted to check in with you, minister, when were you aware that it would be omitted from this Budget, and were you consulted about that?

Ms HOWLETT - Absolutely. I was certainly consulted. We know that the interim Budget process was a compressed process. It simply didn't allow for a gender budget statement to be produced at the quality that was required to make it meaningful. This isn't a shift in policy or commitment. It was just timing was the only issue there. As the Premier and the Treasurer has confirmed, we will deliver a full gender budget statement for the May Budget.

Ms WEBB - At what point were you consulted about that and informed that it was going to be omitted?

Ms HOWLETT - I was advised that including a statement in this interim Budget wasn't realistic, given it was very compressed timeframe post the election timeframe. This is a really important portfolio to me, and I am here to make a difference and do everything that I can, and I did not want a compressed - I wanted a gender budget that would be included in the 2026-27 Budget. I wanted it to have meaningful - Treasury was under a lot of pressure to get the interim Budget out the door, and I want to make sure that this interim Budget is meaningful. I know that Courtney has some more to say on that.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I can hear that you care a great deal about that. That's really good to hear, minister. I was just checking about the timing of when you became aware of it.

Ms HOWLETT - I was certainly advised by the Treasurer.

Ms WEBB - Okay. I've got some specific questions which perhaps you may have more detail about, if that's all right. What I'm interested to know more about is detail on the work

plan looking ahead. We've got a good history of the previous three gender budget impact statements improving and becoming more meaningful each year, which is really good to see.

I'm wondering, looking ahead, what's the work plan to keep developing it, the rigorous and current benchmarks and indicators that we would be looking to include in the next gender budget impact statement? What research and data collation is being developed to feed into that? What's our work process? How does it also work between your portfolio supports here and working with Treasury for that to happen? What does that collaboration look like?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. That's a really important question. We all collaborate and work together and share information, and we all talk about what's working and what's not working and what areas we can certainly improve on, and there are many areas that we can improve on. Courtney, would you like to speak to that?

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. I have to be careful how much I go into process, because it is now a process that is led by Treasury, which we take as a sign of progress. You know, it takes cultural change, and the fact that Treasury is now the lead agency is a sign that we have reached another threshold point where this is integrated into the budget process rather than a side matter that DPAC would produce.

Ms WEBB - Sorry to interrupt you, but may I just check on that. Is this upcoming May Budget the first time that's been the case where lead has been with Treasury?

Ms HURWORTH - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I appreciate that.

Ms HURWORTH - I think a few years ago we shared information about the fact that we'd hired a specialist economic consultant at the time, Impact Economics, who did the federal gender budget statement. The lead economist is actually a Tasmanian, and she worked with DPAC and with Treasury at the time to develop the model that we use.

So what data sets do we use to determine which areas of the budget to focus on? How do we do that? And then what is the analysis overlay that's put over that? Over the past few years, that process, along with Impact Economics, has become more and more refined.

As you would know, in the first one, we used primarily - well, only publicly available ABS data. My understanding is that that's starting to nuance into other data sources. I don't know how far, I'd have to take that on notice which specific data sources will be used in this process, but the other part of the process is in order to facilitate a more efficient way of making this part of the budget process we have the gender impact assessment toolkit, which is an online toolkit.

As part of the budget process, agencies will be prompted to put a gender analysis over their submission, and they would use the toolkit to do that. That toolkit has a range of data sets and other things that sit behind it that enable the officer to do an analysis.

Ms WEBB - Minister, is that something that you could table for us, or provide to the committee just as a point of reference so we can see what that toolkit looks like?

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Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. It's not a static document. It's a full online system. We would need to consider offering a briefing to interested members to show you the system.

Ms WEBB - Okay.

Ms HURWORTH - Victoria has a static document, and we did test it, but it didn't give the level of real-time analysis that we thought was needed to properly inform the budget process.

Ms WEBB - Minister, is there then a record of those gender analysis processes that have gone into the budget preparation process that each department or agency has done? Is that something that then can be held accountable or looked at or audited? Or if this tool is not a static tool, but it's an online tool, is there a way that that can then be held accountable or audited?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll seek some information, honourable member. Yes, agencies can save all their assessments which are provided to Treasury.

Ms WEBB - That's good to know.

Ms HOWLETT - Which will be important moving forward.

Ms WEBB - Sure. It's just good to know that there's a record keeping around that that can then be audited or looked at if necessary. It sounds like it's a well thought through tool that's being used and will probably keep improving.

Can I ask, in an associated space to that, and it's given how thoughtfully the budgeting process has been set up around that tool, is that also something that you might consider in relation to - or putting to your colleagues in Cabinet in relation to cabinet templates? I'm aware that the federal government requires a completed gender impact assessment template to be included as an attachment to federal cabinet submissions, just as a standard part of a package that sits around something that's considered by Cabinet. In fact, I went to look at it and printed out some information about the federal government's arrangements there. Is that something that you would advocate for here in Tasmania in terms of the Cabinet processes of your government to incorporate a gender impact assessment template as part of a standard cabinet documentation?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm happy to have that conversation with my Cabinet colleagues, and happy to have that discussion with them.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Thanks for agreeing to look at that. It helps build it into the architecture at every stage, not just at Budget time, so it's really positive.

If I could move on. You mentioned the Tasmanian Family Sexual Violence Alliance, and I think it's excellent that we've got - are you right if I keep going - anytime, just jump in.

The Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance now in place, and it's really good to have that voice of leadership across those sectors, however, the alliance is raising some concerns, minister, and reporting that because we've seen reports of family violence rising, and

again, that's positive in many ways because people are seeking help and reporting, but it is rising by nearly 70 per cent over the past five years and sexual violence is rising by 180 per cent in terms of reporting. Funding to specialist support services has really not shifted anywhere near that much to meet demand.

The alliance says the state's frontline family violence services report women having to wait far too long to receive necessary support. In some cases, the waiting lists extend beyond months and into years, I think. Anecdotally, I've heard that. That's obviously an unacceptable situation for survivors to be waiting that long for support at times of intense trauma.

Can I ask you, I've also heard about women not being able to get legal support and having to self-represent in courts because there's just not the support available for specialist legal services. What strategies have you put in place to try to ensure specialist support services have the capacity to match demand, to meet demand, and the need that's there? Do you have a breakdown of current wait times for survivors seeking access to sexual violence support services and family violence support services through funded programs?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the honourable member for her very important question. Wait times are challenging, and that's not something that we're going to shy away from. But it also shows that people trust the system more than ever. More Tasmanians are reaching out earlier, and that's a change that we've worked really hard to achieve.

Right across the country, services are experiencing the same pressures. Every state and territory is reporting a higher demand for family and sexual violence support as more people recognise violence, and they're reaching out for help, which is a good thing. That increase in demand isn't necessarily a sign that things are getting worse. It reflects growing awareness, reduced stigma, and stronger trust that help will be there.

While Tasmania is experiencing the same national trend, it's important to note that how wait times are captured and calculated differs across services and jurisdictions, and this makes it difficult to make direct comparisons or to present a single accurate figure.

What matters most, however, is that victims are not left out on their own and services are adapting to make sure that people stay connected while they wait through regular check-ins, safety planning and ongoing contact. It may not always be the full program of support we want to offer 100 per cent of the time, but it ensures that victims remain supported and visible while they wait to join those programs. Thank you, Courtney. Courtney does have a breakdown of the specific wait times.

Ms WEBB - Support services. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll let Courtney add to your question.

Ms HURWORTH - What I might do is run through each service. The wait time is the number of people and then the number of days or months. Anglicare Tasmania doesn't maintain a wait list, so there's no figures there. CatholicCare doesn't maintain a wait list. Gender equality has 227 people waiting for services. In the south, the average wait time is 18 months. In the north, it's six months, and in the north-west, it's nine months. Huon Domestic Violence Service has 50 people waiting for an appointment. The average wait time is three to four weeks. Yemaya has 65 people, and the average wait time is four to five months. Noting that the

majority of these services have managed waitlists. So that's where people are contacted while they're on the waitlist to have their risks checked or to have them referred if their circumstances changed. That was family violence services, not sexual violence services.

