

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

LC Thursday 11 September 2014 - Estimates Committee A (Hidding)

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Thursday 11 September 2014

MEMBERS

Mr Robert Armstrong
Mr Craig Farrell
Ms Ruth Forrest
Mr Mike Gaffney
Mr Greg Hall (Chair)
Mrs Leonie Hiscutt
Mr Tony Mulder

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Rene Hidding MP, Minister for Police and Emergency Management, Minister for Infrastructure

Department of Police and Emergency Management

Mr Darren Hine, Secretary and Commissioner of Police
Mr Scott Tilyard, Deputy Commissioner of Police
Ms Donna Adams, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime and Operations)
Mr Todd Crawford, Director, Corporate Service

Tasmania Fire Service

Mike Brown, Chief Officer
Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Director Corporate Services

Department of State Growth

Mr Kim Evans, Acting Secretary
Mr Bob Rutherford, Deputy Secretary Regulatory and Customer Service
Mr Gary Swain, Deputy Secretary Strategy and Policy
Ms Amanda Russell, General Manager, Corporate Services
Ms Emma Reid, Communications Director
Ms Penny Nicholls, General Manager Land Transport Safety
Mr Shane Gregory, General Manager Transport Infrastructure Services
Ms Lia Morris, Chief Executive of Marine and Safety Tasmania

Ms Angela Conway, Director Infrastructure Strategy

Martin Grace, Manager, Passenger Transport Services

Ministerial Office

Vince Taskunas, Chief of Staff

Andrew Lea, Director SES, Tas Fire Service

The Committee met at 9.00a.m.

DIVISION 9

(Department of State Growth)

Output Group 2 - Infrastructure

2.1 Infrastructure Tasmania

CHAIR - I call the meeting to order and welcome the minister. Today we have Infrastructure so I please introduce the people at the table for the purposes of Hansard.

Try and keep things fairly well structured, minister, so there are not too many chairs being played. If you would like to make some overarching comments or introductory comments on infrastructure, please.

Mr HIDDING - I will be fairly brief. I am personally very pleased to have Infrastructure as one of my portfolio responsibilities. It is a very important time for Tasmania's economic development. It is also great working with my colleague ministers to bring about all of the economic leavers under one roof under in the Department of State Growth. The planning, delivery and maintenance of best practice infrastructure system is a cornerstone of our government's philosophy to drive jobs, growth and opportunities for all Tasmanians and as a government we need to ensure we invest in strategically for infrastructure for growth. Key to that will be the centre piece of our new government in this portfolio, the establishment of Infrastructure Tasmania and I am happy to discuss that with the committee when we get to that point. It is a whole new body, a new way of thinking about things and it is a very modern approach to infrastructure expenditure. This portfolio is very broad ranging things. I am also responsible for five GBE's as it happens and the operation of those are scrutinised in December. There are policy matters around that and I am perfectly happy to answer questions on that.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, I just remind both sides of the table for the benefit of Hansard please speak up. There are some technical issues with a couple of those microphones. With regards to any overview questions, minister, I might ask just one. Could you just give an update on the rail situation and funding? I am still trying to find something in the papers there and it is not very explicit.

Mr HIDDING – All right, broadly above rail funding, in all discussions on rail we have to talk two businesses, because there is an above rail division of TasRail and a below division of TasRail. It is a healthy way to look at it because traditionally they are two entities. One pays the

other a track fee and an access fee, but as it happens at the moment TasRail operates both those divisions. So, in above rail there are still funding streams coming over the next year or two from the previous government's commitments to fund through transfers from another GBE, TasNetworks now, but you might recall there are still two \$10 million tranches, that kind of thing. You would need to look at TasRail documents for that, but there is a substantial amount of funding still to come for above rail to fund the rest of the locos and the new carriages. Other bits and pieces as well.

But below rail, while they are holding some funds for development things, the next tranche of funding is federal. There is \$119.6 million on offer from the Federal Government for below rail funding, but it is on a 50/50 basis. We have been in discussions with the Federal Government on that, on the basis that our case is that we are in the unique situation of having to spend so much of taxpayers money on above rail, which no other rail company has to, and after all the federal government has put so much money into building this businesses back up that our 50 per cent contribution should be considered in total. It is our contention that it is perfectly fair that our contribution could be looked at in that way and they are looking at it. There is \$119.6 million on the table to be spent basically on network improvements, because there is still so much of the lighter version of the rail still to be changed. It is still quite a degraded network.

CHAIR - Over what period of time, minister, the \$119.6million?

Mr HIDDING - It is a five-year requirement.

CHAIR - I have just noticed how much work has been going on below rail even in the north and north-west, around where I live, there is always a lot of activity. Is that going to do the job?

Mr HIDDING - It could be argued it is somewhat of a bottomless pit but we want to get the rail network suitable for freight in Tasmania.

CHAIR - Could I ask about some of the really problematic areas which were in the Southern Midlands, the Rhyndaston Tunnel where we were losing so much efficiency, what has been done there?

Mr HIDDING - This federal funding is aimed at those areas. That is the area where there is quite some concern with the tight curving but we are not pointing to specific jobs. We need \$119.6 million and more but that is a great offer from the Commonwealth. It is that kind of network upgrading that is in TasRail forward Estimates.

There are other things to do in the network - particularly over on the West Coast with the minerals transported up to the Burnie port. There is the Burnie port loaders to be graded - there is still a big task to do, but money has been spent already on the network. It looks pretty damn good in a lot of areas, doesn't it?

Mrs HISCUTT - I was wondering if you could give me an update on the Burnie port with the railways and how is that progressing?

Mr HIDDING - There is a project on that port that we thought was going to cost some \$6 or \$7 million but they found that the sub-straight for where all that port activity would be taken, was not strong enough and so the project has become quite a large one. It is more that \$10 million now. TasPorts wanted a surface down that had some kind of warranty on it. You would not want

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

to be pulling it up in a year's time with all that heavy equipment on it. That has been resolved. It has been to tender but they have not been able to announce the winning tender yet. I do not know who it is but they have not been able to announce it. Because the federal funding flowing from that is part of these over arching national partnership agreements that we are finalising with the federal government.

From my point of view, as Infrastructure minister, who is keenly aware that the civil construction industry needs a decent flow of work, one of the first projects out the door would be the Burnie Port. It is highly developed, ready to go, not far away from starting.

Mrs HISCUTT - You cannot say one month's time or two months time, it is just imminent.

Mr HIDDING - As soon as we land on an arrangement with the federal government on the partnership agreement the money would be fine yes. A number of other projects.

Mrs HISCUTT - Not sure if I am stepping on Mr Gaffney's toes here, but do you have an opinion or a comment to make on the Don River Railways. Hoping to get onto the line.

Mrs HISCUTT - TasRail continues to work with Don River Rail and all heritage rail interest. TasRail are not the problem. From their point of view they own the network and they would like to see more trains on it and link it in with their business. The chances of that being a real problem is not high in Tasmania because with the best will in the world we do not have that many trains on the route. It would be great to get some more kilometres usage by other trains then paying an access fee to the rail. There are two stumbling blocks. One is that whoever the organisation is it has to provide its own regulatory approval, which includes insurance. Because the regulators are going to ask where is your insurance and unless they can table insurance that meets passenger rail standards, then TasRail cannot even consider providing access to the rail.

Sadly it is a long road, but we work positively with heritage rail interests. In Tasmania, we have so much history wrapped up in all this but we need to translate that history into something that works, is fundable and washes its own face in a business sense. I know that the Glenorchy Rail Museum is very business focused. I met their consultant and there is no question he is rock solid on knowing what is needed.

Mr FARRELL - Just leading on from that you mentioned Glenorchy and the consultant. There was a report commissioned by the previous government to look at options for the now disused Bridgewater to Hobart section. That was due to be reported back sometime before the end of the year. I just wondered if you have any indication of that.

Mr HIDDING - Who was doing that.

Mr FARRELL - Chris LeMarshall was doing it and I wondered if you had any indication of whether that was on schedule or how that had been going. I believe once a report has been done, it comes back to you.

Mr HIDDING - I have seen a meeting request from Mr LeMarshall, whom I met at your request. You might recall. Thank you for your involvement in that. I have seen a diary request to meet with him. I am happy to facilitate that as soon as I can. My guess is he is possibly getting to the stage of wanting to show me something.

[9.15 a.m.]

Mr FARRELL - Minister, I have heard through some of the preservation groups and this is probably also a bit of concern to the West Coast Wilderness Railway. Obviously a lot of secondhand rail and sleepers are very handy for the west coast and for the other groups and with the concrete sleeper replacement there was a story going around that a number of reasonably good quality steel sleepers were accidentally sent to scrap. I do not know if you have heard of that, I am not making any accusations, but I thought it might be something that has not been reported to your office and whether there is any truth in it?

Mr HIDDING - As I am the one man ministerial corporation responsible for the West Coast Wilderness Railway if that did happen they would probably be avoiding telling me that.

Mr FARRELL - Indeed.

Mr HIDDING - I would be surprised if that was so but I will seek some advice. There are so many of these steel sleepers available I doubt we could ever use that many but if there are high quality ones around then you would wish that organisation could have a crack at picking them up.

CHAIR - It is essential for the west coast, given the downturn in mining, could I suggest that because of the weight of tourist numbers there is always a piece of infrastructure that is going to require public subsidy down the track.

Mr HIDDING - Without flagging any particular intentions either way, clearly when Federal Hotels decided to walk away from the operation the state and federal parliaments both decided that would be a very poor outcome. They made available a substantial amount of money to recondition, to get the business model back up and it was decided to form a ministerial corporation so it did not flounder. There was a structure around it, there was a general manager appointed and shortly after the election I decided to go and have a look at it. I have a deep personal connection to that because I was the young chap who brought it to Cabinet in the first place. It was my area down there and we achieved eventually \$20.45 million from the Federal Government. I remember standing in ditches with lots of leeches, pointing at broken bridges and thinking how we might get all that done. I am very keen to see it remain part of the Tasmanian infrastructure network, not just the west coast. It adds quality to the whole Tasmanian package.

I was delighted to see, when I went there, the condition of the business in terms of rolling stock, the staff and the facilities - although only doing half the track. It is in very, very good order. I spoke to tourists who had paid nearly \$300 for the experience and thought it was the best thing they had done on their whole trip. I feel good about it but the long-term future of the West Coast Wilderness Railway, the Abt Railway, the above rail business will be better in private commercial hands. We are moving towards that but we need to get into a position where we can consider who takes what risk, how we analyse that risk, how we offset that, how we insure against it and come up with a workable model.

CHAIR - We support the whole process as it is so important to the west coast. Do you have any figure in mind down the future years, as you say you will be trying to get a private operator I understand, but what the level of subsidy might have to be?

Mr HIDDING - If I was speaking to a proponent who was interested in running the business that proponent would want to know how much risk that operation would need to take for the below rail. You would not want to leave them with no risk, because they will treat it like rubbish

and not participate in the maintenance of it. At its best operations, it was an \$8 million to \$10 million business. As a small business, it is best that everybody have a shoulder to the wheel - that is the way a small business best operates. However, catastrophic failure, for instance or a landslip that would take the business off for two weeks or something, that probably could not be part of the risk to an operator. One way or another, it will be reflected in the income or the outgoings of a government. There are discussions to be had there, and I am comfortable we can land it. It could be a top little business again, if we get it right.

Mr SWAIN - I am chairing an advisory council to support the Minister in this endeavour. We have been dealing with the General Manager of the West Coast Wilderness Railway, who as you would be aware, is looking to extend the service from Dubbil Barril to Strahan this summer. His view is that if that is done in a strategic way, it will actually make a positive contribution to the economics of the railway. It is still highly challenging. One of the things that we really need to do is test the patronage numbers over summer with a full service offering. At the moment, the railway is operating off numbers partly derived from what KPMG did a couple of years ago when the ministerial corporation was set up. So part of the exercise this summer will be to test the patronage sensitivities to both the service offering and also the price.

It is a long way of answering your question, but I think part of the job we have got to do in advising the minister is assessing the outcomes of this summer's work, and then coming up with a view on longer term options and potential levels of support.

Mr GAFFNEY - While we are talking about rail, I am just wondering why in the grants and subsidies in the 2015-16 year there is a \$5 million decrease from this current financial year, and then in the following year there is \$11 million. I am wondering if there a reason for that under grants and subsidies. It looks like a blip there.

Mr HIDDING - I guess it is a funding agreement. Amanda can explain that.

Ms RUSSELL - That reflects the anticipated Australian Government commitment for Tasmania rail, at 50/50 contribution. It actually commences in the 2016-17 year.

Mr HIDDING - Probably it is a TasRail question as to why it rolls out like that.

Ms RUSSELL - The 50/50 contribution from the Australian Government actually is anticipated to come online in the 2016-17 year. The difference between the 2014-15 year and 2015-16 year is actually the completion of a couple of projects on the railway. I don't have that specific data to hand, but it just reflects the tail end of the project funding.

Mr GAFFNEY - Would you be able to get that information for us? Would that be things like maybe the locomotive supplier contract?

Mr HIDDING - It is likely to be that kind of answer, but we are very happy to get it.

CHAIR - Members, any further overview questions on infrastructure before we start the line items? If not, we will move on to Output Group 2, minister and Mr Farrell has a certain question on 2.1 Infrastructure Tasmania.

2.2 - Infrastructure Strategy.

Mr FARRELL - Could just give your overview of how you think this the new department will work for infrastructure in particular, and your responsibilities?

Mr HIDDING - It is a key element of our election commitments. It is not something that we came up with lightly with. We looked at it closely and sought advice around Australia. We spoke to people involved with infrastructure Australia and we came up with a model. Infrastructure Tasmania as an entity will sit within the structure of the Department of State Growth. Its reporting lines are through the secretary to two ministers, that is myself and the Treasurer. The idea of it is that it will improve the overall coordination, planning and delivery of infrastructure and provide expert advice on infrastructure and priorities. It is actually all about priorities. Across government, we perceived a lack of a central body of knowledge and intellect that had actually worked through a process and decided where public funding went - not just state funding but federal funding as well. 'Is that project or group of projects more important than this one? Would it have been better to do this first rather than that one?'. That all flows of course from structured planning which we are expecting Infrastructure Tasmania to drive.

The notion is that funding is for three senior staff, one CEO and two others. In the interim, we have advertised for and we are not that far away from an announcement for the CEO of Infrastructure Tasmania. But rather than appoint all three, appoint the CEO and discuss with him or her which way is the best way forward. In the mean time, the funding exists to acquire outside advice and so that is how that is going to be set up. One of the key things that we will do is that our relationship with the federal government through Infrastructure Australia will be greatly enhanced by this operation. It will use precisely the same modelling and when the Tasmanian government says, 'Here is our application under infrastructure funding to infrastructure Australia, it is able to be plugged straight into IA's modelling.

All of the benefit-cost ratio work and the structure of the application will be precisely how they go about it. It will stack up and there will not be any consideration that, 'Well, you Tasmanian's have not really figured out what it is you want to do first or how you want to do it'. So our applications always struggle. IA struggles with our applications so that will be greatly enhanced. That is our contention and we have to make it happen now. It sits within the Department of State Growth and does not belong to an agency. It sits out to the right of the secretary and will be tasked with this overall prioritisation across GBEs and everywhere. However, I must say for now, because it is a new operation, it has been asked to focus its work on roads, ports, rail, and transport kind of infrastructure. For instance, energy is a whole new area. A new person would be stretched way too thinly if it went to everything so we are focussing on that first because there is really quite a lack of good structured prioritisation in that area.

CHAIR - Any further questions on that, Mr Mulder?