Ms WEBB - Might stay with those for a moment, then, minister, and ask you about particularly the very significant waitlist that Engender Equality has there and the lengthy time. Can you confirm, or do you have confidence that there is a regular check in and those other things you mentioned, regular check in, safety planning, and regular contact occurring with all 200-plus people on Engender Equality's waitlist?

Ms HOWLETT - It is my understanding that those wraparound services are provided.

Ms WEBB - Well, it's hardly wraparound. It's check in, but yes. That's okay. That's what I'm asking about.

Ms HOWLETT - Well, there's multiple -

Ms WEBB - And in terms of the first part of my question, which is what are you doing to actually address this issue that we have, it's not really good enough to say everybody in the country is experiencing it. We are experiencing it with some urgency and acuteness here. What are you doing to make that picture different in this Budget and into the forward Estimates?

Ms HOWLETT - We fulfilled all our positions, the 500 workers. I believe we were the second jurisdiction in Australia in order to do that, to fulfill those workers. In your question earlier relating to Legal Aid, I've met with them, and I want to acknowledge incredible work that they do, and I know that the service is funded through the Department of Justice.

I'm very concerned actually, that the federal government has reduced funding to Aid, and that was also mentioned to me in the meeting that we had, and that is something I'll be writing to the federal government about.

Ms WEBB - You said something about 500 workers. Can you explain that a little bit further, what you have done there, and, therefore, what impact you expect that to have on these wait times that we're currently experiencing?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, thank you. Thank you, Courtney.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister, I think it's important to be clear there's multiple different funding streams that sit behind this portfolio. There's state government funding which comes through the state Budget, and that's really in two parts. One is core funding that's been given to these services over many decades, and one is additional funding that's been flowing over the past few years.

Then there's three separate national partnership funding streams. There's family, domestic and sexual violence funding stream, and then there's the stream called 500 Workers, which was an election commitment of the federal government a few years ago. Tasmania received funding to employ an additional 24 family and sexual violence workers, and we were the second state to meet that target and have all those workers fully employed. That agreement is currently up for renegotiation, and we're looking to see whether we can increase the number of workers through that negotiation.

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Ms WEBB - What difference did those 24 workers make to the waiting lists? Did we map that? Presumably if we're going back to ask for more from the federal government in a renegotiation, we'd want to be able to tell them what impact the 24 had in the first time round.

Ms HOWLETT - I understand what you're saying, and nationally, it's particularly challenging. Courtney, would you like to add anything to the mapping?

Ms HURWORTH - We have gone back and provided the federal government through their department with a significant amount of information about demand, particularly in the north-west of Tasmania.

We've also really tried to work with the federal government to have Tasmania as designated as regional under that national partnership and to get a regional loading into that agreement. Like I said, those negotiations are still under way. My team works very, very closely with our community sector organisations and looks to provide back into government innovative advice from the sector around how they're looking at waitlists.

So it's not only additional workers, and there is a national workforce shortage of specialist workers in this sector, but it is also other ways that they can manage waitlists or manage referrals, and Engender has been running a pilot looking at that. SASS has also done some work around looking at how they manage their waitlists, and as we move into the next family and sexual violence action plan, that will be a key focus area.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. In terms of those workers, were they across both sexual violence and family violence, or were they just family violence workers?

Ms HURWORTH - The federal government doesn't distinguish between the two.

Ms HOWLETT - Under one.

Ms WEBB - Yes, thank you. How did we allocate them across those two areas in terms of the 24, and then also the other question - and I'm interested in this - where we put them in the state, what was the distribution?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. I'll just seek some advice.

Ms WEBB - And to flag ahead as well for the next question because it might be for your other support person there, I'm going to ask about waitlists in terms of sexual violence as well as sexual assault services.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Courtney.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister, I can list every service and how many workers they have, what their SCHADS award are and what they're employed to do, but that will take a significant amount of the committee's time.

CHAIR - Would you like to take it on notice?

Ms WEBB - Or just table it.

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Ms HOWLETT - I'm happy to table that.

CHAIR - Table it.

Ms WEBB - Yes, that'd be great.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. I'll just table that rather than take it on notice. No, thank you. I think we can just pass it over here.

Ms WEBB - I appreciate that, and does that also show the regions?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Thank you so much. I think the waitlists you were reading to me before were family violence-related waitlists. Do you have the sexual violence or sexual assault services waitlist from funded services?

Ms HOWLETT - We certainly do have that information. We're just seeking it.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, minister.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister, for Laurel House they have 347 people on the waitlist. In the north, it's 81, and in the north-west, it's 266. In the north, it's two months' wait time. In the north-west, it's seven months. The Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) has 499 people waiting for an appointment, but they don't record average wait time due to how they manage their waitlist.

Ms WEBB - They are really large numbers, minister, aren't they?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a significant amount.

Ms WEBB - When it's to do with sexual assault, which is something that's immediately traumatic for people. Not that they'll all be contemporary sexual assault incidences that they're seeking support for, but most of them are likely to be. What are we doing here at a state level? Beyond what might be coming through the pipeline federally, what are you doing at a state level to address that? It's clearly an urgent situation.

Ms HOWLETT - It is an urgent situation, and that's why I was pleased to say in my opening statement that the Arch Centre on the north-west coast will be opening early next year. We know that we have significant issues on the north-west coast in particular, and there's a growing need and demand for support services there. We're doing everything that we can, and we know that there's a lot more work to be done in this critical space.

Ms WEBB - There's certainly a lot more services to provide.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

Ms WEBB - Which requires funding. So it requires your advocacy, obviously, with your Cabinet colleagues and in the budget process. The Arch Centre is great, and it's very positive.

We've got it coming in Burnie, but that will drive more need for the support services that are going to be working in collaboration in that model.

Unfortunately, we'll probably see those numbers get worse as a result of the Arch Centre opening in Burnie, and, again, it's not a bad thing that it's opening. It's a very good thing, but it will drive numbers up. There's only going to be a larger anticipated need. Have you got modelling on the next year in terms of anticipated demands?

Ms HOWLETT - As far as modelling is concerned, I'll allow Courtney to speak to that. One thing that we will be very focused on is prevention as well, prevention of family violence and awareness of prevention of family and sexual violence. That's one thing that we'll be certainly advocating for. We know that coming up in a few days, we have 16 days of advocacy of activism against family and sexual violence, and that's something that we'll certainly be participating for. I'll certainly, as far as funding is concerned, continue to lobby the federal government to seek more funding for this critical area.

Ms WEBB - How about state funding, minister?

Ms HOWLETT - Courtney, I'll allow you to.

Ms HURWORTH - I think there's several parts of what you're asking. There has been a significant increase in funding to sexual violence services over the last few years by the state government. It's approximately 200 per cent.

Ms WEBB - Commission inquiry-related, generally.

Ms HURWORTH - Yes, but that is not restricted to dealing with child sexual abuse victim-survivors, noting that a lot of people that disclose are adults when they do so.

Ms WEBB - Yes.

Ms HURWORTH - So there has been a significant increase in funding for sexual violence services. The other part of this is that the Commonwealth has generally focused on family violence over the last few years. They have never had a dedicated focus on sexual violence, and their commissioner and the Commonwealth are looking toward a dedicated focus on sexual violence services, and we are thinking about how we can make the best use of where that particularly goes. I think those are the two parts. The other part around prevention -

Ms WEBB - But what about modelling, was the question. Sorry.

Ms HURWORTH - Modelling, yes. Excuse me. There is a commission of inquiry recommendation around a review of the sexual violence service system. We are going to undertake that review, but we're going to include family violence in it as well. That review, I think, I signed off on the procurement process for that review last week, and we'll be looking at an external reviewer to undertake that review, and that will include modelling of demand.

The other bit is that the Commonwealth is also doing a national piece looking at demand modelling, and they're also doing a national piece looking at workforce, because workforce is the flip side of funding. So they're going to release a national workforce survey through AIHW

early next year. Those three things together will help us in our evaluation of survivors at the centre.

Ms WEBB - That's good to hear. With that review of services that you just described, that you're tendering for at the moment, will that occur in this financial year then, or in the next financial year and be funded in the next Budget?

Ms HURWORTH - We would have the outcome ready to inform the 2026-27 Budget.

Ms WEBB - Next May's Budget?

Ms HURWORTH - Yes, that's right.