Mr MULDER - In relation to that Infrastructure Australia, when we were doing the work on the northern suburbs or the proposal for the northern suburbs light railway, we hit the hurdle that Infrastructure Australia was using a strict cost-benefit type of analysis whereas in fact, no projects in Tasmania I would think would really struggle up there, and we were pushing at that stage and suggesting that we needed to get to a triple line, like the opportunity costs in rebuilding a railway instead of multiplying the Brooker Highway by six lanes and things like that. Can you give me an idea of whether that has changed or are we still stuck in this?

[9.30 a.m.]

Mr HIDDING - Infrastructure Australia remains under the new Federal Government. Incidentally I would like to thank on the record and congratulate Dr Dan Norton who has just been appointed to Infrastructure Australia. It is a prestigious position and it is great to have a Tasmanian on there. I have made some announcements about how Infrastructure Australia is going to operate and the level of funding for certain bits and pieces but I will ask Mr Swain to talk about that.

Mr SWAIN - This is a live debate going on in a national policy sense. There is a transport infrastructure council which is one of, I think, seven COAG councils and some of the other jurisdictions, particularly the smaller ones such as Northern Territory and South Australia, are very strongly advocating for a change in methodology. We met with Infrastructure Australia recently and had a discussion about this and they advised they are under some direction to continue to put efficiency at the front of their assessments but also ensure that their arrangements are not exclusive to one half of the country and not the other. I interpreted that as meaning they may get a direction that a project needs to proceed in a particular jurisdiction and they are working within that overall parameter. It is still alive and it is a matter that will be discussed at the November Infrastructure Council meeting to be hosted here.

Mr HIDDING - In Tasmania?

Mr MULDER - I look forward to a more comprehensive evaluation of that knowledge in the future.

Mr HIDDING - It is probably a lessening of the rigidity. You expressed it well that there are more ways to look at this, however there are many projects out there that do not stack up on any scale except politics. That is why you would have these bodies here and federally. For instance in Canberra right now they are building a light rail service and the BCRs on that are less than one, but they are going to go ahead and do it anyway. Politics overrule that, but no matter how you look at it it does not stack up to an efficient spend idea.

Mr SWAIN - I think the key they are going to look at is capturing non-transport benefits. I was talking to someone who is involved in that project yesterday who was advising me that was going to be the tricky bit of the methodology.

Mr MULDER - I am being very careful here because we are almost dropping into a debate about a specific project and I was clearly not wanting to do that, I was using it as an example because that is a debate we can have at a later time.

Mr HIDDING - That is a very important point.

Mr RUTHERFORD - Through you, minister, Gary knows well that I have taught cost-benefit analysis for many years and there are two issues with the application of the methodology. First of all it has well-recognised weaknesses as an efficiency measurement tool and enormous strengths. There is some argument going on as to whether when it looks at mass transit systems in particular it tends to favour the agglomeration of very small gains, so it does not tend to treat the addition of serving lots of people five minutes differently, it just adds them up, values them at the wage rate adjusted for tax, and that is the benefit in time savings. Time savings account for about 80 per cent of the benefits of a normal transport project.

I do not mean to have a shot at mainland colleagues putting forward cross-benefit cases for mass transit systems, but arguably, if I add five minutes to your day, its economic value to you is not very large because for times savings to be valuable they have to be able to be impounded into the production process. One way or the other they ought to be worth something to households. Because we do not have that kind of mass movement project there is, I would argue, an inherent bias in the methodology. This is a well-debated theme in transport economics. The point the minister is referring to is, overall the bar is being raised on the evidentiary base needed to justify projects as efficient. That bar is being raised in two ways. First of all, the engines of analysis we attack it with; cross-benefit analysis is not the only mechanism. And also the ability to apply that rigor across investment portfolios.

So typically, state governments including our own for very good reasons, are focused on the analysis done internal to sectors. We would argue that the level of rigor applied to road projects in Tasmania, for instance, is second to none. But the ability to compare road to rail to port, just in that transport value chain, is not something we have applied that level of rigor to in the past. That is what Infrastructure Tasmania can bring and then with the prospect as it gains expertise and knowledge to transfer that more broadly about the capital development agenda for this state.

Mr MULDER - I agree with it.

Ms FORREST - Minister, I might have misheard you but you said the focus of Infrastructure Tasmania initially in its fledgling time, is going to be rail, road and ports.

Mr HIDDING - Let us just give you the list. Transport-related matters - there is about five things in there. I might have to give you that list.

Ms FORREST - Okay, in the statements on page 10.5, it also includes energy. You did say that energy was one that was not going to -

Mr HIDDING - That is what Infrastructure Tasmania has been set up for. In an operational sense, for the first year or two, we have decided that we will leave energy with the energy specialist for now. The Infrastructure Tasmania person will have - we do not want to stretch that person too thinly for now.

Mr SWAIN - The advice that has been accepted by the government is that it should be focusing on economic infrastructure with initial emphasis on transport. Defining economic infrastructure as energy, water, transport and NBN.

Ms FORREST - I am glad to hear that. I was concerned that it wasn't going to include all those things. Digging a hole on the side of the road, or in the road with everything in it at once.

Mr SWAIN - Some of those are obviously operating under frameworks, where the majority of their funding comes directly from customers, in particular the energy space, but also water as well, water and sewerage. Part of the discussion around needs to focus on transport as it didn't have the same funding mechanisms in place for those parts of infrastructure. It was significantly coming from consolidated funds be it state or commonwealth, and also you did not have price signals working in the same way that you do in some other areas to allocate resources, which is why a greater emphasis on planning coordination is needed in the public domain.

Ms FORREST - I asked a question yesterday about of Mr Groom about the Coordinator-General. Seems there is a bit of cross-over here in some respects. The Coordinator-General is supposed to be the one-stop-shop person to go to if someone wants to get a development up. Most developments require infrastructure.

Mr HIDDING - The Coordinator-General sits in the Department of State Growth, in which I am these days and so absolutely available to them. I would be expecting that, I would have a fair bit of interaction with the Coordinator-General. I suspect because of the way that his or her position is going to be structured, he may have a fair bit to say to us as well.

Ms FORREST - I am just wondering about creating silos or duplication here - one or the other, because it seems what you are talking about is a process to provide a coordinated approach to projects, particularly in the first instance related to transport, and the Coordinator-General's role may be more for private enterprise. Is that right?

Mr HIDDING - I guess everyone sees it slightly differently in this big department, but I see the Coordinator-General as being the opposite of silo thinking. Rather than having to deal with five silos, you go to the Coordinator-General.

Ms FORREST - But then you have to go to Infrastructure Tasmania as well potentially.

Mr HIDDING - Only for expenditure of public funds. Infrastructure Tasmania is for the expenditure of public funds, and then prioritisation between that or that.

Ms FORREST - So when we get to one of the contentious issues there are varying views in the community about - we could use the pulp mill or Venture Minerals as examples - Infrastructure Tasmania I assume would be tasked with upgrading the road, rail or whatever to support those businesses. People in the community get a bit tetchy about that because now you are supporting a pulp mill or a mine or whatever, and there are crossovers here. I have a view that infrastructure for the common good is what we should be providing as a government. If you have the Coordinator-General perhaps dealing with a pulp mill proponent or mining proponent, and you have got Infrastructure Tasmania doing their stuff, are things going to get lost in the wash?

Mr HIDDING - No, I can tell you that at the base of the architecture of the Department of State Growth was clearly a strong need for the roles of Infrastructure Tasmania and Coordinator-General. They are really quite separate things.

Mr SWAIN - There is a systems element to this as well, so an example of how we have been imagining it might work is that the policy function that sits under me might say we are going to draw together the priorities for transport policy, identify them and put some advice to the minister around that. On the way we would consult with Infrastructure Tasmania. If the minister takes it to Cabinet and signs that off as a policy framework, that would be something Infrastructure Tasmania would use to assess proposals against. Will this proposal further the objectives of the government of the day?

In practice, that could be Ports doing work about their ports' capital spend, and the road area of State Growth under Shane Gregory would be doing work on a 10-year program of works, and TasRail equally would be doing its own work. The idea of Infrastructure Tas is that it will moderate those individual plans which have been driven by the interests of each one of those parties to say what is in the overall interest of the state. It is a system-wide planning thing. It

might say, for example, over the next 20-30 years there is a lot of growth going on in Burnie port so we want to make sure that the road expenditure is aligning with the capital works on that port, and that is consistent with the needs of the west coast for mining. It is that type of system-wide approach. The Coordinator-General, I imagine, will be more involved with specific projects either looking to attract to Tasmania or facilitate, so in one sense he or she will be looking at a level of detail below system and the specific needs of this proponent to do this specific proposal, whereas Infrastructure Tas is going to be looking at the transport networks a whole.

Ms FORREST - I guess I am concerned about building up little fiefdoms here and creating money-draining areas when it could be done in a more coordinated approach. I will be watching to see how it happens.

Mr HIDDING - And so will we

Ms FORREST - My next question is what will be your KPIs? How are you going to measure value for money and the benefits it brings? I want to see some real outcome-based KPIs, something we can see.

[9.45 a.m.]

Mr SWAIN - It is very early days on that. We are thinking about the timeliness of its advice to the minister because it is an advisory body. There is also provision in its arrangements to do tasks at the request of the two ministers. I think it is mostly going to be about quality and timeliness of advice to ministers and we can have a look, once it is up and running, at whether it does some sort of survey-based approach to seeing how it is going. A lot of this is being deliberately not developed until the CEO is on board. Obviously there is not much point of appointing a senior person to a role if you have already tied down every element of their new role. There is a desire to support the CEO by getting the basics in place but not go so far that they cannot bring their own view to the role and advise the minister accordingly.

Mr HIDDING - Also we did identify when we first announced this that we saw this body doing things we thought quite overdue. Those of you with a local government background would be aware that it has been mandated that local government do strategic asset management plans for their own roads, and that has been mandated by the state Government which does not have to do such a thing. We always thought that was odd and I indicated in the speech on the bill that came through that we want to see that changed. We would see Infrastructure Tasmania driving a state roads audit. We own so many roads and spend so much money and we do not have a structured approach to that. Already the department is setting a standard target on the Midland Highway to AusRAP 3-star rating. We want to get there over a 10-year period after doing an audit to understand a prioritisation on state roads as well.

Ms FORREST - That comes back to my question about KPIs rather than timely advice. That's a bit wanky in my view.

Mr HIDDING - Not if you are waiting for it.

Ms FORREST - Well, yes and no. How is it measured? If you want it on Tuesday do you get it on Thursday? I would like to see it much more outcome-based saying this is what we have achieved, this is why Infrastructure Tasmania is kicking goals here, not just because the minister had the advice on Tuesday when it was actually due on Wednesday.

Mr HIDDING - There is a lot of industry interest from professionals in this role in being appointed to a position on it. That is particularly because it is going to be focused on what the industry recognise as the sharp of their industry which is really understanding and providing advice on our priorities. Also, we mentioned that Tasmania does not have an integrated freight strategy. Being an island and not having an integrated freight strategy is kind of odd, I would have thought, so this organisation has plenty to do, trust me.

Mr SWAIN - It does go to your other comment about duplication, though, so you still have this entity planning and coordinating with GBEs and SOC's which are under their own board and management. I take your point that you want to see some real meaty indicators but it cannot take over the accountabilities at law of GBEs and SOC's. It cannot have delivery of this road or delivery of this rail because there is a whole structure around that.

Ms FORREST - If you were building a road you could because GBEs do not build roads.

Mr HIDDING - No, that is right.

Mr SWAIN - You could but you have a delivery arm in the department which has those accountabilities and you would not want to reduce that.

Mr HIDDING - As a practical example, as the portfolio minister for five GBEs and the Treasurer is the shareholder minister for these GBEs one of them says, 'Here is our capital expenditure plan, this is what we want to do', and shows it to the ministers. Infrastructure Tasmania provides advice to us on that that is a poor expenditure if you were to accept that this is plan forward for the state; that is out of whack. There is no-one doing the out-of-whack discussion right now and this is precisely where it is going to be to say to the shareholder ministers, not that you would direct necessarily a GBE but you would say, 'As minister we are not going to sign off on your corporate plan until we get more advice from Infrastructure Australia.

Ms FORREST - This has been happening at the Burnie Court, with Tasports and Rail. It is not like it hasn't happened. I have seen work start there. They have a 15-year plan there or 10 years. There has been some collaboration between those two.

Mr HIDDING - And so there should be. As it happens, they share infrastructure on that port. It is not always the case but in this case there is an integrated port where trains would go through. They needed to be shunted along the waterfront, stopping cars going through and all that. That will all be resolved by one project. That is a good way to collaborate together on improving the port. Could it be done better on roads? Well, someone has to test that. A GBE should not be allowed to go ahead and spend what it wants to on whatever. You need a structure to test that against that.

Ms FORREST - I think the GBE intended to do that, on their modelling.

Mr SWAIN - The only thing we do not have at the moment is if a rail project comes up to the minister, we do not know what are the avoided costs or benefits or detriments to the road. The rail company does not have the expertise to do that and the road provider has not been engaged. There are also the crossover costs and benefits that need to be captured and that is what we are trying to do.

Ms FORREST - I just want to hear your comment on the fact that the government had responsibility for a number of roads. Will Infrastructure Tasmania incorporate local government into a unified approach to meet infrastructure?

Mr HIDDING - When I first launched this policy, I said that I do not see Infrastructure Tasmania necessarily being confined just to the expenditure of state monies. The fact is that local government exists, under legislation from the state government, and you cannot ignore their road network. But it is their responsibility. After a number of years, once it has established itself and has its thing going, I think that the work of the councils, with their strategic asset management plans, ought to be back-ended into Infrastructure Tasmania's work so that we get a state-wide network idea.

Ms FORREST - Otherwise you end up digging up roads twice, particularly where they cross over or join.

Mr HIDDING - I remember in my electorate in Orford, the local government were planning that year to put in kerb and channel at the main road, as part of the Tasman Highway. The government announced that were coming re-seal it two inches higher so they could not put their kerb and channel in. They did not talk to each other.

Ms FORREST - Look at Strahan with the mishmash of state and local roads there. It's a dog's breakfast. We will get to that later.

Mr GAFFNEY - I am really pleased to see that there is a body that is going to be established to have an overview because there are some areas where plans from 30 years ago on transport routes are actually limiting local government areas from expanding. Now they have grown, that may not be the right place for that. We are full up with commercial zones. We have a so-called bypass that is supposed to be there and it is just limiting what we can do as an area. It will be good to have a good go-to for people to put cases towards. I think that is the perfect example of the left and right hand not knowing what they are doing. We do not have that overview, so I think this will be good. I also take Ruth's point that when we are here next year asking the questions, they will be, 'What have you done? What have been your major projects and what impacts has this department had?'

Mr FARRELL - Following on from Mr Mulder's and the Legislative Council's reporting to public transport, we have found one of the issues with looking at funding or the possibility of looking at alternative forms of public transport using the railway line, was the fact that it had just been really judged as train versus bus. It had not taken into account possibilities such as if it was an electrified system, what the benefit would be to hydro Tasmania, and what the retention of the line benefit would be for tourism and that type of thing. So is it envisaged that this new Infrastructure Tasmania will look more broadly at these type of issues? Will it take that into account when it does funding rather than as it had been in the past?

Mr HIDDING - You are dead right. That follows on from the matter raised by Mr Mulder and expanded on by my departmental colleagues as well. I think in a Tasmanian context, we have to use everything that we have got. I would see Infrastructure Tasmania to be very well placed to be more lateral in its thinking. If you were Infrastructure Australia in considering an inland railway between Brisbane and Melbourne, those kinds of things would not be on the radar. It is a very high level thinking, I would have thought. In Tasmania we need to drill down and

understand those broader things. I would have thought that that is a terrific opportunity. Infrastructure Tasmania is very well-placed to consider those matters.

Mr SWAIN - I was talking before about having a policy framework which Infrastructure Tasmania could operate in. So if you took a concept from electricity, you could, for example, say to Infrastructure Tasmania, 'For any capital project over \$10 million, assure yourself that the infrastructure provider has looked at the demand-side solutions'. As an example, before you go and double the causeway from Midway Point to Sorell you might ask, 'Have we actually looked at other options that might mitigate the demand growth over the forward period'. So that would be an example of the kind of question Infrastructure Tasmania could reasonably ask when looking at a program of capital works.

CHAIR - We will move 1.2, Mrs Hiscutt.

Mrs HISCUTT - It seems that infrastructure strategies have been well and truly talked about. I just noticed that the funding has dropped away and wondered whether you still have enough funding there to continue building a good strategy and how do you actually go about organising your strategies?

Mr SWAIN - We have a branch that called the Infrastructure Strategy Branch which historically has been more focused on transport planning. We have been evolving that over the last year or two to make sure that the planning elements sit more with the road provider, which is not part of the department. That is freeing up some capacity to look at strategy and policy which is what the branch is really there to do. Within the department we would come up with a set of proposed work priorities which reflect the government of the day's priorities, as we would understand them, and then propose them to the minister.

At the moment, as I have already alluded to, we are doing work on freight which is clearly a key priority for the community and the Government. We are also doing some work on transport policy, understanding that that is needed to support the work of Infrastructure Tasmania. Once we are working on a strategy, the standard process, before you invest a lot of time, is to be very clear on the objectives that you are trying to further. So we would normally put some advice to the minister in response to something that either he or the committee have raised or something that we have put to him. Either way, we want to be absolutely clear on what we are trying to achieve before we invest a lot of time and effort in trying to work up proposals. We then get a sign-off if that was going in the right direction, and then we come back and develop some options for progressing those objectives and say this is the role of government in that space. It is an iterative thing where you have a program of works and normally this will all be happening under the framework of three-year corporate plan. We are a new department so we still have to put our first corporate plan together. You will have ongoing conversations with your minister. We have weekly meetings, but it will be no less than every 2-3 months you will be coming back and testing the priorities. This is where we are up to, that is still meeting your needs.

Mrs HISCUTT - How does the Structured Infrastructure Investment Review process fit into that?

Mr HIDDING - It is called a SIIRP and it is an excellent process. It's the kind of process as an example, we are looking at a portfolio later in Police, and we recently announced that we are going to acquire or build a new police vessel.

The SIIRP process has been in place for 18 months, or two years, and they have landed on the solution. It is structured. They have proper advice on what kind of vessel they need, what the police officers want, the people who go and save people in shocking weather, what they need out there to keep themselves alive, and that is fed in. That process allowed us to budget an amount of money and go to market. We will end up with an excellent police boat out of it. When you don't have a SIIRP the likelihood of ending up with a PV Fortescue is pretty high. There is a perfect example. You don't always end up with a *Fortescue* - that was fairly spectacular.

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, is SIIRP specifically there as a review process for things that go wrong?

Mr SWAIN - It is really a Treasury-led process - I am not sure that I have deep expertise to talk to this one. It is an allocation of capital mechanism. It is to help the government, through the budget process, allocate scarce capital across competing uses. It applies a general methodology - it applies as series of gateways where you must show that you are meeting a defined problem and then you have considered alternatives. It is sort of a structured approach to putting forward capital proposals.

Ms FORREST - Just following on from that, and I was trying to think of the name of the SIIRP, when you were speaking earlier, minister, about what Infrastructure Tasmania would do, why would they develop another process or are they going to use the same sort of structure?

Mr HIDDINGS - Infrastructure Tasmania would consider whether the expenditure of \$5 million on a police boat, no, sorry, that frankly would not even get to the Infrastructure Tasmania. Let's consider a priority where \$100 million is spent on this form of infrastructure or that form. That is something Infrastructure Tasmania would decide, advise its priority. Once we decide on that, the SIIRP process, the Treasury, the funding of it, would kick in to ensure that the absolute best processes are applied to get the best value out of that.

Ms FORREST - So only after prioritisation has been done by Infrastructure Tasmania will that SIIRP process take over?

Mr HIDDING - Yes, the committal to the SIRP process comes once it has been decided that need.

Ms FORREST - Has it ever been rejected at that point? If Treasury decide well this does not look like good value for money to us, or doesn't meet the requirements of the SIIRP process,

Mr SWAIN - Yes, and also on the basis that the money is there. It is a good project, but there is no money there.

Mr HIDDING - The last few it didn't stop that.

Mr SWAIN - There is another half. So that is one half of the column, but the other one is federal money. A lot of our infrastructure money is coming from the feds and as Bob touched on before, the bar is really rising in Canberra in terms of what is required to get funding. It might have been the case in the past that the politics of 12 senators was enough, but all states are getting more professional in their proposal analysis and the way they put it forward, and a number of states already have infrastructure bodies interacting with Infrastructure Australia. In the case of Federal money we think it would be very beneficial to have a body Infrastructure Australia can go

to and ask, have you looked at this, do you think it meets the set policy objectives, it is not just a set of good projects? That is the issue for Canberra when they are looking at these projects. They look the same, they are all individually good projects but we need a basis for prioritising them. If Tasmania Inc. does not do that then Canberra Inc will and they will do that from a great distance without a detailed knowledge of the state's needs.

Mr MULDER - If you look at Budget paper 2, we talk about all of the funding that we are committed to up until FYE financial year ending 2018-19. Are all of those projects there, are they going to now put back through this SIIRP process?

Mr HIDDING - Every project goes through a SIIRP project to ensure that money is spent wisely on identifying the project. Will Infrastructure Tasmania have any role in the out years as in the Budget? Yes, in the work that they do, they may well uncover and advise the government to say it would be better to spend this money this way or this way. In the out years this government is perfectly entitled to say, on advice, we are going to go down this way as well. On an annual basis you put your out years on what is known now.

Mr MULDER - So there are a few promises you may not be able to keep?

Mr HIDDING - We intend to keep them but the budget processes is about this financial year and our best projections for the out years, every year that financial year is back in the focus and the out years keep getting reviewed. It is not just an automatic process; it would be poor government to not continually test and utilise the greatest knowledge.

Mr SWAIN - It raises a very important point. There is always the possibility of significant changes in external circumstances. We have some big reviews going on in the shipping and freight space which have implications for our transport arrangements and also on islands. If Cornwall Coal Company mine shut tomorrow or two or three mines were not there in five years or a major industrial changed, the demands on our economic infrastructure would change and you would reasonably want to have a body you could turn to and say what does this mean for our forward program, are these still the priorities?

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr GAFFNEY - With the statewide irrigation being involved in a lot of federal money, state money, did that go through a certain process?

Mr HIDDING - Let me just say for the record that the SIIRP process belongs to Treasury and Peter Gutwein's people would be better tasked to answer it. We have been discussing where the SIIRP process fits within Infrastructure Tasmania arrangements.

Mr GAFFNEY - It is just that that is such a big project which remarkably changed the landscape in Tasmania with agriculture and the goods and costs, just because of that project, how does that impact on something like the infrastructure that you will be looking at?

Mr HIDDING - Just on irrigation infrastructure, there is a mountain of work done on a commercial business case which is then backed by financiers and banks, then it comes to Cabinet signing off on the business case so that is that process.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

2.3 Land Transport Safety.

CHAIR - We will move to 2.3, Land Transport Safety. I introduce to the table, Ms Penny Nicholls, General Manager of Land Transport Safety. I will start with a few questions, with regard to the matter of rural road speed limits. We had a select committee of the Legislative Council and the minister at the time suddenly changed his mind at the 99th hour, I do not know why that happened. Can you give us an update on any other programs that might be in place in terms of rural speed limits and particularly about the interaction with local government and some of the matters they might want to deal with?

Mr HIDDING - It is the position of this Government that a blanket speed reduction on non-urban roads was not good policy, and we are talking about the default speed limit where all non-urban roads that are 100 kph you would drop to 90 kph. We took the view that that was a blunt instrument and reasonable mobility at an acceptable risk is the correct policy position to take, and where there were obvious areas on a road network that for reasons of design, lack of maintenance or whatever, there was obviously a safety issue over and above the normal issues, that should be considered for re-signing.

There is no better example than Paradise Gorge outside of Orford, which is a windy road. If the right speed limit for that is a maximum 80 kph, let's put 80 kph signs in that area but not arbitrarily lower the limit on the rest of the road, which in some areas is a wide three-lane highway with very little traffic on it now because the chip mill up there has closed.

CHAIR - Going back to local government, has the department had much interaction with them identifying or requiring reduced speed limits on particular segments of their road networks?

Mr HIDDING - I will defer to advice, but generally local government at the time was asked to do an audit of their own roads to decide what to do, and my guess is much of that work is available to us.

Ms NICHOLLS - State Growth will continue to work with individual local governments and communities to address safety issues on particular rural roads. That might include a range of things for consideration. Certainly lowering rural speed limits on sections of road which are of a lower design standard and a high crash risk will be areas that are particularly considered.

CHAIR - That is going on at the moment, so in cooperation with those local councils have any of those areas of road actually had speed restrictions place on them yet?

Ms NICHOLLS - I don't believe so as a result of that process. The conversations with councils have started recently, but as you know we get individual requests from councils and local communities for some changes, and they will continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis outside of that broader engagement strategy we have embarked upon with councils.

Mr ARMSTRONG - When you get an application for a speed reduction in a certain area on a state highway, what process do you go through regarding consultation with the general public? I can think of a couple of areas in the Huon Valley for instance where there was an entrance of a road coming out onto the highway and the people came to the department to ask for a speed reduction. As far as I am aware it came to the council at the time but I don't believe there was any general consultation with the people using that road because I know we copped a lot of flak from

the users of that road, saying they were never consulted on it. I think it was the wrong decision that was made. There are passing lanes there that you can't use now, so what is the process. What consultation do you go through?

Mr HIDDING - It is my experience before I became minister that where there was an issue identified through crash history or an event, or pressure from people who live on that road, that you would write to the minister and the minister may or may not trigger some interest in that. For instance, with the Port Sorell/Main Road, in the area towards Devonport from the winery on there is a group of houses there. Somebody counted up, with the farm gates and tractor and things and the rest of it, and in a small area there were 40 access points to the road along 100 kilometres. They made a case. I wrote and asked that to be looked at, and in fact the Latrobe Council, as an example of local politics, declined to support a speed limit change. I wrote as a local member to say I think the government should look at this and before long it was announced they had agreed to a reduction and dropped it 80 kph and blamed it on me.

Adam Brooks is still barely speaking to me but the people who lived there had a very strong case for their safety, from my point of view. I would have hoped, and suspect that we are about to hear, that the professionals looking at this made a recommendation to government based on everything, which is again, reasonable mobility at an acceptable risk.

Mr ARMSTRONG - To follow up on that, is there any actual consultation with the road users?

Mr HIDDING - I would like to introduce to the table Mr Shane Gregory, general manager of Transport Infrastructure Services, who handles this area.

Mr GREGORY - We do not generally consult with broader community per se, and the main reason for that is for any stretch of road we will have 100 different views on what the speed limit should be. We had a situation a few years ago where we were asked to look at speed limits in Richmond and it very quickly degenerated to the point where the community could not agree on what speed limit they wanted. In the end we left it with the council, saying if you want to change it come back to us. The position we take is we look at it from a technical point of view. The Australian Standard for speed limit setting looks at roadside development and the type of development, so we look at that. If there is not a case at all, if it is very clear that the speed limit does not need to be reduced, then we would simply make a call on that basis. If we get into a marginal zone or a clear zone where we think it should be reduced, we would then consult with the council and the RACT as the representative body and go from there. When it is in a marginal space, if we do not get a clear view, we would tend to leave the speed limit as it is.

Mr ARMSTRONG – Minister, you touched on a perfect scenario at Triabunna where you had a chip mill up there operating. Does the government have people go around and look at these areas where these circumstances have changed? That is one example but it happens when businesses open and close over years. Does the department go and reassess speed limits in those areas to see whether the speed limit there now is appropriate?

Mr HIDDING - Before I pass to Shane, without embarrassing him, when you come out of the village of Ross to head south you go past a property and the lady who owns that property raised it with me years ago and did again recently. When you come out of Ross there is an 'End Speed Limit' sign so it is 100 kph but it is literally 400-500 metres to the main road. You would need a rocket ship to get up to 100kph. I explained that that old sign had been there for years and

you could barely read it, but I drove by the other day and there is a brand-new 100 kph sign up. That would be the replacement of signs program, not the 'is this the right sign?' program. I will hand over to Mr Gregory.

[10.00 a.m.]

Mr GREGORY - We tend to focus on the state roads, and then we respond to requests from council on local government roads. You will get anomalies around the state where someone hasn't raised an issue. It tends to be very difficult to get support to raise speed limits, particularly on the fringe of urban areas. We have a couple of locations we think like that where that 60 goes a little bit too long technically, and we have had discussions with councils and been told firmly 'no' - the community would not support that speed limit going up. So we do reviews and we keep an eye on things, but we also tend to be triggered by crashes and changing development and we look at things that are triggers for us.

Mr ARMSTRONG - There was a big sawmill operating as you went into Avoca years ago. You were forever in a 50 kilometre speed limit from one end of Avoca right through, and you did not see a person. That is one of the issues where I think the big sawmill was operating there, with a lot of traffic coming in and out. I would imagine that would have been done in consultation with the local government authority there. That is just another example of where you do have changing circumstances.

Mr HIDDING - It does. Just for the record, we would rather fire the sawmill back up than increase the speed limit. That is another portfolio

Mr GAFFNEY - From the Council's point of view if it is a state road, like Port Sorrel Road, we find the same issue that Gregory raised in that you have a thousand different opinions. So with that one, we would not make comment. But on the entrance into the town when we requested that DIER put a 50 km here, that was a fix and divide, so it was quite a good process. We would not enter into discussions, other than giving the information out there to say please contact your -

Mr HIDDING - However, in that particular one, because we are talking history, I go back to my records where I got a letter from a councillor saying our council rejected a speed limit reduction, so we'll check. We'll see whose memory is right.

Mr MULDER - I have a stretch of road that is less than 8 kilometres long and it has something like 17 speed limit changes in it. A lot of those are that it is a reasonable size road, on which you can travel 100 kph quite safely. But of course, then you will come up to a roundabout, and as you approach the roundabout there is an 80 zone, and then there is a 60 zone. What there isn't is a 25 zone, which is actually the speed you can go around the roundabout on. I am just wondering why we go through this switch, switch, switch, switch, switch stuff, when we are going along what are supposed to be arterial roads. In most cases, you could not go over the speed limit anyway. If you did, they are in transition zones. I wonder why we have these multiple signs and the switchings.

Then when you go into a place like this and you decide that this section of road needs to be 80 kph, you get these silly situations where someone says, 'What about this? How far out of town?', whereas you could stretch it a bit or take it back. I am wondering why we persist with this policy of flipping speed limits, which I must say, is of extreme frustration to motorists, especially when police decide to park their cameras in transition zones.

Mr GREGORY - I will start off by saying that the setting and management of speed limits is probably the most complicated, involved and demanding aspect of being a road manager, because we can never get consensus on what on it should be. We like consistency in speed limits; the community likes consistency in speed limits; and that is where the agreement ends.