Ms WEBB - So it'll be done quite quickly then?

Ms HURWORTH - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Quite a quick turnaround. That's really positive to hear. Thank you. Then in terms of funding for prevention activities, because I agree with you, minister, that prevention is, of course, a better - or an important place to devote attention, as well as services at the end point. What funding have we got in this interim Budget that focuses on prevention activities?

Ms HOWLETT - Prevention, as I said before, is a very important resource that we need to focus on. It's something that I know Justice is certainly working on as well in the prison systems, et cetera. The Tasmanian government is firmly committed to the primary prevention of violence against women and children, and recognises the critical role of Our Watch in advancing this work. Primary prevention is a foundational pillar of our national and state-level strategies to end violence against women and children. We're committed to evidence-informed, whole-of-population approaches that deliver a measured long-term impact.

We're a proud partner in a five-year agreement with Our Watch from 23 June 2022, which marked a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to prevention. Through this unique partnership, a dedicated Our Watch senior adviser position is based in Tasmania, providing expert advice to the Department of Premier and Cabinet on family and sexual violence policy, as well as women's policy.

The 2025-26 work plan includes activities that contribute to the ongoing implementation of Survivors at the Centre, actions and informs priorities related to the Our Watch partnership, and the government continues to work in partnership with Our Watch to deliver on the commitments under Tasmania's Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan, which includes primary prevention across key initiatives. This collaboration is central to progressing current activities such as workplace equity, respectful relationship education, and community-based prevention. Through this sustained partnership, we're not only addressing immediate priorities but also laying the foundation for lasting changes to stop violence before it starts.

Key initiatives funded through the Action Plan are: Respectful relationships and consent education - early intervention program delivered in Tasmanian schools by the Department for Education, Children and Young People; the Men's Behavioural Change program; Men Engaging New Strategies program for men who have hurt or abused their partners or ex-partners and are ready to take responsibility, and that's delivered by Relationships Australia;

PUBLIC

perpetrator programs operated through referral from magistrates as a condition of a family violence order; and mandated behavioural change programs delivered through community corrections as well.

That's some information on some programs that we're dealing with.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. I want to ask you, with regard to the Arch Centres, do they come solely under police or are they partly under your area as well?

Ms HOWLETT - The funding is provided through community services.

CHAIR - I wasn't sure whether you were able to answer any questions with regard to the centres or if that's something we need to ask police when we have them tomorrow.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, that's more a question for tomorrow for police.

CHAIR - No, that's fine.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, can I please table a copy of Our Watch's latest draft snapshot on primary prevention report?

CHAIR - Yes, thank you. Appreciate it.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. Yes, please add to my comments.

Ms HURWORTH - Further to the minister, this is a snapshot of primary prevention in Tasmania done by Our Watch. It's the first snapshot of its kind in Australia and it provides a third-party analysis of primary prevention activities here.

CHAIR - I don't believe the member has mentioned the third family and sexual violence action plan?

Ms WEBB - Not yet, but you can go ahead.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, Tasmania's third family and sexual violence action plan, Survivors at the Centre, could you give us an update as to where it's at.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, absolutely, and it's a really important question. Thank you, honourable member. Our vision is that all Tasmanians are safe, equal and respected, and our homes, families and communities are free from all forms of family and sexual violence. Tasmania's third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027: Survivors at the Centre was informed by extensive consultation and reaffirms the government's commitment to eliminating family and sexual violence in the Tasmanian community.

Survivors at the Centre builds on what we know works and includes actions to refine and target our efforts towards preventing and responding to family and sexual violence, while putting the voices of victim-survivors at the centre of our approach. Our government has committed more than \$150 million over the five years of Survivors at the Centre to implement 38 actions under four key principles: partnership and transformation; capacity building;

prevention and early intervention; voice and diversity, and we're on target to achieve each action by 2027, with 29 completed actions, including continuing actions, as of 30 June 2025.

Some of the actions under Survivors at the Centre are establishing a multidisciplinary centre which is our Arch Centres in the north and south, to provide survivor-centred, integrated responses, now expanding to include the north-west in early 2026. Establishing the Tasmania's Family and Sexual Violence Alliance as a peak body for the sector to improve coordination of services and support policy development. Establishing Tasmania's first Victim-Survivor Advisory Council to provide an ongoing voice to government. Develop and trial the Tasmanian Risk Assessment Tool, increasing core funding to Tasmania's specialist family and sexual services.

We know that addressing the prevalence of family and sexual violence needs a long-term approach. In the short to medium term, reporting rates increase as responses and support to victim-survivors are trusted and our understanding increases of what constitutes violence. Chair, just as I correct myself, \$140 million, not \$150 million, apologies.

CHAIR - No, that's fine. The Victim-Survivor Advisory Council, how many members are planned or are on that council? Could you advise?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I'll get that information for you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Can I ask a follow-up question on that plan, or are you still going, Chair?

CHAIR - I'm still including, but you can answer a follow-up, if you'd like. A question to follow-up.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. There are currently eight members. There are seven members in the south and one member from the north-west. The range of members is estimated to span from 20 to 70 years of age and members are drawn from diverse communities and priority groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, people from LGBTQIA+ communities and people living in regional, rural and remote locations.

CHAIR - I'm assuming eight is not the maximum number.

Ms HOWLETT - No, 12 is the maximum number.

CHAIR - Twelve? So we have seven from the south, one from the north-west.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right. That is the current make up.

CHAIR - So we're seeking four more members?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, that's right.

CHAIR - I'm assuming that we'll be looking to north-west and north for the remaining members?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - That's correct.

CHAIR - How do you actually seek members? Can you advise? It's interesting that you've got seven from the south, one from the north-west, and none from the north. How do you go about seeking members to go on the committee? And deciding who is actually going to be part of it.

Ms HOWLETT - I haven't been part of this process of recruitment before, so I know Courtney would like to add to that. Thanks.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister, I think it's really important to be clear that this sort of advisory group is not like your standard industry advisory group, for example. We're drawing on the experience of individuals, which is often the worst experience of their life and so the way that those individuals are recruited is highly specialised.

CHAIR - I'm sure they're state-wide though.

Ms HURWORTH - It is state-wide.

CHAIR - That there are people state-wide who have these issues.

Ms HURWORTH - It is state-wide. Absolutely. There is, however, a process of assessment that's undertaken by qualified specialists and we've had our major services engage in our process for this Victim-Survivor Advisory Council. So it doesn't just look at someone's willingness; it looks at their readiness and whether participating in the council would be the right thing for that person at this point in time.

Obviously, as you would all appreciate, participating in government advisory groups can be immensely frustrating for people who want to see change and see it quickly, and so there is a process that we go through. Whilst it may look uneven, partly that's because there is this additional readiness assessment that goes over the top to make sure that the individuals who are engaged are protected and that the process is trauma-informed. But for the next stage we will be advertising. We advertise openly and through our services for applications from anyone and then there is an assessment process.

CHAIR - Who would the qualified specialists be?

Ms HURWORTH - For this particular group, we've used Engender Equality. We also used a specialist consultant who specialises in trauma-informed approaches to the construction of these sorts of groups, and we've worked heavily with Victoria, who's on their fifth round of their Victim-Survivor Advisory Council. We've learned a lot from their process.

CHAIR - How many people are actually on this group that are assessing who should be on the council?

Ms HURWORTH - The last process had a specialist service, a member from DPAC and another community member. I think it was three. But it's multi-phased. There's a self-assessment that people do. That's then looked at. There might be an interview or a conversation. There's then follow-up interviews and conversations depending on what the

outcome of that process is for the specific individual. It might look completely different for every individual who applies depending on what they need and what their readiness is.

CHAIR - How many times would they meet per year? I notice they're paid for their time and expertise.

Ms HURWORTH - Yes, they have three meetings a year formally scheduled, but it's actually up to the group how many times. Their terms of reference, the way they operate, is entirely driven by the group, and it's facilitated by a specialist facilitator. We're changing facilitators at the moment because our specialist facilitator just got a job doing this for the federal government. So, they have three formal meetings a year, but it's determined by the group how much they want to meet and how engaged they want to be.