Mr Armstrong would remember the situation on the Huon Highway, with a series of small towns - Franklin and so on - where everyone agreed there were too many speed limits. We had absolute consensus until we said, 'What should it be?' The people who lived in town said should it should be 60 all the way along. The people at the end of the town said it should be 80 all the way along, or 100. That is one of the problems. We will never get consensus from the community. With regard to urban arterial roads, the preference obviously is to keep the roads operating at a higher speed because that makes them more efficient. It is about balancing safety. We have some urban arterials that have development on the side of the road that probably is not consistent with an urban arterial road, and we have to try and manage that. If we had a more enlightened group of drivers, we probably would not have to have as many speed limits as we do and people would be aware that they are coming to an intersection and they need to drive at an appropriate speed.

Mr MULDER - The point I am making though is because you cannot get community consensus that is the time that the signs come in. Is that not the time that you say, 'We do not have switch-backs. I am sorry, people of Franklin, but, the bulk of your particular road is where the switching comes in'. If there is a certain section of road where it is safe to travel at a speed limit, then there is another section of a short distance where it is safer to travel higher and then you come in to only a short distance later back into another section. Would it not be best to just say, 'We take it back so that we do not get switching, so you get a consistent speed limit over a distance of the road and forget sometimes that two people in the same house are going to have a different opinion'.

Mr GREGORY - We do have some roads where we have historic towns that are relatively close together. It is not appropriate to drive through those towns at 80 kph or 100 kph. Similarly, it is not really appropriate from a transport efficiency point of view to drive the remainder of the road at 60 kph. It is, to some extent in rural areas, just a characteristic of how Tasmania has evolved and developed over time. I do not think it is appropriate to drive through Franklin at 100 kph or even 80 kph. But there will be adjoining bits of road where it is appropriate to drive faster. We have done some rationalisation and trimmed the number of speed limits. But to an extent it is unavoidable when you have those sorts of roads with towns at a regular basis. I do not think we are going to avoid that.

Mr MULDER - The other point that we have not picked up yet is this business about transitioning in zones and stepping down to a roundabout, for example, when the actual speed limit that applies to the roundabout is 60 kph and you could not possibly drive around it at that anyway. So I am wondering why we just do not have warning signs, 'Roundabout Ahead' and let people judge their way into the roundabout.

Mr GREGORY - We do apply this standard speed limit practice that is set across the country. So, for consistency we do what is done in other states. So I might not always like it but it is a consistency.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr HIDDING - Just to be fair, that discussion demonstrates some of the reasons why the previous road safety advisory council proposed a blanket reduction so that every body drives at a more limited speed, rather than at bits and pieces. Our policy would have the risk of creating more different zones along the way but we do not propose too much of that.

Mr MULDER - I am not suggesting a metre-by-metre approach; I am suggesting a 5 kilometre by 5 kilometre approach.

Mr HIDDING - The second point I would like to make is that a lot of this is historical and therefore change needs to be driven by local leaders, ergo, members of parliament. But when you are putting in new roads - for instance, on the Rokeby road where we are spending an absolute fortune - the designs there need to not be compromised by something that tends to lower or stop-start the traffic to a point where you get more of that. The free flowing nature of the design as much as possible needs to be maintained.

Mr FARRELL - On the speed limits, related to the free-flowing issue, I am not sure who decides where the signs go and how that is worked out but on the Brooker Highway coming into Hobart, the limit is decreased towards the bottom of the hill. I have often thought that if the sign was just up on the top of the hill, there is a natural slow-down there anyway because people come down the hill and have to brake. Likewise, the increased limit is half way up the hill, so everyone puts their foot down where if it was down a little bit further, you get a natural sort of speed increase. I wondered if these factors are taken into account when they are placed.

Mr GREGORY - They are, the particular situation you are talking about at the bottom of the Berridale Hill -

Mr HIDDING - It's a nice little revenue raiser there too.

Mr GREGORY - You need to take into account that you are coming off very much a freeway style road. There are no accesses at all; it is that point where it starts to change. A few hundred metres up the road you have the high school with direct access coming out. So that is why it is in that situation; that is what it takes into account. If we could have it further along and not at the bottom of the hill that would be better. But then that puts us to a point where we are not getting the speed control we need running into a section of road that has a lot of activity beside it.

Mr FARRELL - I have tried it myself a couple of times.

Mr HIDDING - Could I make one more comment on rural roads and take the opportunity to announce something that would be of great interest to the member for Huon? You might be aware of a system called wet and icy traffic systems. There is one at Constitution Hill and one on the East Tamar Highway. It is temperature-controlled and it actually warns and changes. There is an area called Vince's Saddle down in your electorate. It is on the Huon Highway. Everyone is aware it can be affected by ice, sleet and snow during colder times of the year. There have been crashes there but while it is waiting for funding for a \$1 million solution, it has not been funded.

We are hopeful that an innovative road safety treatment will lead to a reduced crash risk at this location. It consists of special safety markers in the road that flash to alert motorists to icy conditions. For those members who are interested, we can send you a link later which you will be able to log onto. Here is one we cooked up earlier. It actually looks like this - that is the centre of the road marker and under a certain temperature in that area, they flash.

This is the black ice problem when the road is a little wet and you wonder if there is black ice. You will need to know what the temperature is outside. Your car says that it is 2 degrees, so you wonder if there is black ice or not. If it gets to a certain level, these things start flashing - blue lights down the centre of the road. They are in use in a couple of places in New Zealand and they are a terrific idea. They are very cost-effective and we are going to put them in at Vince's Saddle.

Mr FARRELL - What is the cost per unit?

Mr GREGORY - The individual units are about \$85 each. They replace a normal raised pavement marker which is about \$20. Importantly, we can do all of Vince's Saddle for around about \$70 000 instead of a \$1 million. The systems do exactly the same thing. This device activates at temperatures below 2 degrees and in the presence of moisture. The WIT system checks the road surface temperature and the presence of moisture. It does exactly the same thing; the WIT puts up a message that says, 'Slippery' and this will do the same thing at a fraction of the cost.

We have over 30 ice-prone sites around the state. We can treat all of those sites for probably the cost of treating two under the system we have been using. The WIT system is smart but it is also complicated and much higher maintenance cost. We will lose a few of these each year and the maintenance guys will be able to put new ones back on.

Mr ARMSTRONG - What is the life-span?

Mr GREGORY - They will stay around for many years. The risk to them is that they get killed off by trucks which happens with raised pavement markers.

Mr HIDDING - This initial job should be funded by the Road Safety Levy, as it is a trial. As we suspect, it is going to be a great idea, particularly for Scottsdale. At the sideling over there, the black ice problem happens regularly. You cannot drive on black ice.

Mr MULDER - Begonia Street is an arterial road through the middle of a suburb. It is the rat-run through the back of Flagstaff Gully. You are coming down a really steep hill there, with lots of traffic volumes and kids walking up and down to schools, and pedestrians.

Mr HIDDING - This technology is doable. Rather than waiting for five years for a million dollars to come up, this kind of technology is exciting.

Mr GREGORY - Our plan is to install it in March. If we put it in now, we will lose a few between now and March. We are not going to see how they work at all over summer, so we will put them in March and actually run a trial.

Mr HIDDING - As a local member, we will get you involved in highlighting it to people. They need to start watching out for these things. You don't want people driving along and wondering, 'What the heck is going on? There must be police along here somewhere'. They are not that bright. I have seen video footage of it; they just pulse away beautifully and tell you that black ice is likely.

CHAIR - Estimates are always a great opportunity for ministers to announce new initiatives.

Mr HIDDING - Well, I did not announce in the other one because it would have been pearls before swine. In all truth, my opposition spokesman on infrastructure is in this House.

CHAIR - As we know, DIER has been subsumed into State Growth. I have a couple of questions that relate to safety matters. A big concern is where we do some major public works on state highways and the road surface deteriorates very quickly afterwards. In fact, you would be aware that just outside of Longford, we have had three or four attempts because of surface failures. Is it a problem of engineering under-design? Is it an issue where we have a lack of proper supervision by the appropriate people? Some of the answers always go back to the contractors responsible. However, it is a safety concern and it does frustrate a lot of people, as you know. You would have seen plenty of it yourself, compared to a lot of other jurisdictions. I don't think that we really do all that well in our roads sometimes.

Mr HIDDING - We have had a spectacularly hot couple of days in summer in the last few years but that is a very good point. It actually belongs in another output group. However, Shane is at the table if he is happy to do that.

Mr GREGORY - I have spent nearly 30 years in public infrastructure on both sides of the fence - contracting, and design, planning and management of public infrastructure. This is an issue which is very dear to my heart. I think we have had problems in Tasmania, and the failure rate we have had has been far too high. Over the last couple of years, we have been changing our approach. We have drawn a line in the sand with our contractors and we are going to be administering our contracts very stringently. We are not going to accept defective work.

The project that you are talking about at Longford was the straw that broke the camel's back for us. That level of outcome is not adequate. We are making some significant changes with how we are managing our contracts and expectations with our contractors. We put all of our contract administration and project management staff through very detailed contract admin training last year. We bought in a contract litigation lawyer to run them through what the contracts are about and what we are entitled to get, and how we need to do that.

Last summer was really a starting point for us. There was a project down at Huonville where the product that was put on the ground was non-conforming. We have directed the contractor that that is to be removed and replaced. We could leave it there and take some risks, but I do not believe the Tasmanian public should take the risk of failures down the track. We have a mechanism to have the work repaired immediately by the contractor. That is what we have done and that is what we will continue to do from here on in.

CHAIR - Thank you for the response; it was comforting. It is something that has been needed to be addressed for some time. I am pleased to hear that we are working towards that.

Mr HIDDING - Mr Gregory has articulated it in a way that reflects my concern expressed to him from day one as Minister. Basically, we have been in a perfect storm of failures and we had to draw a line. He has absolutely got my backing.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Just to follow up on that. You are talking about the main street in Huonville. When is that work going to be done? Is it going to be done over the summer, over the school holiday break or the holiday period?

Mr GREGORY - The contract will have to come back and be discussed with council staff and the community. We went through a whole process of liaison with the community to determine the best time and we will expect that that will happen again.

CHAIR - As a cyclist, I will go to another question that is dear to my heart - the Metre Matters campaign, which has been adopted in Queensland. What progress have we made with the Road Safety Council and the Road Advisory Council?

Mr HIDDING - We are very aware that there are more and more Tasmanians taking to cycling for all sorts of reasons, including health, sport and competition. For that reason, we went to the election with a policy on cycling that was really quite comprehensive. It was one of the bigger policy areas during the election period for me. Cyclists are vulnerable road users and the Road Safety Advisory Council is going to attack this issue of vulnerable road users as part of the third action plan, which we launched just the other day. It is the last three years of a 10-year program. It means that over the next few years, we are going start planning the next 10-year program. So it is an exciting thing for myself as minister to have the honour to be able to develop that with the community and with my people.

There have been nine cyclist fatalities in the past five years, which is an increase on the previous five years. We took to the election the policy that we are interested in the Metre Matters concept. We did not commit to implementing it because we thought that was bad policy-on-the-run. One other state had gone there, so therefore why would you not have a close look at what they are up to there? We said we would refer it to the Road Safety Advisory Council for their consideration, particularly given the nature of Tasmania roads - is it doable?

The Road Safety Advisory Council has been to Queensland. It has gone and had a look and provided me with some recommendations. The Government has accepted the recommendation from the Road Safety Advisory Council, which took advice from a specially-convened cycling safety steering committee with all the representative bodies on there. It is an excellent committee.

Our decision was not to implement a minimum passing distance rule in Tasmania at this time. We have also accepted their recommendation that the Department of State Growth continues to monitor the Queensland trial of the rule, and reviews the evaluation of the trial. What we are talking about here is legislation to say it is offence to pass a cyclist, in a 60 zone or less, at less than a metre. It is also an offence to pass a cyclist at less than 1.5 metres at high speed limits. That is the law in Queensland. One of the key issues in Queensland - and it would be here - is that it is great to have the law, but can you prosecute somebody who does not do it? If you do not prosecute, does that actually bring into disrepute all of our road safety laws? It must be measurable to some degree and in Queensland they are finding that measurability is a real issue for them.

What is of more interest in the package of legislation in Queensland is the real way that cyclists are kept safe. That is the second tranche of the their laws, which is a law that allows a motorist to cross solid or double white lines for the purpose of maintaining that distance - if it is safe to do so. So let us say you are on a narrow road without a passing lane. You have one cyclist and the road is narrow. The safest thing to do here, rather than sitting behind the cyclist for the next 10 minutes, is to just cross over this double white line. They have changed the law up there so that it is a defence that you are able to cross those lines for the purpose of passing a cyclist, if it is safe to do. There is still a judgment call there and I have asked for work to be done in implementing a very strong educative campaign on the Metre Matters. At the same time, we are

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

considering implementing a rule change to the crossing of white lines. After all, that is the methodology that says to a motorist, 'You do not have to undertake risky behaviour. Keep the cyclist safe'.

We also had a promise to spend a lot of money on a vulnerable road users campaign, including special signage for cyclists where there is often cycling activity. Out in your electorate, Mr Chairman, it would be at the back of Bishopsbourne.

CHAIR - There are hundreds there every Saturday morning.

Mr HIDDING - Hundreds every Saturday morning - lycra clad

Ms FORREST - MAMILs.

Mr HIDDING - Sorry?

Ms FORREST - Middle-Aged Men In Lycra.

Mr HIDDING - Perhaps Mature-Aged Men In Lycra. Anyway, that is an area where you could expect lots of cyclists at any given time. We have worked out the state-wide, high-use cycling areas. Here they are. There was a death, not that long ago, on the West Tamar. There are always cyclists there. Richie Porte, one of the world's finest cyclists, trained on that highway.

CHAIR - We have a few of them.

Mr HIDDING - Yes, we have a sensational background in Tasmania.

Mr MULDER - If that works, why are we changing anything?

Mr HIDDING - Sorry?

Mr MULDER - If that produces such good cyclists, then it makes good training.

Mr HIDDING - Well, his answer to you - because he has been to Tasmania and launched the Metre Matters rule - would be that he is tired of losing friends on the road.

CHAIR - And there are injuries.

Mr HIDDING - For motorists, there are two aspects to the safety of cyclists, as vulnerable road users. The first is awareness of cyclists on the road. Once they are aware of them, how should they behave around them? We must not forget the whole awareness issue because the defence in the west Tamar accident was, 'I just did not see him'. There was only one car and one cyclist on the road, and yet - 'I just did not see him'. So there is whole body of work to be done around that.

CHAIR - I applaud this. It is the awareness and the educative campaign that really counts. I have to say, having ridden in most countries in Asia and in the States, in Europe and through Yorkshire and other places, that we have fewer motorists on the road here but our road manners are the worst of the lot. In a cycling tourism forum recently, I talked to a couple of the operators who were in that business and they said some of the negative feedback they were getting on

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Facebook and other social media about the road manners of Tasmanian motorists is actually impacting upon their business.

Mr HIDDING - I see this as one of my biggest challenges as minister responsible for road safety. I want to bring the motorist and cyclist communities up to a higher level of awareness and safe interaction between each other, without them losing confidence in each other. In Victoria, you might recall, Shane Warne was driving along and somebody bumped his mirror. He stepped out of the car and smacked this person. He was chided lightly by a police officer for doing so. Yet he became a cult hero because he had smacked a cyclist. If that is the level of understanding between each other over there, we do not want it in Tasmania. I will not ever launch into something that leaves people behind. I would plead with all elective members to not feed into any of that and make sure we advance together.

We could put up a sign that shows the international symbol - there is a cyclist on the road. Or we could say, 'Please look out for cyclists'. The Road Safety Advisory Council has gone out and done a big body of work, including focus groups and the rest. This is what they have come up with. As you see, we are using the Metre Matters concept as the basis for saying, 'There are a lot of cyclists here' and 'Go around them'. That addresses the awareness and -

Ms FORREST - It does not address the issue that the arrangement that Queensland has with their legislation where they can cross double white lines.

Mr HIDDING - It does not and I cannot because you would have to change the legislation.

Ms FORREST - I come across it on the West Coast, which staggers me. They want to ride up and down that hill; I certainly would not. There are not many places where you can pass a car there.

Mr HIDDING - It is all part of the cycling package. I am not averse to this notion of having a close look at Queensland and allowing that exception to the road rules for the purpose of passing a cyclist, where it is safe to do so. That is under review and we will see where we land with that. There is a lot of work happening in the cyclist space.

Mr MULDER - One of the issues is that a lot of these roads have gravel shoulders that the cyclists do not want to ride on. Are we also looking potentially at sealing the shoulders, and putting a line down the side so that there is space for cyclists to ride off the road? I am sure some of those roads do not have enough room, particularly in the flatland. A program of doing that would help keep that distance.

Mr HIDDING - It is a very good question and very much part of this whole package. I will ask Mr Gregory to comment.

Mr MULDER - Take the case of Cape [inaudible] eight or nine years ago now, where there was a car and single cyclist riding up a hill. The driver was blinded because it was just on sundown and facing straight into the west. She was riding on the inside of the white line because there were 400 acres of space on the left of gravel road. There she was - cleaned up, dead, and all because we had not sealed the road.

Mr GREGORY - We do have a lot of roads with unsealed shoulders. Research in recent years indicates that it concerns not only the safety of cyclists. The sealing of shoulders

dramatically reduces road risk. It reduces the risk of a driver dropping a wheel into the gravel and losing control. That is one of the predominant causes of crashes. We have a dispersed crash pattern but that is quite a predominant cause.

All of our new projects will have sealed shoulders and we will not be doing roads with unsealed shoulders anymore. The Midland Highway projects have two-metre sealed shoulders on them. We have tendered a project on the Esk Main Road which will be a continuation of shoulder sealing. We will start at the Midland Highway and we will work way all the way through. It has been identified as an issue.

While we do not have a specific program to go around and seal shoulders, because we are trying to deliver a whole range of initiatives, we will not be constructing those without sealed shoulders anymore. In urban areas we will always be looking to put off-road cycle facilities, which is what we are doing at Rokeby.

Mr MULDER - It encourages you to think about. How many more do we lose because we are not retro-fitting? You can identify the high cyclist routes.

Mr HIDDING - The other thing is where there is a lot of gravel, you might have a bit of space but because of the design of it, there is a lot of gravel in that section. You cannot drive or ride comfortably or safely either, so they have come out of that.

As part of our vulnerable road users' package, to complement the Share the Road campaign, there has been a pocket booklet developed based on the Amy Gillett Foundation one in NSW, which I think was a cracker. It is supported by radio and online advertisements specifically targeting road drivers and cyclists, outlining their responsibilities when using the road. This is the interface between too many drivers who say, 'Hang on. What are you doing on my road?'. And the cyclist is saying, 'This is my road too'. That poor interaction can end up in death.

The campaign uses a highly successful Amy Gillard Foundation collateral adapted to Tasmanians requirements. There is another long-term campaign being developed advising motorists to maintain the safe distance. This campaign includes television commercials, supported radio and bus-backs, online and other media. There is a lot going on in this space. Cyclists will come to realise that we are very committed to this.

CHAIR - In Tasmania we have a lot of narrow, winding roads. In other places, particularly in Queensland, you often see slow vehicle turnouts or bays. I would have thought that from an infrastructure point of view they are relatively inexpensive to construct. They do alleviate that frustration of the slow Winnebagos and trucks and everything else. It gives them an opportunity to pull off and let other traffic get past. Is that something that you might consider?

Mr HIDDING - We will let Mr Gregory respond to that, but the two turnouts on the way down to the Tasman Peninsula are of fairly dubious value. The problem is that nobody considers themselves a slow driver. Nobody accepts that they are slow and pulls over. In any event, you need longer than that to pass that person who is doing 70 kph. On the Great Eastern drive, which is the Tasman Highway coming down the East Coast and which we want to rename and brand as a terrific drive, we are committed to doing actual pull-offs, not pull-outs. This is so that you can actually come off the road in your Winnebago, and just pull over for a couple of minutes to let the line of traffic behind you keep going. It is our intention to greatly grow the number of visitors to

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Tasmania, through TT-Line particularly. We are likely see more of these RVs on the road. We have to have the ability for people to pass so that the frustration levels do not get out of control.

Mr GREGORY - The name of these things says it all - slow vehicle turnouts. We are not talking about 'slower' vehicles, but 'slow' vehicles. What you need for them to be effective is a big speed differential. A slow vehicle needs to be very slow compared to the others. If you have a vehicle travelling at 50 kph in a 110 kph zone, and everyone else is doing 110 kph, they can be effective. If you are talking about a 10 kph speed difference, they do not work. The ones on the Arthur Highway have not been successful because the speed differential is not significant enough.

It is not so much the windy roads. It is roads where you have hills and it is steep and you have a class of vehicle that slows down dramatically compared to everything else. That is when they can be effective. So, even though we are windy, there are a lot of places in Tasmania where they are not effective. If you are talking about small speed differences, you need a very long turnout to be effective as an overtaking lane. Overtaking lanes designed as overtaking lanes would be more effective.

CHAIR - It is getting close to 11am. We will take a break of 15 minutes.

The Committee suspended from 11.00 a.m. to 11.22 a.m.

CHAIR - In regard to the appropriation for this line item, there is a decrease as we get towards 2017-18. Is there any particular reason for that?

Ms NICHOLS - Footnote 4; the decrease reflects completion of programs associated with road safety levy, which is due to cease in December 2017.

CHAIR - Is there any breakdown of expenditure in regard to each of the segments of the output? What is allocated to the Road Safety Advisory Council, for example? Does that come under this?

Ms NICHOLS - Yes, it does. There are a number of funding streams that come under this output group. It is a general consolidated fund. There is a portion of the \$10.4 million we have available each year from the road safety levy for road safety initiatives. That \$10.4 million is spread across Shane's output group and this one. This output group also covers the funding we get from the Motor Accidents Insurance Board.

CHAIR - Can we have a breakdown? We can take that on notice.

Mr HIDDING - The difference in funding shown under that line item also includes a saving. Funding for the point-to-point speed detection, the initial rollout was costed between \$2.4 million and \$2.6 million, with ongoing costs of \$2.7 million over 10 years. We have parked that program for a number of reasons, particularly for financial reasons. That is now not in the forward Estimates, and we are looking now at a plan without point to point.

Ms FORREST - I was pleased to hear about your policy with regard to learner driver and provisional driver speed limits. I think it was a finding of the Road Safety Committee a few years ago. It is a really sensible thing to look at. Have you a time frame for rolling it out? There are some concerns about how it is going to be implemented.

Mr HIDDING - I was hoping you would ask me that because we have recognised in the policy and publicly that it was actually the work of your House, a very good select inquiry that identified the notion that a P-plate driver was limited to driving at 80 kph for the whole 12 months and then overnight, never having once driven at 81 kph -

Ms FORREST - Let alone 110 kph.

Mr HIDDING - then goes to a 110 kph overnight - a 30 kph hike. Where was that ever good policy? It is not. The second thing is, as I am one of many who spend way too many hours on the Midland Highway, particularly on busy weekends, the way that flow of traffic telescopes, gets into dangerous activity, starting to pass each other, and you wonder what on earth is going on. You know that when you finally work your way forward there will be some poor little L-plate or P-plate driver.

We have made the policy and will be a period of only months before we implement it, rather than three to four years. There are issues we are working on, but one of the things is that L2 drivers have to be allowed to drive at those speeds as well.

Ms FORREST - While they are supervised -

Mr HIDDING - Yes, otherwise you have that same step problem. Never having driven at that speed, suddenly they can. So a supervised L2 driver can now drive at 90 kph. Bear in mind our policy is for 90 kph on roads that are currently 100 kph, and where the main highway is 110 kph we would be limiting it to 100 kph. You still get a speed differential, but there are a lot of people who drive at 100 kph on 110 kph road, so that is not an issue.

Ms FORREST - The current proposal is that the learner driver gets their L1 through an online test. Ideally they do about 30 hours of supervised driving, but that is not logged. People do not necessarily have to do any number of hours, provided they can meet the L2 test. The L2 test is conducted at a particular point in time when some people are well prepared for it and probably should pass it, but do not, and there are others who perhaps have a really good day but they are actually quite bad drivers. Is there any thought given to logging that period to ensure that these people going for their L2s actually have a period of logged time before they are allowed to increase their speed?

Mr HIDDING - We have a better plan than that. We announced this in the election campaign and it is within not long of being implemented. It is that the assessment of L2 capability can be done by the instructors.

Ms FORREST - Excellent.

Mr HIDDING - Particularly up your way you have Mr Bentley and others who are excellent instructors.

Ms FORREST - So a competency-based assessment.

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr HIDDING - It is still the same assessment; the point is they can make the assessment on what they know about the driver. If, for instance, an assessor from the private sector does not

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

know the driver, he is required to be critical as to that person's capacity. The question of whether that whole thing ought to be competency based is of great interest to me. That would be safer in many ways. The regular frustration is of a novice driver failing, and then having to wait - and this is usually the biggest issue - not only having to pay the \$80 to retest, but having to wait three months before they can. The average age of Tasmanian novice drivers, achieving their P1 - what do you think that might be?

Ms FORREST - 22.

Mr HIDDING - It is 19 years and 8 months. Nearly 20 years of age. A lot of that is to do with this generation Z. They are not as motivated as we were, back in my day, to get your licence at 17 years and one day.

Ms FORREST - No, you get it a day before you are 17, so you driving at 17, that is what I did.

Mr HIDDING - So the policy changes that we are making as a result of my policy commitments, when I was the shadow, are already well under way.

Ms FORREST - I am pleased to hear that. It has been an ongoing problem. Some young people get very nervous with a person they do not know in the car. The only time they experience them is when they need to be assessed but they have been with another very skilled driving instructor, for a number of months sometimes. I noticed in your major initiatives the Driver Mentoring Tasmania. Is that the support for learner driver mentor program or not?

Mr HIDDING - Yes.

Ms FORREST - It is.

Mr HIDDING - It is a fantastic program.

Ms FORREST - I am personally interested. I am the chair of the steering committee.

Mr HIDDING - Well done. It is a local initiative that we should all want to be involved with. To encourage people who have time on their hands, and the commitment to spend an afternoon with a driver getting miles up in the log book. With broken families, mum might have a car but no time or mum might have her license but no car, those sort of things happen. This learner driver mentoring program, also provides, in some cases, a car. I launched one recently and it was stolen and smashed, sadly. Generally these people use their own cars.

Ms FORREST - The one in Burnie is quite different. It reaches out across the region, and there is also one in Kentish that is very good. The Red Cross run this one, and it is funded through that. They have two cars and it is very well structured. We were concerned about the ongoing funding for that.

Mr HIDDING - The good news is, we have announced, signed and delivered, a three-year funding package for learner driver mentoring program and encourage them to.

Ms FORREST - These are existing programs, what about the new ones.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr HIDDING - Yes, there is funding, for new programs.

Ms FORREST - As well as the existing ones?

Mr HIDDING - I will ask Penny to explain it.

Ms NICHOLLS - In November we will go out with the first round of funding, under this \$1.5 million that has been made available. That will be available for existing and new learner driver programs.

Ms FORREST - Is that going to be done just through DMT or are you going to go directly to the programs. I am self interested as I am on the chair of the advisory committee and there is often not great communication between DMT and the program itself.

Ms NICHOLLS - Part of that \$1.5 million will provide funding support to DMT as the peak body. The way we will administer that funding program is that DMT will work alongside DIER. DIER will be working alongside DMT in terms of the review, the evaluation of submissions and State Growth will be administering that scheme but we will have some input from DMT as we have had with other funding allocations from the Road Safety Levy to date.

Ms FORREST - Should the individual programs, like the ones in Burnie, Kentish and other places, go through DMT to get their funding or do they go direct?

Ms NICHOLLS - My understanding is the funding application will require them to come through State Growth and I will let you know if there is any change to that.

Ms FORREST - It takes a few years to start seeing results because these kids have to get the hours up and it is a vigorous process around linking mentors with learner drivers because there are a range of issues there potentially. We had three P-platers pass in a week recently, which is fantastic.

Ms NICHOLLS - There are some great programs. We have about 17 running across the state at the moment, particularly in the north-west; that is the area of the state where there has been a slow take-up rate. We are pleased to see some programs being well-established there.

Mr HIDDING - From a road safety point of view, it is not necessarily a social equity matter; this is about the fact that young people who are desperate for a licence without road time could be encouraged to cheat on their log book but not have the hours - squeak through their licence testing and be unprepared.

Ms FORREST - The footnote on the major initiative says you are funding it out of existing resources as opposed to having an allocation there for funding. So where is it?

Ms NICHOLLS - It is coming from the Road Safety Levy. The Learner Driver Mentor Program has traditionally and previous funding for DMT has come from the Road Safety Levy so that will continue.

Ms FORREST - On this broader area of infrastructure strategy, do you have information you could table about the cost of consultants and travel within this department area for the last two years that you could provide?

Mr HIDDING - I am sure we do.

Ms RUSSELL - For the last two years?

Ms FORREST - Yes.

Ms RUSSELL - We have it for the last year, Ms Forrest, but if you want it for the last two I can take that on notice and provide it to you.

Mr HIDDING - Do you want to take the whole question on notice?

Ms FORREST - I do not mind, whatever is easiest.

Mr HIDDING - In the financial year 2013-14, the former DIER awarded 62 contracts with a value of \$50 000 or more; excluding consultancy contracts the department awarded 26 contracts over \$50 000 for transport infrastructure projects worth a total of \$155 million. All 26 contracts were awarded to Tasmanian contractors. The department has a consultancy contract in place for provision of professional services to deliver projects allocated to it under the Government's CIP program. The panel comprises three Tasmanian-based companies: Pitt&Sherry, GH&D and the Jacob Group. That is consistent with our having prequalified civil contractors so that the people we are dealing with are almost ready to go, other than the price.

Under this panel arrangement, in 2013-14 the department awarded 20 contracts over \$50 000 with a total value of \$4.5 million. There are some small projects, probably \$30 000, \$40 000 to \$50 000 - that type of thing. We can provide this in writing as well as the other one.

Ms FORREST - That would be great. Are most of the contracts to Tasmanian companies?

Mr HIDDING - Yes, of the number of contracts awarded with a value of \$50 000 or more, 84 per cent were awarded to Tasmanian contractors. The total value of contracts over \$50 000 awarded to Tasmanian businesses was \$161 million, which is 98 per cent of the total value of contracts. Roads expenditure will do that.

In the financial year 2013-14, the former department received 136 bids outside of the panel arrangement with 108 of those submitted by Tasmanian businesses. We can get you that information and you can unpick that, and the same for the previous year.

CHAIR - We will go to 2.4 passenger transport.

2.4 Passenger Transport

Mr HIDDING - I should have been watching the clock a little closer but Mr Rutherford is responsible for this area of policy and needs to excuse himself a couple of minutes before 12 o'clock. If we can focus on passenger transport specifically right now, then we can see what we can deal with.

Ms FORREST - There was a review in 2007, from memory, and a range of recommendations came out of that. From memory there were recommendations about seat belts in school buses. Where is that up to? There was a renewal program as part of that deal, with

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

buses, as they were upgraded. There was a financial incentive for the companies to have newer buses.