CHAIR - I'm interested by the way of the terminology on the side here. 'Membership: the Victim-Survivor Advisory Council include between eight to 12 members who live in Tasmania and have lived experience of family and/or sexual violence.' However, when it goes down further, it says, 'Members of the advisory council will be paid for their time and expertise'. I think the word 'expertise' when -

Ms HOWLETT - I don't know about that word.

CHAIR - I am really not clear on that word, 'they'll be paid for their time and expertise', when these are people who have lived experience of family and/or sexual violence. I think the wording is really inappropriate here and it should be looked at. I'm concerned about the way it's written.

Ms HOWLETT - I take your point very seriously.

Ms WEBB - Well, they have lived experience and their expertise lies in the lived experience in the service system.

CHAIR - But it's the way it's written, that they're paid because of their time and their 'expertise'.

Ms WEBB - That's right, their expertise as lived experience people in the service system.

CHAIR - Yes, but I think it's the wording.

Ms WEBB - It's correct.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, that term is consistent with how -

CHAIR - I know, I understand, but it sounds as though they're paid according -

Ms HOWLETT - That is a term that the federal government uses.

CHAIR - It doesn't sound appropriate, particularly when the word 'paid' is in front of it.

Ms HOWLETT - I take your point.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - That's not the view of the committee.

Ms HOWLETT - I take your point.

CHAIR - No, it's my view.

Ms WEBB - Yes.

CHAIR - That's right. Thank you. Mr Hiscutt?

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. I have two questions. There was a funding announcement before the election, if I remember correctly, for the Warrawee Women's Shelter in Ulverstone. I'm not sure where I would find that in the Budget, if it is in there. If you could elaborate, please?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. That is an item that is listed under Homes Tasmania.

Mr HISCUTT - I'll find it there, thank you. Just on a technical nature in the Budget, the line item for the Budget, which is on page 216 of Budget paper 2, volume 1. It has the forward Estimates at the exact same dollar value three years running, 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29. I find that odd to see in a budget that they're the exact same value year on year. It's very rare that you would see that. Can I get an explanation of why there's no, I guess, inflation allowance or anything like that? Happy to take that on notice.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and that's a very valid point. As I said before, I will continue to lobby the federal government to acquire more funding. This is a really serious issue and we need a nationwide approach and the approach needs to be above politics, which we all know the seriousness of this.

Mr HISCUTT - This is the appropriation from state government, these numbers, so that's worked out by our Treasury.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

Mr HISCUTT - I wanted to know why there's no allowance for -

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Courtney.

Ms HURWORTH - If the minister's comfortable, we'll look a little bit more into it. The funding figures are static over the forwards, except there is indexation that's usually added to it.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, that's what I'm -

Ms HURWORTH - So we will check that.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you.

Ms HURWORTH - Our expectation is that indexation will increase that amount over the forward Estimates.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - Quite frankly, it's good there's just numbers there in the out years. Most of the budget doesn't have them, so at least you didn't try to fudge it by pretending they weren't going to be funding something.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, if you would confirm and take that on notice and get back, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Can I move on?

CHAIR - Ms Webb. Yes.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - I don't think we need to take that on notice, honourable member.

Mr HISCUTT - Sorry. So will this be -

Ms HOWLETT - It is indexed.

Mr HISCUTT - Well, it's not in this document, which is what we're approving.

Ms HOWLETT - We'll provide some further information to you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I ask you about the Closing the Gap area that's within your responsibilities. Under the state plan for Closing the Gap 2025-2028, action No. 49 requires you to work with the Attorney-General to ensure the Family Violence Prevention Legal Service is funded through the National Access to Justice Partnership, which is meant to be under way by the end of the 2025-26 year. Can you provide us with an update on progress in meeting that Closing the Gap priority and also indicate where we see reporting of progress on that priority that's your responsibility?

Ms HOWLETT - One moment. Thank you, honourable member. The Tasmanian government continues to reaffirm its commitment to ending violence against women and children. Our efforts are guided by the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children in 2022-2032, and it's a shared framework to drive change and create safer futures. The 2024 Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches provided critical insight into what works to prevent gender-based violence, guiding both immediate and long-term actions in Tasmania across Australia.

Governments are progressively responding to the review's recommendation with coordination and accountability overseen through the Women's and Women's Safety Ministerial Council. A new component of the federation funding agreement on the family domestic and sexual violence responses commenced on July 1 2025, which will provide matched Commonwealth and state funding at \$15.7 million over five years until June 2030.

The Commonwealth and states and territories are currently discussing an extension from 1 July 26 to the 500 worker initiative under the Federation Funding Agreement, and the Commonwealth is also providing additional national funding to further support initiative perpetrator response to target high-risk perpetrators and young people using or at risk of

violence, and Tasmania has applied for funding under this program and is awaiting the application outcomes expected in November 2025.

The Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan is also nearing completion as well, following extensive consultation. This plan seeks to deliver a 10-year strategy to strengthen the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families led by their voices, wisdom and lived experiences as well.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, minister. That does get closer to my question because I wasn't asking about the national plan, but thank you for the information on it anyway. I was talking about the Closing the Gap program, which is a national program to improve the discrepancy between outcomes for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Australians and other Australians.

We have a Closing the Gap plan here in Tasmania for our state that has a timeframe of 2025 to 2028, and there are actions in that plan, the Closing the Gap Plan. Action No. 49 relates to your portfolio area. That's specifically the one I'm interested in an update on, what progress you're making towards that action from our state Closing the Gap plan. It's about family violence prevention legal services being funded through the National Access to Justice Partnership. It's meant to be under way by the end of this 2025-26 year. Can you give us an update on that and explain where you report against your Closing the Gap action responsibilities?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and I'll certainly be talking to the Attorney-General about that. I'll take that on notice.

CHAIR - Thank you. There's time for one last quick question. We can move to -

Ms WEBB - I probably don't have a quick one. I've got some with a little bit of complexity. So maybe it's not going to fit.

CHAIR - No. It probably won't, not if it's not a quick question, unless it can be taken on notice.

Ms WEBB - Yes. I'll just ask one other quick one. How about in terms of the Survivors at the Centre plan, the Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan? I noticed that we've got reporting on that. What is the frequency of reporting? I see there's a range of progress reports on the website. When is the next progress report due for that action plan?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. That's a six-monthly reporting cycle. Can I state, honourable member, please, any questions or any issues that you have and want to raise with me in relation to this portfolio, please do so. My door is open any time. Please don't wait for -

Ms WEBB - I appreciate that, minister. That's good to know.

CHAIR - Don't wait for Estimates.

Ms HOWLETT - Don't wait for Estimates.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - As I think you would know, and as you would know, I don't wait for Estimates to ask questions, but just try to use that opportunity when we have it here, too. Can I ask, though, in terms of those progress reports, was there a July 2025 report, like a media report for 2025?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I believe so.

Ms WEBB - I don't see it on the website.

Ms HOWLETT - I believe the timeframes were impacted by caretaker mode. Yes. It will be published imminently.

Ms WEBB - Then will there still be an end of year progress report as well that covers the second-half of the year?

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. In terms of our women's strategy -

CHAIR - Is this it the same question?

Ms WEBB - No. It's a different question, but it's really quick, and we've got three minutes left. So Equal Means Equal, Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27. We're well advanced into that now, and there is a section that talks about evaluation. My question is just briefly, can you talk about whether the evaluation framework for that strategy is in place and whether we're already collecting information and making progress on evaluating the plan?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. Equal Means Equal outlines a vision for Tasmania where women and girls have access to equal choices, opportunities and resources to participate in economic, social, political and community life.

I'm committed to delivering the right program supports and opportunities for women to be the best they can be and fulfill their ambitions, whatever their ambitions are, and through the strategy, we strive to embed gender equality in our culture, attitudes and practices recognising the diversity of Tasmanian women and girls. The 2022-23 state Budget allocated \$800,000 over four years; \$200,000 per year to support the implementation of Equal Means Equal.

In the last year, our key achievements have included supporting 15 organisations to host International Women's Day events across Tasmania. These events hear from inspiring capable women from a range of industries and backgrounds and provided valuable networking opportunities, and they are actually open today, and they close on 23 December.

Also completing trials of our gender impact assessment toolkit, and the toolkit provides Tasmanian government agencies with practical resources and examples to assess policies and programs for gender impact.