Mr HIDDING - I will go straight to Mr Rutherford here, because I would only be guessing. I do not remember seat belts being part of that review

Mr RUTHERFORD - Seat belts on school buses have always been treated differently. On the sorts of routes we have in Tasmania, there is no evidence that seatbelts would make a substantial difference to safety. I need to emphasise that, because it is a statutory responsibility I have in this area, and I take it very seriously, but I can assure the committee that school children on Tasmania's school buses are far safer than they are in anybody's passenger car, at any time.

The real risks for children on our school buses are getting off the bus. That is a policy issue that constantly has our attention. There is also an issue with seatbelts, and the nature of the fleet and the fact that we have what is called 'three for two' for school children travelling on school buses. The demand for bus services is very peaky - it is twice a day - so the provision of school buses has a lot of capital locked up for a lot of time that is not getting a lot of use. There has been a process of shifting school children, where possible, to our normal general passenger services, but on the school buses proper that 'three for two' issue would be a significant cost were we to move to seat belts. As soon as you put seat belts on school buses you have lost 'three for two', and you will have a very large increase in costs for, as far as we can tell, a negligible safety benefit.

Ms FORREST - Some of the buses have been replaced with coach-type buses. The seats on those coach-type buses are more like individual bucket seats, so to have three kids on a seat like that, someone is sitting on the hard bit in the middle. That is hardly comfortable on a lot of our roads. Also, as I understand it, 17 children can stand.

Mr RUTHERFORD - There certainly are allowable standing capacities. We generally have problems at the start of the school year. Every year we have the problem of predicting the need and in that period the issues that arise are often to do with standing. To talk about that properly, I will need to get Martin Grace to the table - the manager of passenger transport services. He can probably shed further light on that for you

Ms FORREST - While he is coming to the table, I will make that point again. Passenger buses are now more coach-like, and have replaced older buses on some narrow, winding roads around my electorate. I am sure others have the same things. There is no anchor point for kids to hold onto. There is nothing to hold onto on the seat. These are little kids - kinder and grades 1 and 2 who can't reach the top of the seat, let alone hold anything that might have been available up high. When you have 17 children standing, and I have photos of kids on buses like this, where there is nothing to hang on to, you do not have to have a crash for them to go forward, you only need to stop suddenly. It is a big concern for a couple of services in my area, so I am concerned about how we deal with this.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I will let Martin comment on it, because it is a service delivery issue.

Mr GRACE - In terms of coach-style seating, the buses have to lend themselves to be amenable to 'three for two' as you pointed out. That is not always possible. In terms of the standing and 'three for two' there are requirements in the regulations about the technical specifications about when you can allow standing. Not all buses can have standing capacity.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Many of them have zero as the standing limit under the act. It depends on the logistics of the service partly as to whether that is possible.

Mr RUTHERFORD - I want to emphasis at the start of the year, as the commission, I take the view, that while we are sorting things out, I do not want children left at the side of the road. It is perfectly possible that the contracted party may use their judgement appropriately to carry children standing, when otherwise you would not. There was a very special situation in that early period.

Ms FORREST - This continues into the year.

Mr RUTHERFORD - That is the issue that Martin is talking to. Once we get into steady state, if they do not have standing capacity, we need to know about it and to make alternate arrangements if that is the case.

Ms FORREST - Do you have guidelines to direct all of this. Obviously, it is legislated in regulation.

Mr GRACE - Yes it is. That is what we use as our guidance. The 'three for two' only applies to primary school-aged children. They need to use their relative wits and on a bus where there is mixed primary and high school kids, the driver would arrange it so the primary kids were on the seats, 'three for two', and the high school kids were standing.

Ms FORREST - Some of these buses only carried primary school children.

Mrs HISCUTT - I was going to bring it up in the rural and special needs but now you are talking about it. The contracts for the school buses. How long are the contracts issued for?

Mr GRACE - Five plus five. We are in to the second five year period now, depending on the contract, but about 1.5 years into their second contract. They finish, broadly speaking, 2018 and 2019.

Mrs HISCUTT - There is a primary school and secondary school in my electorate that have been amalgamated, thus putting the finishing times of the two schools under pressure, because they finish at the same time. I think the contract is that the children have to be delivered home within half hour.

Mr GRACE - That is a guideline, that is not in the contract.

Mrs HISCUTT - That is a guideline. This particular school did write to the department asking for some help to get these kiddies away from the school quicker, because it was taking a lot longer than the guideline times. They received a letter that said there is no negotiation on the contract, until the end of the contract which means they have to wait 18 months before they can discuss the situation. Do you have a dispute process so they can talk to the department about this?

Mr GRACE - We have a dispute process in the contract with the operator. In this case we are not in dispute with the operator.

Mrs HISCUTT - No, this is with the parents group, who want this cleared.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr GRACE - With the parents, we have what is called the Student Transport User group and through various parent associations that are represented on that group, issues like that filter through to us. Also the Department of Education is represented on that group. We also have separate meetings with the Department of Education to regularly discuss these types of logistical issues.

Mrs HISCUTT - The bus driver's concern was the contractor was quite happy to load the children on, to have them on the bus, which then means you have more kiddies standing. Taking them around until it is their turn. I was disappointed from the letter, from the department, saying that we do not want to know about it, until the contract is up, which I thought was pretty harsh.

Mr GRACE - In the specific case of this service, which I am well aware of, putting on an extra bus and an extra driver could potentially double the cost of that particular service.

Mrs HISCUTT - I think it might have just been a matter of negotiation rather than a blunt letter.

Mr RUTHERFORD - We would normally deal through the Department of Education because the issue is essentially that we supply services to meet the needs of the Education department, which is why we put in place liaison issues and we need to be advised by the Education department of what their contractual needs are. We do not contract with individual schools.

Mrs HISCUTT - This parent group can access the Student Transport User's Group to lodge their complaints to see if something can be done about it?

Mr GRACE - Yes.

Mr RUTHERFORD - And to take up their concerns with the Department of Education.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes, well, it will not go any further.

Mr RUTHERFORD - It is a very important point. In our area, as the contracting party, we cannot deal with issues that stem from educational policy changes, except through dealing with the department because this minister and the secretary who holds the contracts are not in a position to deal with those issues. What I can tell you is that we put a lot of work into building a strong relationship with the Department of Education, so I would encourage that avenue to be pursued.

Mrs HISCUTT - Right, I will, thank you.

Mr GAFFNEY - Just a comment there. In my MLC capacity I have had some dealings with a couple of schools and we have had very good responses from the department in trying to come to a result. I have always found it very timely and they got back to us very quickly so I appreciated that.

Mr HIDDING - Terrific.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms FORREST - Minister, on your performance information here on page 10.20, it is bus contracts qualifying for a capital payment and then this performance measure is under review, can you tell me what this capital payment relates to and what it is for?

Mr HIDDING - Indeed, having just yesterday spent an hour with a major bus operator explaining the effects of all this on his business and how he can manage to keep very late model buses on the road, so I will hand over to Mr Grace.

Mr GRACE - From what I can tell from the distant past, this is a measure that came out through the Cooperation of Services Review that has been referred to earlier. While I was not here during that period, my guess is that is put in there as a proxy for trying to give people a feel for how modern our fleet is, so that the more buses that qualify for a capital payment the newer the fleet because we have age limits on when buses can receive capital under the contracts.

We are currently looking at whether there is a better way to describe that rather than that measure, the reason for which would not be apparent to most viewers.

Ms FORREST - Yes, I thought that is what it must have been related to. How many capital grants have been made to contractors or providers over that time?

Mr GRACE - It is not a grant as such, it is part of the standard contract payment.

Ms FORREST - I see, it is a benefit in their contract.

Mr GRACE - That is right, but only whilst those vehicles are within the capital, and that varies depending on the contract type as to what those rules are.

Ms FORREST - How many bus companies would have been able to access that in their contracts?

Mr GRACE - All bus companies can access it.

Ms FORREST - How many have?

Mr GRACE - That is the numbers that are in the -

Ms FORREST - This is a percentage?

Mr GRACE - That is right, rather than a hard number. Sorry, I do not have the hard numbers with me. We have roughly 500 contracts and about 180 operators.

Ms FORREST - Is it per contract or per operator?

Mr GRACE - That is per contract.

Ms FORREST - There are about 500 contracts?

Mr GRACE - Yes.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms FORREST - How much have they been given? I know it is part of the contract, but it is a department cost.

Mr GRACE - It is a cost. We have not added that up, but it is 50:50 of the contract payments capital and we spend nearly \$90 million per year on bus payments, so it is roughly one-third of that times the six-and-a-half years under the current contracts.

Ms FORREST - I think what you are saying is that you are going to review whether this is the most appropriate way to ensure the bus fleet is kept up to date?

Mr GRACE - To make sure of that, we are providing information that is most useful to the public through the budget papers. This is a measure that makes sense.

Ms FORREST - You are not thinking of abolishing that?

Mr GRACE - The cap and rules will stay the same during the course of the current contracts.

Mr HIDDING - What I am keen about as minister for this area is to allow the industry a very clear signal on what our policy is. We do not want them to be driving old buses. As much as possible we want them to invest and go to their bank and say, 'This is why I want to buy this \$450 000 bus', which would be second-hand but still only five years old, rather than continue with his 15-year-old bus. We want them all in modern buses.

Ms FORREST - The bus is only available up to 10 years of age - is that right?

Mr GRACE - It depends on the contact time.

Mr HIDDING - But it works. These companies are arranging their business models on government policy, which is great and what you want.

Ms FORREST - We are still seeing a lot of old buses in my electorate that are obviously not getting the benefit of that.

Mr GRACE - Everybody has equal access to that benefit. As soon as they put a new bus on and we approve that then they get access to that. One thing I would note is that during the course of the current contracts with this incentive payment mechanism we have seen a significant reduction in bus ages over that period.

Mr HIDDING - It works.

Ms FORREST - Have you got figures about the average age?

Mr GRACE - I was thinking that would be a more useful mechanism than what is in there at the moment. The average bus age makes more sense to most people.

Mr HIDDING - That is the reason it is under review, to show that there are better measures to be used to see if this policy is working.

Ms FORREST - Have you got a figure over the past five years of the average bus age?

Mr GRACE - Not on me at the moment.

Ms FORREST - Are you able to provide that?

Mr GRACE - Yes, I can provide that.

2.5 Traffic Management and Engineering Services

Mr HIDDING - I invite Mr Gregory back to the table.

Mr GAFFNEY - In regard to traffic management, one of the issues on the stretch of road I travel a fair bit between Bridgewater and Hobart is the fact that many drivers seem very reluctant to move into the left lane. There are no signs there but people should know that unless you are overtaking, and it is over 80 kph, you are meant to return to the left lane, but you will see them get into the right lane at Bridgewater and stay there right through to Hobart.

Mr GREGORY - There is an allowance under the legislation that when you have heavy traffic you can be in the right hand lane and you obviously want that; you don't want to have the right lane empty and the left lane backed up. There is probably not a lot more we can do other than try to educate people about how to use the road effectively. We have talked about cycling and pedestrians. We need to educate everyone that we are all sharing the road and we need to be courteous.

Mr Hall talked about the manners he experienced in other locations and that is one of the things we need to work on improving. It is not an infrastructure problem, it is a road user attitude problem. To be honest, we could fix a lot of issues on our roads and save a lot of infrastructure expenditure if we could get that element right.

Mr GAFFNEY - You cannot legislate for common sense.

Mr GREGORY - No, unfortunately not.

Mr HIDDING - Nor manners.

Mr GAFFNEY - If only people didn't use our roads, how long would they last?

Mr HIDDING - Yes. It is like being a member of parliament. If there were no constituents it would be wonderful.

Ms FORREST - That will be on the front page of the *Mercury* tomorrow.

Laughter.

Output group 7 - Subsidies and Concessions

7.1 Shipping and ferry subsidies -

[12.00 p.m.]

Ms FORREST - The forward Estimates for 2017-18 here relate to the funding for the international shipping election commitment. Besides the freight equalisation support you are giving, what subsidies will still exist after your international shipping election commitment?

Mr SWAIN - That is a combination of payments to the Bruny Island ferry, King Island and the safety net arrangement that applies to Flinders Island. I would have to check the amounts. An amount of \$280 000 is the balance of the contingency for Flinders; I think Bruny is \$100 000, and the balance is King Island.

Ms FORREST - Of that \$1.1 million?

Mr SWAIN - I can get you a breakdown of that. I have just been corrected, it is \$640 000 for the Bruny Island ferry.

Ms FORREST - What does the other \$11 million in subsidies relate to?

Mr HIDDING - This is the funding package we have put in the Budget, up to \$11 million, but you cannot budget for up to, you have to put \$11 million in. We lost our last international shipping service and it is currently costing exporters in Tasmania between \$20 million-\$40 million extra to access ships travelling overseas from the Melbourne port because of double-handling in one of the most expensive ports in the world. We have gone to the shipping market to say, 'To overcome those areas of market failure that led to the previous service failing, we want you to consider starting a new service and accessing up to \$11 million a year for three years to make that service viable in the fourth and outgoing years'. This was market-tested and I have personally worked on it very strongly.

I have been in and out of boardrooms discussing this with companies, some at the low end and some at the high end, and \$11 million was the highest, so the policy is about the highest because we want to get an international shipping service back in Tasmania. There has been substantial interest but we have drilled down now to two proponents and are advancing discussions with them to see whether we can land on a deal that shares some risk, overcomes the establishment costs, and sets in place a robust sustainability model for such a service.

Ms FORREST - Does this allocation indicate to the two proponents still in the race that there is \$11 million available?

Mr HIDDING - Yes, we wrote to them. The previous government eventually came on board with this policy. At first they said no but then realised it was the only way to go. To bring them to the table you have to say there is an amount of money available. The previous government said, 'There might be some money available', and talked on that basis, but we went back to the marketplace to say, 'We have up to \$11 million'.

Ms FORREST - You are saying 'up to', and I know you have to put a figure in, but -

Mr HIDDING - I can tell you we will spend nothing like \$33 million. It was not a target and it is a competitive process. It is an open-book process, so you have to see what you can spend it on. There needed to be enough to open their minds to say, 'How can we restart a sustainable service to Tasmania?', and it has worked, we are engaged and are moving forward. We have a lot of work to do yet but it is looking good. Gary, can you just finish off my answer?

Mr SWAIN - There are just two additions. In communications we have been pretty careful about the way it is expressed because of the concern that has been raised. There is language around value-for-money and there is obviously a competitive process. In addition, there has been

a request that all proposals show a transition to a sustainable service. So each of the proposals shows the ramp operator volume for exports and imports. Essentially, they have to show a credible path towards a sustainable service after three years.

Ms FORREST - Otherwise, you are going to have to put this under a line item for many years in the future, potentially. That is not the policy position of the Government.

Mr HIDDING - No. I would see it as sad. Business cases do not write themselves but they are much easier to write when you have some money upfront to overcome the same market failures. These failures relate to the need to ship empty containers back, because we ship out 40 000 but only bring in 10 000. Sadly, in Australia, we have the insane arrangements where an international shipping container is different from a national shipping container. It is just nuts. What is wrong with our industry? CHEP makes billions a year out of wooden pallets, but they do not fit in international shipping containers, so they are the wrong size. This goes back to why states have all got different gauges for railways. But with those sorts of constraints, we have a long way to go.

Mr GAFFNEY - Chas Kelly, who is well-respected in transport on the north-west coast, raised this as an issue. I would like to hear the answer.