Ms WEBB - Just quickly, then, through to the evaluation part of that strategy. Is there an evaluation framework in place, and are we evaluating the strategy as we go?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - And that's the final question.

Ms WEBB - Yes.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Courtney. I know that you have some more information to provide.

Ms HURWORTH - The evaluation framework at a population level is embedded into the gender impact assessment toolkit. At a program level, related to the programs within the strategy, we assess those through our regular assessment processes, and we'll be looking to how we do that better into the next plan. At the moment, we've embedded the population level evaluation into the assessment toolkit.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. Chair, can I please table the following information that provides a breakdown of the average spend for the Eat Local, Stay Local programs as requested by the honourable Luke Edmunds earlier today.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Thank you very much for your time on this output line.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

CHAIR - If we could cease the broadcast while we change over the table. Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 3.16 p.m. to 3.21 p.m.

DIVISION 8

**Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Minister for Racing**

Output group 1

Racing Regulations and Policy

5.1 Racing Regulation and Policy

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, and good to have you here. We'll be speaking about racing regulation and policy. If you would like to do a short overview before we ask you some questions.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. Thank you, Chair. To my right, I have Deirdre Wilson, Acting Chief Operations Officer at NRE; Anita Yan, Deputy Chief Operations Officer at NRE, and to my left, I have Sean Carroll, Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner. Thank you, Chair.

I'm pleased to be here today to talk about the racing industry, which generates more than \$208 million in economic activity for Tasmania and involves 6400 people across the state, directly or indirectly. The Tasmanian government is a proud supporter of Tasmania's racing community and the passionate Tasmanians who are part of it.

PUBLIC

We have delivered a strong plan for the biggest reform to the racing industry in decades, following the passage of the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2024, and the Racing Regulation and Integrity (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2024 in late 2024. The changes in legislation are reflective in the make-up of the table at today's hearing. We have continued to strengthen racing through the state's first racing integrity commissioner, Mr Sean Carroll, and the Racing Integrity Committee, chaired by international legal practitioner, Ms Regina Weiss, now in place.

We have ensured oversight of this important industry. It should be noted that some questions which have previously been relevant to Budget Estimates are now more appropriate at GBE scrutiny next week. This reflects the abolishing of the Office of Racing Integrity with Tasracing through the Tasracing Integrity Unit responsible for many of these functions.

Chair, as you would be aware, the government introduced the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 on 6 November 2025. The draft bill will see the phasing out of greyhound racing in Tasmania through a staged and considered approach, with a code to end in June 2029. This timing coincides with the end of the current Tasracing funding deed. The interim Budget includes the initial provision of \$500,000 to support implementation of this important legislation. The independent Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner, Mr Sean Carroll, is developing a comprehensive plan for the transition, and this will resource his work.

Under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*, the commissioner has extensive powers to set integrity and animal welfare standards and comprehensive investigation functions across all three codes of racing in Tasmania, harness, thoroughbred and greyhound. The commissioner has hit the ground running with the immediate establishment of a complaints management framework and commencement of an assessment of code of practice for racehorse welfare at my request. Animal welfare remains paramount, and I'm pleased to say that we've finalised the appointment of the Integrity and Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to support the commissioner. That includes the RSPCA and veterinary representatives.

Work has started on a new racing industry funding deed to ensure the financial sustainability of the Tasmanian racing industry. This is especially important to provide certainty to the industry following the government's announcement of the phase out of greyhound racing. I'm working closely with the Treasurer as shareholder ministers in Tasracing to see a new deed finalised, and that work is under way.

The government continues to honour the racing industry's 20-year funding deed, which expires on 30 June 2029. This is reflected in the interim Budget across the forward Estimates. The government shares a strong interest in the racing industry, the need for certainty, and we're getting on with the job.

Before I take any questions, I'd like to acknowledge the passing of Phillip Young last week. Phillip was known as 'Bruiser', and he was a long serving committee member and life member of the Tasmanian Trotting Club. I give my deepest condolences to his family, loved ones, and the HRC committee. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. For first question we go to Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - I echo your sentiments about Mr Young.

PUBLIC

Minister, I want to ask some process questions, if I may, particularly around your comments regarding the phase out of greyhound racing announced by the government. What was the process in developing that policy announcement?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much, honourable member. There certainly was a process, and for the avoidance of any doubt, the Premier and I discussed the decision prior to the announcement, and it was endorsed by Cabinet. I fully support the decision, and we have announced our policy on greyhound racing. The bill was tabled in the House.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. So where is the genesis of it? Where did the idea, the policy, come from?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, we announced our policy on greyhound racing, and the policy was developed by NRE, the bill was developed by NRE, and I'll allow Deidre to speak to the bill.

MS WILSON - Yes. I'd be quite happy to talk to this matter. Thank you, minister. In drafting the bill, we actively engaged with the commissioner and members of parliament to - sorry, I'll just go back a bit.

What we did was we were asked to develop a bill to implement the policy of the government of the day. In doing that, we considered the statements that were made and the intent. We consulted and took advice from the commissioner, who is a leading expert and who has a great understanding of the greyhound racing industry. We also sought advice from the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Department of Premier and Cabinet look after the *Dog Control Act*. We also took advice from our internal stakeholders who are quite knowledgeable, and we spoke to Biosecurity Tasmania who are responsible for the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.

We also briefed with the commissioner of the transition working group and provided a briefing to greyhound racing participants. As noted, it was important to us that we understood the full - we took a staged approach to development to ensure that we had a bill that was appropriate for presentation to the parliament.

Ms HOWLETT - Commissioner, would you like to add anything to Deirdre's comments?

Mr CARROLL - The only thing I would say is that upon the announcement being made, there's been extensive work, and I've appeared before the parliamentary committee previously to discuss my involvement since the announcement was made, firstly in working with NRE to what the draft bill may look like, but also the development of the working group and the terms of reference of the working group that have been placed on my website.

Mr EDMUNDS - It was mentioned there was engagement with members of parliament. Which members of parliament were engaged?

MS WILSON - No, I should say that the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner has actively sought to engage with members of parliament and greyhound racing participants and the general community to inform the transition planning. When I was thinking about this, I was thinking about the role the commissioner had in looking to actively engage with members of

PUBLIC

parliament, the greyhound racing participants and the general community to inform the transition planning.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay. What consultation occurred with participants prior to the policy announcement?

Ms HOWLETT - Prior to the policy announcement? Look, the policy announcement on greyhound racing, we're getting on with the job. That's what we're doing. We've tabled the bill in parliament, and I believe the commissioner has sought to engage consultation on the bill. There were some comments from industry that they would not participate or engage in any conversations until the bill was tabled, and the bill is now tabled.

Commissioner, would you like to add anything?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. If I can just jump around a bit here, the parliamentary committee that's been established, what is the purpose of that committee?

Ms HOWLETT - The purpose of that committee is to assist in the transition of the phase-out of greyhound racing by 2029. That's a pretty important committee.

Mr CARROLL - If I can assist, certainly in the discussions that I had with the minister and the Premier after being advised of the planned phase-out and the announcement, and being invited or asked to develop the transition plan, the idea of the parliamentary committee, I feel as though that's a very important process in the transition phase, given the fact that I've been asked to do this very important job.

There needs to be a level of accountability and transparency as far as the development of that plan and the working group itself is held to account. Accounting for the parliamentary committee is the ideal way to ensure there's accountability and transparency from my office that not only the parliament, but the Tasmanian community can feel comfortable that the transition plan's developed in a clear pathway that has the involvement over the next three-and-a-half years with all involved.

Mr EDMUNDS - Did you have a question?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, I do have a question. My concern is at what point in time and who was involved with the decision to go from supporting the greyhound industry to phasing it out? That's before your time, I believe it was.

How was that decision made, and who was involved in that decision? The greyhound industry, from my understanding, received correspondence saying that they had full support of the Premier, and then suddenly there's a policy announcement saying that it's now going to be phased out. That's the information I need.

It's not the writing of the draft bill. It's not the involvement of the new group looking at the transition. It's what occurred, what conversations happened. You must have been involved with that, minister, with your hat on with the racing fraternity. That's what I want to know.

How did that transition come about? Was there any conversation with the codes of that transition with the greyhound code at that time? Up until this stage, they'd received a letter

from the Premier saying they had the full support of the government. The next thing they know is that is being transitioned.