Mr HIDDING - He would be smiling now because he knows precisely what is going to come and it goes like this. When we lost the last international shipping service, 40 000 containers in and 10 000 containers out transferred to Searoad and Toll. They picked up the business overnight. It is argued by the shippers that not long after there was a substantial price rise across the board. The people who used to use the international service had to meet the extra costs of having to go to Melbourne before they could access the cheap shipping. So Mr Kelly from SeaRoad, with the greatest respect to him, picked up this business after somebody else failed and on the resumption of an international shipping service, would be likely to get that business back off him. That is, the market had worked and so what he is saying is, 'You are using public money to try to get somebody else to take these boxes to Asia'. That is precisely what they have to do because it is much cheaper. That is the market at work. But we would not use that as a permanent thing; it is only an interim measure to restart the service. In Devonport, that was a competitor speaking against this international shipping service.

Mr GAFFNEY - He is a competitor who lives and works in this state, and so do all of his workforce. The indirect flow-on and benefit from the government using that service is possibly going to be more beneficial for the wider community than an international link where the money goes elsewhere. I suppose that is where he is coming from.

Mr HIDDING - If the price were close, that would be an issue to consider. But I can tell you that an international T unit – 20 foot equivalent container leaving Tasmania to go to Shanghai is hugely expensive currently because it is via Melbourne. An average price of a container between Launceston and Melbourne is \$730. Out of Melbourne to Shanghai it is \$600 to \$700. So if you add that to that, you have doubled or more your price. This is why we are absolutely entitled to work in this space to try to get an international shipping service back. If we are not successful for some reason, he retains the business. If we are successful and we use some money upfront to try to overcome a market failure, we have done the right by the exporters of Tasmania. We had the conversation on that day and I said to him, 'You are saying nothing that a competitor against this service would not say'.

Mr SWAIN - Just to put it in context as well, the T unit equivalent unit trade for Tasmania is about \$500 000 per year. The international is about \$40 000. Even if there is a new shipping service, you have half of that; you are talking \$20 000 not \$500 000. That would be probably lower than the annual growth rate in boxes just correlated to Gross State Product. So our advice to the minister has been that there are significant decisions being made involving Toll and SeaRoad about new vessels and their commitment to the ongoing Bass Straight service. So I think this will be very important to the people who are shipping and want to export directly to Asia. But it is not a major factor in overall demand for the Bass Straight service. So it should not effect the core of their business.

Mr HIDDING - The good news is that he is one of Tasmania's finest business people. He is a success story that all Tasmanians should be proud of, not just the north-west. He is a major shareholder in our shipping company which provides a great service. They have just ordered a new vessel and it is under construction. There is no talk about this thing now - it is live. It is being built in northern Germany - a vessel worth more than \$100 million. These people and fellow directors have put in their entire equity to get a brand new ship built in northern Germany. That is a wonderful thing for a Tasmanian company. They did that and financed it in the full knowledge of what that state government was up to with that bit of a market.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

7.2 Metropolitan General Access Regular Passenger Transport Services.

Mr FARRELL - Some of these questions have already been put by other members in other parts but that is all right. Just in relation to the general access, it says that there is \$3.3 million per annum outside of the contract service delivery contractors. I wondered what these contracts concern.

Mr HIDDING - The two guys that have come back to the table might not have heard the question as they were coming up. Sorry.

Mr FARRELL - This was just in relation to 7.2. It says that in this output, funding is to Metro Tasmania and \$3.3 million per annum is outside the contract service delivery for contractors.

Mr HIDDING - Every year the State of Tasmania, the taxpayers, provide an amount of money to Metro. Including this \$3.3 million that you are talking about. It is now almost \$40 million year to run Metro. We are doing that because we are civilised state and we believe in public transport. There is mass passenger transport and we have chosen buses. I have to say, and I placed on the record in the other House, that we must temper our policy in this space and the amount of money that we spend is in the full knowledge that the city of Hobart has chosen policy settings for itself which work directly against public transport policy. That is the provision of an extraordinary number of relatively low-cost car parks in Hobart. It could be argued that the people of this end of the island have voted with their steering wheels. They have chosen to drive themselves to work and park in these car parks. In that environment, it is very difficult to run a high quality metropolitan bus service, but we are doing it and Metro do a great job. Incidentally, a new CEO has just been appointed - Mr Stuart Wiggins. In the face of that kind of urban planning, it is very difficult to attract full-fare-paying passengers. There is one area of great interest, they have a new service out to the northern suburbs called Turn Up and Go, and it is

working. There is an 8 per cent passenger growth and that is exciting. There are some good things on the horizon.

The extra money we are talking about here is a bus replacement program or a bus enhancement program that was put to Treasury some time ago to show that whatever they are doing with the services, there is not the money to upgrade the bus fleet.

Mr HOPE - This is a source of funding that has been provided to Metro each year since 2009-10 and specifically to enable them to progress against the Disability Discrimination Act Transport Standards targets. It is primarily spent on buses but also on bus infrastructure.

Mr FARRELL - That covers my next question about DDA, that is good. The rest is self-explanatory when it comes to Metro and I understand it is a substantial amount of money out of your budget, minister.

Mr HIDDING - Yes, it is. The ongoing DDA requirements are not something we could resolve overnight but there is expenditure every year and it is getting better, and so it should. We absolutely support the rollout of that program as it is affordable.

Mr MULDER - I pick up on your observations about Hobart City and the free parking on The Domain which is your basic driver and also the high-frequency passenger services. I do not know whether you have read the report by the select committee of this House that looked at integrated transport options. Those were things that were noted in that study.

Mr HIDDING - What was the inquiry?

Mr MULDER - Integrated Transport Options, a committee B inquiry, a sessional committee of this place which looked at all those issues, including something we will get to a bit later on, about public transport, ferries, light rail and all those things.

You will see that the previous government took some of those bits and pieces onboard. It is not that we do not appreciate the issue. You will also note that before we were able to publish the report, due to the examining, the Hobart City Council started to wind back the free parking on The Domain and they instituted the high-frequency passenger service - once again without acknowledgement of the work of the House's committee. But that is fine. I wanted to make you aware that some of those issue that you identified have been identified by this committee with suggestions for the way forward.

Mr HIDDING - When I was in Brisbane recently I spoke to a businessman and he explained that he had to hurry because every five minutes he spent speaking to me was costing him another \$5. I said, 'What is that about?' He said that for him to be in the city of Brisbane, his parking fees were likely to be just under \$70 for the afternoon. That brave policy has funded the BRT, the rapid transport system. That is how brave you have to be to get a massive, major project like that up.

Mr MULDER - That is what this study talked about, the opportunity costs of being able to shift the patterns through policy and recovering money. I thought I would bring that report to your attention.

Mr HIDDING - That is what it is about in Brisbane because they chose not to spend any more money on the roads and just ping them hard for being here.

7.3 Rural and Special Needs School Bus Services -

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, we have covered a fair bit on the rural buses and school children. I will cover on two points. First, the special needs buses. Do you think there is enough transport available for children with special needs and we are talking about wheelchair-adaptable buses here, I presume?

Mr HIDDING - I am not qualified to answer that. I guess that is a subjective call. I know of the issue and would probably want to hear more from people like yourself as to whether you think that is for needs met or not. We can certainly explore that with the policy officers in a moment, but the budget for rural and special needs school bus services this year is \$22.36 million. Contracted bus services are provided free of charge to students attending their local rural school as well for students with special needs attending urban schools, so it is two steps. Other than for special-needs students, services of this type are provided where the distance travelled is five kilometres or more between home and school. In addition, there must be at least 10 students requiring transport and no other form of government-subsidised public transport available in the area. Expenditure on these services was approximately \$19 million in previous years and is expected to be \$21 million 2014-15. You will see that the special needs part is the smaller part of that. I will ask Martin to speak to that.

Mr GRACE - With special-needs students it is a multistage process. The first thing is that the Department of Education does the assessment of every individual student's needs. Where that student is able to take public services they are directed towards those services. The next level of assessment is whether the parents can take the students or is it reasonable in those circumstances. Where other alternative options have been exhausted they will talk to us about a bus service. In order to put on a bus we need to have enough students to justify the size of that vehicle and there are minimum numbers we have for that. Where there are not sufficient numbers going to a particular location the Department of Education will look at alternative forms of transport themselves but if there are enough they will come to us and we will discuss the potential to either amend an existing route or put on a new service. A case in point is that we recently tendered for a special-needs service between Huonville and Mount Nelson and are in the process of finalising that at the moment. There were sufficient numbers there to justify a bus.

Mrs HISCUTT - I am glad to hear it is number-based because I had heard wild stories that there was going to be wheelchair access on all buses and I thought that would be a different issue.

Mr GRACE - That is a different issue. That is the accessible transport issue that Mr Farrell was discussing earlier. There are Federal Government guidelines about how many public services need to be accessible over a staggered period of time and various compliance ratios. We work with the bus operators on that. We make sure the capital funding we provide to operators has funding for a level of accessibility but they are required through the federal laws to meet those obligations in terms of how many services are accessible. Wheelchair accessibility is one element of that but there are a lot of other elements of accessibility for people with disabilities and special needs.

Mrs HISCUTT - Could you comment on the north-west commuter bus pilot program?

Mr HIDDING - This is a discussion of how long it takes to catch public transport between Devonport and Burnie. It takes 40 minutes by road and over two hours by bus, so why on earth would you get on a bus? There is a whole number of issues there so this is a project that is well underway and there is a lot of consideration being taken there and all players are in the tent working on this issue. One of the key issues is that there are two operators and one goes this far and one goes that far. Yes, they meet in the middle but probably at the wrong times with the wrong buses and all that stuff. To integrate something is what we are working on now. I am of the view that in this day and age if it is 40 minutes by car a bus service should take no more than an hour, otherwise why would you get on it?

Ms FORREST - Unless you had absolutely no other option. That is the only reason you would get on it.

Mr HIDDING - That is right, and that is a very poor bus service. There has been too much of this thinking, so it is coming to a head and I promise you, one way or another we will pull this off. This will start changing the thinking right along the whole area where those people live about the accessibility of doctors, specialist services and things like that. Public transport is a given in other parts of Tasmania. It ought to be a given there too, so I am very motivated to see that happen.

Mrs HISCUTT - I look forward to seeing how it works.

Ms FORREST - While we are on that point, what are you doing about the west coast trial?

Mr HIDDING - There is a bunch of work on that but it is seriously problematic and there are shifting sands because of mine closures, people moving out and that type of thing. There is a body of work done on that, we are not there yet and it is difficult. Ideally if there is a service, you would want it to be regular enough for people to plan to say, 'I will wait till such-and-such a day where I can get the bus up and back in one day, and it is comfortable', and all that stuff.

Ms FORREST - I am sure in the process of doing that you are looking at other options like community transport and that sort of thing as well, because one of the challenges is that not everybody goes to the doctor on the same day at the same time.

Mr HIDDING - I would be keen for you to have some input as a local member because you are dead right, it is hard, so we will make a note to invite Ms Forrest in to chat on that.

Mr GAFFNEY - You said they have contracts, are they for five years?

Mr GRACE - They are five plus five.

Mr GAFFNEY - In a situation with changing demographics with some schools that have great changes because of people moving out or people moving in, or whatever, can an arrangement be made between you and the bus contractor to revise the contract?

Mr GRACE - If numbers decline over time and no longer justify having a bus the service can be removed, and we have the capacity to do that. Alternatively, if the numbers increase to the point where a bus is required in an area that has never had one before, there is an option to put on a new service.

Mr GAFFNEY - Some of the issues arise when parents choose to send their children to a certain school that has certain values and bypasses their local school, or it is out of area, and a lot of times it is faith-based or there is a type of methodology used at a certain school. That is where I think there are some issues.

Mr GRACE - Absolutely you are right. Under our current guidelines for rural school buses one of the first tests is about going to the local school, so a new or extended rural service is primarily provided to the nearest home area school as defined by the Department of Education. In rural areas that is primarily government schools anyway, just by the nature of the dispersion. The independent and religion-based schools tend to be based in the city anyway, with a few exceptions here and there. That is in terms of putting new services or extending existing ones. There are some existing services that operate to those non-government schools, though.

7.4 Non-metropolitan general access regular passenger transport services

Mr FARRELL - The area I am in is served pretty well by O'Driscolls. It is a really good service with modern buses and it all seems to be working pretty well. A couple of the smaller issues that come up from time to time are when they go to contracts. When they buy their new buses, their finance term is for this long and their contracts are for a shorter period of time which makes it a little difficult, I am not sure if the department is working with the operators to address this issue but it makes it difficult for them to finance their buses over a long period of time.

Mr GRACE - That is a challenge to be recognised and it is something we are going to have to grapple with prior to the contract season in 2018-19 so we are very aware of that and we are in the early stages of thinking about how those sorts of issues can be addressed.

Mr FARRELL - It is a system that is working well in that particular case and it would be nice to keep it. The other issue that comes up and it is not just confined to the area that I represent but as far as bus stops and shelters go because the bus operators think that maybe it is a state and local government responsibility. Local government thinks it is a state government and bus operator responsibility and it seems to be that question keeps going round and round to who supplies bus stops. In the old days Rotary clubs would knock up the bus shelter here and there but now with health and safety and all those sort of concerns you cannot put up a tin shed.

Mr HIDDING - You are right, it is historical that somehow or other Metro has ended up responsible for bus shelters everywhere and now with DVA requirements you cannot just put a bus stop somewhere. They are terribly expensive and some of the areas where bus stops are there is not even a footpath and yet we have to provide a special footpath in the middle of the gravel footpath. It is kind of weird but we have to do that.

It needs to be a policy shift across the community. I have raised it with some local government areas. I am sure you will not mind me referring to mayor Foster of Brighton, it was discussed with him. He said from their point of view they would rather have control of the bus stops. The minute they see graffiti on them they can leave it and fix them, keep them nice and neat, fix up a paver that has lifted up, whereas Metro cannot be there every five minutes fixing the bus stops.

That is an indication, and other councils have expressed the same to me. They are, all other things being equal, the kind of thing a local council ought to be doing. Funding is an issue and

the cost of it. In mayor Foster's case the number of bus stops he can see that as a huge issue. I do not want to discuss unfunded mandates around people in local government because that has been a very big industry in the past.

If you were to go to a white board and figure out who is best placed to look after bus stops, it would be local government. There is this policy void where nobody knows who is responsible and who should set up in the first place and hand it over or should somebody set it up themselves in the first place. It is, after all, a service to the local people, kids or ladies waiting to go the supermarket. You identified an area that is not really tidy enough and we need to have a conversation.

Mr GRACE - It also raises a question as to what is a bus stop now. Is it where a bus halts? But more towards the last with there being rule services with a changing cohort of students every year, that the stops can also change over time and it does become difficult to try matching infrastructure except where we have regular ongoing stops. There is also the issue of who owns the roads in terms of providing the space and appropriate places to pull over and for kids to congregate. Shane's area does a great job in that regard on the state radio network and governments also in regard to their own back yards in providing stopping space.

There has to be ongoing level of demand at each of those sites. In terms of the blades and the shelters to indicate somewhere where people can use a service, largely it falls on the operators, that responsibility, and operators have been doing a good job in that regard. Sometimes there is funding for facilities such as park and ride facilities provided through the department.

Mr GRACE - We had a park and ride program and also a program specifically to upgrade bus stops on the urban fringe, improve the amenity and deviate compliance and we are at the tail end of that program now. In regard to Park and Ride, there are two projects nearing completion. One is at Pioneer Avenue, New Norfolk and the other is at Station Lane in Sorell.

Mr HIDDING - Since it has been raised - Park and Ride - it would be wrong for me to avoid it. Park and Ride, as an initiative, has been defunded in this Budget. There were allocations for it last year and there are not this year, because there were some substantial failures.