If you could provide a bit more information there, that would be helpful.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. The Premier made the decision, and he stated that many times in the House and outside the House. The Premier made the decision, and the decision was discussed with me prior to the announcement. It was endorsed by Cabinet, and the decision was fully supported.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, okay. Following on from that, in your opening remarks, you made the comment about the government is fully supportive of the racing industry. Scenario 2: in three months' time, the harness racing group could get the same sort of thing. We're now getting out of harness racing, and we're going to bring in another group to have a look at the transition because there's no confidence now in the codes that that might not occur because it's already happened to one-third of the racing industry.

The angst that I'm receiving from my office, from the people who weren't involved with that decision-making and are now feeling the force of this transitioning out - don't get me wrong. I think the process that you're putting in place is the right one. This is the point that people who've approached me have difficulty with.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I understand that. May I just make a comment that the government is fully supportive of the other two equine codes, and we've made that incredibly clear. We're investing in the north-west track for a training facility up there for the harness code as well. Commissioner, I know you said you wanted to speak to that comment.

Mr CARROLL - Yes. If I can assist. Through you, minister. The social licence that racing has shouldn't be taken for granted at any stage, whether that be through any of the three racing codes. What I would say through my office is that we're continually monitoring the social licence that racing has within the community.

We'll continue to work through parliament, through the participants, through the public, and through the animal welfare groups to make sure - and I've said this and been on public record before - even as far as greyhounds are concerned that we still strive to maintain the highest level of animal welfare and participant welfare until the phase-out occurs.

That shouldn't mean we should take our eyes off the other two racing codes. Quite clearly, the social licence that is enjoyed by those two racing codes needs to be maintained at a higher level to ensure they continue. That's not to say that the social licence will be taken away in any period in the short term. Through our office and through the reforms that've been introduced, we're working with the codes, the participants, and the public to make sure that those two codes still maintain their social licence they enjoy to continue.

CHAIR - Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. I've got a few, but we'll do a couple and share it round. Regarding the comment of the release of the bill and discussions with the greyhound racing, I know the greyhound racing industry, as I understand it, said they wouldn't engage with the

PUBLIC

working group until it was tabled. Did they explicitly say they would not engage with negotiations with the bill until it was tabled?

Ms HOWLETT - That is my understanding, yes.

Mr CARROLL - Perhaps I can assist. Through you, minister. Yes, I had several discussions with numerous participants, as you can imagine, and whilst they were quite cordial in the way they took place, they didn't want to take place or have conversations as far as the development of the working group or the bill was concerned given the fact that it was essentially 'signing their death warrant', to use some of the terminology that was given to me.

Mr HISCUTT - The working group and the bill?

Mr CARROLL - Yes.

Mr HISCUTT - Okay. I was going to say, 'Were they consulted?' That answers that question. One question in the act that I wanted to ask, and it may come up in legislation, but does the act allow for trade of greyhounds to the mainland if it were to be passed through parliament?

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. The bill will not stop greyhounds being sold on the mainland.

Mr HISCUTT - From Tasmania to the mainland?

Ms WILSON - From Tasmania to the mainland. In the transition period before 2029, which is stage 1, people can bring greyhounds into Tasmania. It's just that there are some conditions upon entry through Tasracing which are outlined in the bill.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. If that's the answer to that, I'll debate that in the bill when it's tabled. But if that is the intent of the bill, does that not diminish the argument that this is based on animal welfare if we're still allowing those animals to race in other jurisdictions?

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. I took it for you to say, 'Can you move a greyhound across the borders?' To clarify, from 2029, you will not be able to breed a greyhound in Tasmania which is for racing.

Mr HISCUTT - My clarification on my question: if I currently own a greyhound, and in 2027 I wanted to sell it to someone who's going to race greyhounds on the mainland, would I be able to do that? Again, back to my substantive question then, does that not diminish the argument that this bill is there for animal welfare, because those greyhounds could still be engaged in greyhound races throughout the rest of Australia? What would your response to that be?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, you can sell. Thank you, commissioner.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister. There's no prohibition on greyhounds moving interstate to race up until 2029. There's no prohibition on the breeding of greyhounds, both within - sorry, interstate, up until 2029, for racing purposes.

PUBLIC

Mr HISCUTT - But again, to the intent of the policy -yes, no, that's all right, I'm happy to -

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, I think that there are two stages to this bill. That's those stages around the orderly transition of an existing industry. It's actually important that you undertake an orderly transition for animal welfare purposes. If you don't allow for an orderly transition, there is a risk that you may see animals are euthanised, rather than allowing for that orderly transition, which is what is proposed through the two stages in the bill. So it still has an animal welfare focus, but it's around that orderly transition.

Mr HISCUTT - I appreciate the response, but yes, fair enough. I have to throw and come back if someone else would -

CHAIR - I have a follow-up on greyhounds. Just some clarification. I'm finding it a little confusing. I have had people in the community come to me who are actually breeding greyhounds, or greyhound racers. On 22 May this year, the ABC reported a report commissioned by organisations opposed to greyhound racing that found state-owned Tasracing funds greyhound racing at more than double the rate of other states and territories. However, it has been sent to me as well Tasracing responds to the financing of greyhound racing, and it says Tasracing annually provides \$7.5 million to the Greyhound Code, which translates into a \$54 million economic benefit for the state based on recently published independent research.

I'm a little confused. I'm getting a report saying that we give them more, and then I'm getting commentary here that's from Tasracing, which was also reported on the ABC at the same time, saying the industry translates a \$54 million economic benefit. Can I have some clarification there?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. I think that is a question for Tasracing and in GBE scrutiny next week.

CHAIR - I thought it was to do with greyhounds. I thought you might have had a comment. No comment?

Ms HOWLETT - No, as I said, I believe that's a matter for GBE scrutiny.

CHAIR - Okay. I thought it was worth a try.

Ms HOWLETT - Apologies.

CHAIR - That's all right.

Mr GAFFNEY - A question there going back to - do you ever hear about the euthanise and welfare. So is a dog or any animal that's euthanised, is that supposed to be because of the - is that not allowed to happen because of the welfare of the animal? I mean, we've all taken our animals to the vet and unfortunately it had to be euthanised because of the welfare of the animal, because they were in pain or they were suffering.

I imagine horses, whether they be harness or gallopers, whether they are fit or injured or old or there's no use for them, are also euthanised. I'm wondering that when we use the word 'euthanise' and when we use the word 'welfare' that we have to be careful with assuming that

every animal that is euthanised is not being looked after because otherwise a lot of vets would be out of a job.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I think racing animals, whether they be equine or greyhounds, have very high level of scrutiny on them and the decision to euthanise a horse or a greyhound on course is made with animal welfare as its highest priority. The decisions are undertaken by a suitably qualified veterinarian on course with the welfare of the animal being paramount.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister. Perhaps if I can assist and extend on the answer of Ms Wilson that the issue of animal welfare is not necessarily purely focused on the euthanasia of - in the instance of the greyhound.

I mentioned this at the parliamentary committee last week, is that the focus of initial thoughts and that I've taken to the working group regarding animal welfare of greyhounds over the next three-and-a-half years is how do we rehome the number of greyhounds so these greyhounds have a fulfilled life and are not just euthanised because we have excess greyhounds compared to how many places we can rehome these greyhounds.

So as was spoken about before, the transition of actually working towards 30 June 2029, is to make sure once that date hits, we have a manageable number of greyhounds that we can rehome back into the community or other locations. I think I mentioned last week we're exploring even interstate options, because we wouldn't be able to rehome 1036 greyhounds that we currently have come 30 June 2029. There has to be a staggered approach to make sure that we have maintained good animal welfare standards.

Mr GAFFNEY - Another question that arose when you mentioned that a pup that is raised here, born here before 2029, goes to the mainland, there's an intent that it can't race. There may be an intent that it can't race. What hold would you have over any pup that was born here before they were transferred over? Has that just become part of the - because once you sell it to somebody on the mainland, how can you stop that group from racing the dog? I suppose, I'm interested to see how legally you can do that. Through you, minister, sorry.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. Commissioner, would you like to?

Mr CARROLL - All greyhounds have to be registered, and in certain circumstances registered for whelping as well, as far as greyhounds are concerned. The intention of the legislation is that there will be a prohibition for breeding for racing purposes and that will essentially then be an offence under the legislation if a person breeds with the intention of that greyhound being sold for racing purposes in another state.

Mr GAFFNEY - Fine. How does that work? So if I'm here and I breed, and I say sell it to somebody on the mainland and say but you can't race this, if it gets to you on the mainland, what stops you from racing it? Is it an Australia-wide registration that stops that, or how does that work?

Mr CARROLL - No. Through you, minister. The sale of the greyhound, and once again I won't go into the investigation that may take place as far as someone selling a greyhound to the mainland, but there would, for all intents and purposes, if that was the case and it was reported to the authorities here in Tasmania, be an investigation that was undertaken as to the reasons as to those greyhounds being bred in the first place and where that greyhound was

being sold. Was it being sold to someone who was an owner or a trainer in another state? Then, obviously, that person would then be liable for charges under the actual legislation itself.

The reality is, to answer your question shortly, yes, they could sell it to anyone. But they open themselves up to an investigation and potential charges should they sell it to someone that, as far as being sold for racing purposes.

Mr GAFFNEY - My last question through to you, minister, is that I've had representations from the greyhound fraternity saying that 0.17 is the percentage of dogs that are injured or hurt over the number of races they have, Australia-wide, and that's a welfare issue.

I suppose what they're surprised with is that, from their point of view, they've had generations looking after their dogs very well and the dog has been part of the family, and I've had fifth generations come in saying, 'This is what we do. This is our social life. This is what we do.' I think they're in shock that it's been changed so quickly, virtually overnight, from being reassured and now are in the position where their social situation and what they've done for many generations is now being taken away on the premise that it is a welfare issue. They would say there are more animals out there, the statistic is very minimal of the greyhound that has been hurt.

Mr HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and I don't have the Australian stats in front of me of injuries and euthanised greyhounds. I expect that Tasracing will have those stats next week. As members of the committee here are all aware, I have a long family history and close personal connection with the greyhound code, and I understand how disappointing it is for many in the greyhound code. I want to put on record that the impact, and obviously the participants in the industry, are paramount to me, and making sure that their voices are heard during this transitional period.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Minister, in your opening statement you did talk about the overall economic benefit, and I assume you were quoting the IER report. Was any economic analysis done on the impact of this decision to ban greyhound racing prior to it being made?

Ms HOWLETT - Not to my knowledge.

Mr EDMUNDS - Any reason why that wasn't the case? Was it the short timeframe around the decision?

Ms HOWLETT - It was a decision that was made by the Premier, and the policy was announced. I know that you spoke earlier about the parliamentary committee, and it's an oversight committee that the terms of reference - I'm sure you're aware of the committee. I want to put on record that that committee is extremely important in the transition of phase out.

Mr EDMUNDS - In the period after the decision - and you said there was no economic analysis done - when it was taken to Cabinet for the decision; was Cabinet provided with any economic impact statements prior to approving the announcement?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - As you're well aware, we don't discuss any conversations about Cabinet decisions or conversations.

Mr EDMUNDS - So Cabinet didn't have any economic information?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not discussing any conversations of what may or may not have occurred in the Cabinet room.

Mr EDMUNDS - Just because the word 'cabinet' is in the question doesn't mean - I'm not asking to see the information. I'm just asking, was any information provided?

Ms HOWLETT - Cabinet and PLP discussions are highly confidential, and I'm sure you can appreciate that, like it is in your caucus.

Mr EDMUNDS - I would be happy to disclose if I was provided with information or not - not necessarily what the information was.

Ms HOWLETT - I've answered the question.

Mr EDMUNDS - So in this committee, I'm unable to confirm whether Cabinet considered any of the economic impact before it took this decision?

Ms HOWLETT - I've answered your question earlier.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay. To that point, perhaps - and I note the comments from particularly the Premier and others involved in this process about social licence - is the government considering waiving the point of consumption tax money that's going to come in from Tasmania's betting on mainland greyhound racing into the future?

Ms HOWLETT - No.

Mr EDMUNDS - So the government will still continue to accept that revenue.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, that's right.

Mr EDMUNDS - From betting on a sport that the government and Premier claim has no social licence?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, that's right.

Mr EDMUNDS - That's interesting. The future legislative process - I'm interested in asking - what work is the committee doing to inform that process, particularly now that we already have a bill introduced?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, and I know the commissioner will have some information providing the oversight of the group.

Mr CARROLL - Can I just clarify, are you talking about the working group or the committee?

PUBLIC

Mr EDMUNDS - The committee. Sorry, the parliamentary committee.

Ms HOWLETT - No, the parliamentary committee reports to - yes.

Mr CARROLL - That'd be a question, what work the parliamentary committee's going to do for them?

Mr EDMUNDS - I guess it's probably more a question for the minister, because this is a committee set up by agreement of the government.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not part of that parliamentary committee, Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - What role do you see the committee playing?

Ms HOWLETT - Well, that's -

CHAIR - The one described in the resolution.

Ms HOWLETT - As I said before, the terms of reference of that group are to assist in the transition and the phase-out of greyhound racing by 2029.

Mr CARROLL - I would think, and I would hope, that there would be a strong level of, as I said before, accountability and transparency for what my office is doing. So that provides a level of confidence, not only to the parliament but also to the public and the greyhound participants, as that we're taking into account all the issues that are being raised through my office.

I once again take this opportunity, as I have - I've written to all of you in parliament, that should you become aware or have any concern with what's happening with the greyhound transition, that you can contact my office direct to raise those concerns so we can address those - and even if indirectly, through any members of the greyhound community that are contacting your office who may have some reluctance to contact my office because of the decisions being made, then we'll take on board those communications that come through your various offices so we can take into account in developing the transition phase - our plan.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, can I please table the terms of reference of the joint committee?

CHAIR - Yes, of course.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr EDMUNDS - Just on that, because that's basically what I was asking you, so you see the role of that committee around accountability and transparency. If the point of the parliamentary committee, as it was established through negotiations between the government and the crossbench, I understand, was to provide the accountability and transparency, was that committee provided with a draft bill before it was released?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - That committee was set up through the House of parliament. I'm not sure when the committee was provided with a copy of the bill. I can find that out.

Mr EDMUNDS - But the committee didn't inform the bill?

Ms HOWLETT - No.

Mr HISCUTT - If I can follow up to that.

Mr EDMUNDS - Please.

Mr HISCUTT - One of the requirements that you've just tabled is that it is to - including matters of the legislative requirements for the transition. So wouldn't the committee then be informing the legislative requirements of the transition? We've now already had the legislative requirements tabled, so the committee can't have an opportunity to inform them. Can I get a response to that.

Ms HOWLETT - I believe the committee can have hearings, et cetera. I sat in front of the committee last week, as I believe you did.

Mr HISCUTT - That's not informing this legislation.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Mr CARROLL - I don't think it's informing. It's informing. No.

A member - Overseeing is the word.

Mr CARROLL - Yes.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, overseeing.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. Another one.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. This may have been touched on before, and I'm not sure if you're able to answer, but greyhounds obviously make a significant contribution to Tasracing. Do you know what the total percentage of that that code produces?

Ms HOWLETT - The total percentage and breakdown would be something that - we would have all that information for you next week at GBE scrutiny.

Mr HISCUTT - I know. Do you have an understanding if Tasracing will remain viable if that's taken away?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a question for scrutiny as well.

Mr HISCUTT - Another question. Yes, thank you. Being a funding question. Obviously, there's an expectation that at the end of 2029 the funding completes the previous - sorry, I can't

think of the words - but the agreement concluded in 2029. Is there any expectation that the government will fund the two other codes to that agreement after that date, or have they made a decision on that now?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, Treasury has been working on the funding deed for quite some time now to ensure the financial sustainability of the Tasmanian racing industry. That's something they've been working on for some time and will continue to work on. It's especially important to provide certainty to the industry following the government's announcement of the phase-out of greyhound racing by June 2029. And as you mentioned, this coincides with the expiration of the current funding deed, but Treasury is currently working on that funding deed for the two equine codes.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you for the answers.

CHAIR - I have a bit of a follow-up on the funding. I realise Tasracing and they had a loss last year, but last year we did mention Racing Victoria. The fact that many in the racing industry feel that the way that Racing Victoria funds their thoroughbred clubs is actually preferable. You did mention last year, minister, that you hadn't actually looked at the Victorian model, but that you would look at it. Have you looked at the Victorian model to see if it's, perhaps, better than the Tasmanian model and something worth considering?

Ms HOWLETT - We haven't yet looked at that, but we will certainly be doing an overall review of what works well and what's not working well. I know the commissioner would like to speak to me.

CHAIR - People in the industry, at Estimates last year did seem to feel that Racing Victoria, their funding model was superior.

Mr CARROLL - If I can assist.

CHAIR - Absolutely.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister, what I would say, and it probably goes to answer the previous question as well, is that I am aware, and it may be a question for the GBE conversation next week -

CHAIR - Well, we unfortunately don't have next week.

Mr CARROLL - Tasracing is intending on doing a feasibility study to the impact of the withdrawal of greyhound racing on the racing industry as a whole, and looking at the financial modelling moving forward. That will look at the operations of clubs as a whole and the impact that the withdrawal of greyhounds has on the defunding that will then, essentially, report into the minister and me so we can look at the future direction of the race industry. That would be remiss of us to guess what that would look like at the moment and actually make informed decisions once that feasibility study has been conducted.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr HISCUTT - I've got a separate question.

PUBLIC

Mr GAFFNEY - I just want to follow up.

CHAIR - So, Mr Hiscutt, follow up?

Mr HISCUTT - No. It's a separate - is yours a follow up?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. I'm pleased to hear that because my understanding - I don't go to races very much - is that the greyhounds and the harness sometimes work together, have meets where the dogs will race and the harness will race. They still have those combined meets?

Ms HOWLETT - Not frequently.

Mr GAFFNEY - They don't.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister, there are the odd meeting that has a dual code meeting as far as that, but they're by exception, not by rule.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - One or two meets per year. One would have been King Island race meet, which - that was more - that was equine. That was thoroughbred, and harness is a dual code. I think there may have been one meet.

Mr GAFFNEY - They used to have it at Devonport when they used to have the greyhound track and harness. They used to have that. It was quite popular because they had - that was a number of years ago.

CHAIR - Mr Hiscutt.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. Obviously, the phasing out of greyhound racing has an effect on the racing industry, but also the broader community around that - people who sell supplies to the racing industry. Has there been any modelling done on what that effect will be, and also with the greyhound phase out, levels of compensation that may be required for these people.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister, if I can answer the question. The transitional working group will look at all aspects of the phase-out period. We've certainly had some preliminary discussions with various groups that this may impact, and we'll take that to account. We'll work with Tasracing on what their feasibility study looks like and what areas that covers off. Once again, I think they've been in the preliminary stages of working on terms of reference of what that feasibility study looks like, but it's certainly something that we'll take into consideration.

Mr HISCUTT - So we don't currently know what the effect will be on the community at the point of announcement of the policy?

Mr CARROLL - I can't point on the impact of that, but what I can say is that certainly, the discussions that I had with the minister and the Premier were that that was something that needed to be taken into consideration over the period of the transition phase out.

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Mr HISCUTT - Thank you.

CHAIR - Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Does the government have any modelling on how many jobs will go when this transition goes through?

Ms HOWLETT - Not at this stage, but that will be part of the feasibility study that will take place.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay. A question about the deed: when are we likely to see movement on the deed?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, Treasury has been working on the funding deed for quite some time now, and obviously there were interruptions with election and caretaker mode, et cetera, but Treasury is certainly working on that deed.

Mr EDMUNDS - So that will be a deed that doesn't include greyhounds, or will only include greyhounds for a certain period of years?

Ms HOWLETT - The current deed includes greyhounds and is due to expire in 2029.

Mr EDMUNDS - So how will that be factored into a new deed?

Ms HOWLETT - The new deed that Treasury is working on will only include the two equine codes after 2029.

Mr EDMUNDS - What confidence can the other codes have based off the occurrences of the last, what, six months until that deed's in place?

Ms HOWLETT - The deed is currently in place until 2029. Treasury is working on a new deed, as I said, and the other equine codes. We've made it perfectly clear that we have full support for both equine codes. Part of this review that will occur will be looking at how we can enhance both codes, and we'll drill down to looking at breeding, et cetera, as well, and what we need to do in order to make those other two codes thrive.

Mr EDMUNDS - In your view, for future planning for those other codes, when would a deed need to be in place for them to make decisions with confidence about their future?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a very good question, and we know the importance of having a deed in place for the future of breeding in both codes, and I'd like to see the new funding deed as soon as practicable.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any more questions?

Mr GAFFNEY - The question might be, minister, that it looks as though neither Committee A nor B of the upper House have Tasracing as part of their GBE next week, therefore, it's downstairs. The question would be, would you be able to table the injury statistics from the Australian in that presentation so that it's going to be in the - so to ensure that the

PUBLIC

up-to-date figures on injuries with the greyhound fraternity is tabled downstairs in the GBE's racing next week?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm sure we can provide that information to this committee. I would need to make sure that it's available and the figures are correct, or I could table it in the GBE hearing.

Mr GAFFNEY - What I'm finding is I'm getting different groups with different statistics of injuries.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I understand that.

Mr GAFFNEY - And it's important that we understand which are the ones that we should be debating or discussing.

Ms WILSON - Minister, through you, I'm not sure if it will answer the question you're after, but the Tasracing annual report has figures and statistics for 2024-25. I'm not sure if it answers the specific questions you asked, but I indicate that there is information available in the annual report.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay.

Mr CARROLL - I was going to refer you to those statistics which are published, and they're on page 16, 18, and 19 of the annual report that are detailed from the Racing Australia statistics. So you'll see there, there's quite specific on-track injury data and retirement data of greyhounds which detailed injuries, deaths and euthanasia, and that then flows across the three racing codes itself.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. My question to you, Mr Carroll, as chair of that - looking into it, that your main document for use would be the Australian statistics.

Mr CARROLL - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, okay. Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, can I provide the honourable member with some answers to your question, given that your constituents are on the north-west coast. As I said, we are providing infrastructure upgrades on the north-west coast for the training facility there, and this is important to provide that certainty for the harness industry participants on the north-west coast to ensure that they can train and prepare their horses at a fit-for-purpose training facility on the coast. We've got Tasracing doing a review currently on that infrastructure plan to prioritise a new business case as well for the harness training facilities.

Mr GAFFNEY - My greyhound owners would say that's very welcome by their harness owners.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Do we have any final questions?

Mr EDMUNDS - I've got one final one on a different topic.

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CHAIR - Yes, Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Are you able to update the committee on the latest developments about whether the Yole property meets the equine code of practice?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister. I can provide you an update. At the moment, the minister invited me to conduct an assessment of the code of practice earlier this year. That was quite a robust process, in which we sought consultation for a number of industries and individuals as far as the assessment was concerned.

At the same time, as you're probably well aware, just prior to that, I had arranged for a multi-organisational inspection of the Yole property, in which there were deficiencies found against the current code of practice for racehorses. Each of those agencies was then responsible for taking their own action if they thought the Yole property breached the standards that was set.

Tasracing had decided that the Yole property hadn't met the threshold of the code of practice of the day and so issued a notice against that. Discussions were held, and the matter was going to appear before TRAB. Quite rightly, given the fact that the code of practice was going under assessment, there was mediation held between Tasracing and the Yoles as to what improvements needed to take place.

What I can say is that there's been significant improvements done to the Valley Road, Sidmouth property, and they've been monitored by Tasracing. An inspection was conducted last week with significant improvements. Once the code of practice has been finalised and released, which I believe will be in the next few weeks - I think there's a release date of 1 January that will be put in place - then the final assessment will be conducted against that updated code of practice.

CHAIR - Thank you. If there are no further questions, thank you very much, minister, and I thank your team both now and before lunch.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

CHAIR - We really appreciate the time that's been taken.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. I thank my team here at the table, Anita, Deirdre and the commissioner, and also the team that I've had behind me from my office, and also Julie and Gaye from Hansard as well. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Yes. I thank my team here and our secretarial support and Gaye as well. If you could please cease the broadcast.

The Committee adjourned at 4.15 p.m.