The Government put a lot of money into the Kingston Park and Ride, but we cannot encourage Tasmanians to use it. It is costing a lot of money. Some 15 cars a day park there - 15 to 30 cars a day - which is less than 1 per cent of the congestion on the road it is seeking to address. The money you expend is just not worth it. It is problematic in Tasmania to get this up, and both New Norfolk and Sorell have the same problem. People are not using it.

Mr FARRELL - The benefit for the one in New Norfolk was that the bus stops in the street were in core locations. It may help solve that issue, but whether it has the effect that Park and Ride is meant to have, I do not know.

Mr HIDDING - We have a car culture in Tasmania that is pretty hard to crack.

Mr MULDER - We only have congestion during school terms. You don't even need the flow management on the bridge when it is school holidays, but other times you do. People need to have incentives to use public transport.

Mr HIDDING - I am learning that. I do not live in this area -

Mr MULDER - Is a congestion tax the way to persuade parents that little Johnny does not have to be dropped right at the door of the school by mum? That causes all sorts of congestion around schools, and where the bus transfers occur in the malls.

Mr HIDDING - I learned that yesterday, at a meeting with councils from your area and the Hobart International Airport people about transport solutions out that way. I had no idea about the awful congestion in the morning. Awful in the Tasmanian sense of course - anywhere else in Australia they'd go, 'What, that is not a traffic snarl, this is.'

Mr MULDER - If the traffic is moving, it cannot be blocked.

Mr HIDDING - But I was not aware that in school holidays the problem does not exist. There is no congestion, which is very interesting. That does not make the problem go away because you have issues with the airport, et cetera, but you make a very good point.

Mr MULDER - On the bridge it is very interesting. Just after school start time there is congestion on the way back across the bridge. Around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, at the famous Mornington roundabout, with St John Paul School over the road - congestion. But that's where the solution lies.

Mr HIDDING - Yes. I am excited about working towards a better understanding of movements on the road. Why are people on the road? Are they travelling to work, or dropping children at school, as you mentioned? There is so much to understand about the movement of people on the roads. If they are travelling into Hobart, are they coming to work? Where are they working?

Mr MULDER - I can give you some clues. A lot of them are tradies heading off to the northern suburbs and to the Brighton Industrial Estate. They have no other means of getting there except via the eastern side of the Tasman Bridge. They cannot go through the back of Flagstaff Gully Road, so you end up with crunch points at the eastern side of the Tasman Bridge. They try to swap lanes to get in the left-hand lane so they can get to the clover leaf at Cleary's Gates. Any time of the day there is a huge back up over the Cleary's Gates Road, because there is no access from the Mornington roundabout area out to the Bowen Bridge. Fix it.

Mr HIDDING - I have heard that from you in a number of different ways, and you make very good points. I promise we will get our heads around that stuff.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Minister, what is the process whereby bus stop move from time to time? Who determines where the bus stops are located? Is it through community consultation, or does the driver look at where people are waiting? How do you determine where a bus stop can be?

Mr GRACE - It can come from any number of forms. We have forms on our website, where people can apply for a change to a bus stop. The operator may have identified the issue themselves. We work with the operator on identifying what the best possible sites are, and our routes and timetables change quite regularly from year to year, particularly the ones where there is such a variable population movement. To answer your question, it can come from a number of sources.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Do you have a minimum number of people at a stop, or is there a criteria you set?

Mr GRACE - There is no set number. It is something we try to get a feel for with the operator about whether it is reasonable. You have efficiency reasons as to why you do not want to stop at every particular point, where someone might want to be picked up from outside their front door as is often the case. If there is a distance to where the nearest stop is, or if there is a safety reason as to why the stop needs to be moved, and that is often the case, that is when we might think about moving some of those things and we would also talk to Shane's area from a safety perspective about whether that is an appropriate place for a bus to be pulling over.

7.5 Construction of Streets in Towns.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Can you tell me how this works - construction of streets in towns - is that money set aside, to work with local government where there is work being done in the main street? Or is it a hang over from local government and the old DIER system?

Mr HIDDING - I will hand over to Shane, but 'the total of all undertakings given by the state each financial year shall not exceed \$52 000'.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It is not a lot of money I know. I was just wondering how it happens.

Mr GREGORY - To be honest it is a hangover from 30 years ago. It came about when the state operated a highways fund, which has not operated for 20 years, and has specific payments in and out of funds. It is a bit of a legacy issue and is very rarely used. It is very rare for councils to even apply for the money. We tend to work in different ways, where we have state roads running through towns, and council wants to do some work, street scaping. We tend to negotiate a contribution, which we did in Strahan, and also in Tullah. It is probably long past its use-by-date to be honest.

Mr MULDER - Is that a hangover from days when we used to hypothecate registrations into the Transport Commission in those days for them to go

Mr GREGORY - Yes.

Mr MULDER - When we decided to set up the appropriately named Con Fund?

Mr GREGORY - Yes, it is for local government to ask for a contribution of up to a third, but it is capped at \$52 000, so essentially it is a tiny amount of money.

Mr HIDDING - It would have to be one council applying for a project work worth \$150 000 for an unmade street, which will get you about one metre, as you would know. But it is there, and it is in the budget and it is safe.

Mr MULDER - I am happy to provide consultancy services.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. We have finished with output group 7, so what we have left is CIP and MAST. To finish under infrastructure, we will move to CIP and have members any questions to the minister?

Capital Investment Program

Mr HIDDING - The central point about CIP is the Midland Highway. There is an offer on the table from the Federal government for \$200 million over the next five years, which is the first tranche of their \$400 million package. There is a requirement for us to match that on the 80/20 basis. So for every \$1 we put up, we get \$4, which is a pretty good deal. Therefore scratching and scraping but we are putting the money up. There will be a lot of money spent on the Midland Highway over the next few years. Predominantly the expenditure is in the big project in the north of the state, Breadalbane to Perth and on the north-west coast, the link road from Illawarra Road - you know how you come into the railway section and drive along Drummond Street? Illawarra Road essentially goes straight onto the Perth bridge. That project as well will flow on after the Breadalbane one.

[12.45 p.m.]

Ms FORREST - That will take about three seconds off my trip; that will be lovely.

Mr HIDDING - It will take a fair bit off. It is very unsafe in Perth for B-doubles to be turning in that corner.

CHAIR - Minister, you have \$32 million there - when do you expect actual work on the ground to start?

Mr HIDDING - Breadalbane to Perth is a major project. There is going to be a four-lane highway there and a major undertaking. The major studies have been done but there are still design works to be done. We need to engage with the Devon Hills people as to the nature of their treatment there. Given that we can only construct in the summer periods, and the summer period is tomorrow, there will not be a bulldozer there this summer but there is a lot of preliminary work taking place. By next summer it will be all guns blazing and over the next two to three summers, and then morphing into the Illawarra Road project. However, it is important to understand there is a whole range of projects along the length of the highway that will get underway this summer. This is under the Safer Roads principles. We would all have to agree the Midland Highway's serious crash toll is way too high. I will ask Shane to speak about the projects that we will get out this summer.

Mr GREGORY - The strategy around the Midland Highway is to bring the road up to a consistent three-star AusRAP rating over a 10-year period. Consistency is very important if you get dramatic changes in the standard of a road that is when motorists get caught up. They get used to something and then it is not there. We have the bigger project that will take quite a bit of lead time and we have spring and summer flora and fauna surveys, and a whole range of things we have to do which will lead to those things being constructed next year. Next year and the following year are the peak funding profile from the Australian Government in the funding of this project.

We will be delivering approximately \$24 million worth of work this summer, which will be looking at immediate safety improvements. We are targeting a number of junctions that need to be upgraded. One is the Esk Main Road junction; there will be some improvements there for the vehicles coming out of Esk Main Road and heading north and also where it runs into Esk Main Road. We will be upgrading Mud Walls Road and Sorell Springs Road junctions to make those a bit safer. We are doing some work at the Kings Meadows roundabout. At the moment, if you are coming out of Launceston and want to get onto the Kings Meadows connector, because of the

way the junction works on the connector road, traffic can bank up back onto the highway and motorists are getting caught. They are arriving at the tail of a stationary queue and that is causing problems there. That will be done this summer.

We are also looking at some alignment improvements south of Tunbridge. We have some geometric issues there, so we will get that done this summer. Then we will be looking at existing overtaking facilities that are not physically separated. There is the section from the top of Dysart Hill through to Kempton where we have overtaking lanes but no physical separation between them. We will be putting a barrier down there and widening the road to provide some additional width. We will also be doing that north and south of Spring Hill.

Mr HIDDING - And the pavement surface on Constitution Hill. That starts this summer as well.

Mr GREGORY - The principle is 'let's go out and get the immediate safety improvements we can this season' and then we will be looking to provide additional overtaking facilities and more comprehensive works that take more effort in planning and environmental approvals. We will deal with those things we can do pretty much within the existing formation or road reserve. We can get those done quickly and they will provide an immediate benefit because we will get separation of opposing traffic flows. We have had a couple of those sites where there have been serious or fatal crashes and this treatment will remove that risk immediately over this summer. We will then progress to more complex roads.

CHAIR - Minister, can I ask you about the Lake Secondary Road which goes right through part of your electorate and mine, the most strategically important road in Tasmania, one might suggest, going right through the centre? In the forward Estimates there is about \$4 million expected to be spent there. There is a 26-kilometre unsealed section and one would hope a start would be made on that for all sorts of reasons, not the least hire cars.

Mr HIDDING - It is my desire to see that road sealed all the way through. Over this period of government in the out years there is \$4 million which will be from up to Liawenee and in the out years from that, in our budgeting it certainly will continue. I place on the record that we will get it sealed.

CHAIR - I am highly pleased.

Mr HIDDING - I am on your side, it is in the heart of my electorate too. It is a race track for north-west people wanting to get to Hobart in a pleasant trip rather than having to go around the boring highway.

Ms FORREST - Regarding the Murchison Highway upgrade there is \$8 million there and there is \$4.3 million for this year's budget on the \$21 million, so is there two lots of money here?

Mr GREGORY - The \$4.3 million is for the wrap-up of previous projects that haven't quite been finished and then we roll into another suite of projects. The \$4.3 million is about finishing the ones where we targeted specific locations with safety problems, including overtaking. The next \$8 million effectively starts to join those up so we start to get a consistent corridor. It is the residual of community roads and then running into the new fund.

Ms FORREST - It is not additional work?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr HIDDING - It is basically stage 2 of Murchison. The stuff we have asked for agreement to go around public works because it is an ongoing project keeps going. As you know, all the Murchison Highway has to be done.

Ms FORREST - I can't see why it wasn't in the project to start with - maybe timing.

Mr HIDDING - There are probably funding reasons for that.

Mr GREGORY - We started a long-term view of the Murchison under the previous round of funding. We always had a long-term view of the corridor and then with the funding available we targeted the highest priority location. The plan has always been to come back and fill those in to get a consistent corridor.

Mr HIDDING - But the rules are you cannot take a project to Public Works over the next 12 years. It has to be done in parts. That is problematic, particularly with the summer season stuff. If you want to race some stuff out there - hello, Public Works, that is another 10-12 weeks.

Ms FORREST - Just beyond the link road turnoff as you go down that hill it still remains unsealed and obviously that will be treacherous.

Mr HIDDING - That is a function of missing the cut-off date of the weather. In previous years it could be argued to go ahead and give it a crack but then you would lose your surface.

Ms FORREST - I don't think anyone has come to grief there. The west coast road in Strahan, \$4.9 million - what is that for?

Mr HIDDING - This is a project that has a final step to take in the Public Works Committee, I understand, although it is not for me to know these things. They have finalised that and that will report to the parliament.

Mr GREGORY - It relates to the significant investment in the salmon industry on the harbour and there is a series of local government roads that were going to start to take significant truck traffic. The state had always owned the Esplanade coming down into the Strahan and because everything was moving away from being a working port toward more of a tourist facility the Esplanade had much less strategic value from a state point of view in terms of vehicle movement and the roads that were becoming more important were Harvey Street, which has always been a council road, and with the salmon industry development, the roads out to that development.

Ms FORREST - Andrew Street.

Mr GREGORY - Yes, Andrew Street, Ocean Beach Road and Macquarie Heads Road. With some savings that were achieved over the community roads program, we went to the former government and said, 'We think these are roads that should really be owned by the state and we should fund this because it supports a significant industry and significant economic development', so we did a road exchange with the council. The council now owns the Esplanade and the state Government owns Harvey Street, Andrew Street and the roads out to the point where the private access roads comes off just past the airport to head in. This funding is using savings out of community roads to upgrade those to an appropriate standard for trucks.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms FORREST - I know there has been some ongoing consultation and community work on this in a very collegial way with the previous government, and I hope it will continue with this Government, on getting a bypass to bring all the salmon trucks and other trucks that relate to the industry off Andrew Street and getting them around the back.

Mr HIDDING - I have been briefed by the locals and I get their point of view. It is fairly big-picture stuff they are talking about and we need to get this first project embedded and start arguing for a solution for the rest of it.

Ms FORREST - There is nearly \$5 million for this and I know some of the work needs to be done on those streets anyway, but wouldn't you reduce the need for some work on those streets if you built the bypass?

Mr GREGORY - The cost of a bypass would be significantly greater. You would still have to do work on Macquarie Heads Road and a section of Ocean Beach Road and then you would add a couple of multiples of the \$4.5 million to get the bypass in.

Mr HIDDING - That was my issue when I was briefed on that. I asked the question on the same issue.

Ms FORREST - Has it been costed?

Mr HIDDING - No, but it is \$10 million plus. It gets into that stratosphere, but we need to keep talking about it.

Mr GREGORY - There is a general principle we need to apply in Tasmania at a state and local government level. We are not a wealthy state. We have a small, dispersed population and a relatively large road network. Most of our roads do not carry a lot of truck traffic. We talked earlier about the peak traffic and the impact on schools. Our peak is about 30 minutes on most roads. We do not have a congestion problem and for most -

Ms FORREST - Congestion is not the issue here, it is the heavy vehicles using that road, cracking house foundations and things like that.

Mr GREGORY - There is a lot of perception about damage to houses. We do pre-construction and post-construction inspection. There was a significant issue raised by the Richmond community around the link road but in reality, the effect is pretty small, if at all. There is this view that truck movements create this great vibration through the ground but generally they do not. You get problems if you have very rough roads and trucks are hitting joins or something that causes a shudder but generally speaking they do damage to pavements and not houses.

[1.00 p.m.]

Ms FORREST - One of the things where immediate action was taken, in collaboration with the salmon producers and the Government, was to reduce the speed limit coming in there for trucks. That made a big difference. It was 80 kph coming along there.

Mr GREGORY - The speed reduction was not related to vibration; it was related to the fact that the road was not of a suitable width for the trucks travelling at speed.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms FORREST - Yes, and as they say there are no footpaths on the side. The residents felt that made a difference because they could feel their houses shake. The crockery would rattle in the cupboards with some of the big trucks.

Mr HIDDING - I am interested in this because in my electorate, the change, whenever you had heavy trucks, is often the fact that they have had a very quiet existence. I was at a meeting with some residents and one said to the other in front of me, 'Were you woken up at 6.30 like I was?' 'Yes, it was 6.35 because I am five minutes longer along the road'. Both had woken up. I said, 'What on earth was the truck doing?'. It was just driving down the road. You can understand they are not normally woken at 6.30, but there was one truck.

Ms FORREST - You can slow them down coming in so they do not use their brakes and things like that.

Mr HIDDING - It is the change that is the interesting thing.

Ms FORREST - They have made some real progress in that in community acceptance and that sort of thing.

Mr GREGORY - If I can finish the point I was trying to make. We really need to maximise the value out of our existing infrastructure because for large parts of the day our roads are virtually empty. So as we continue to build more and more roads to deal with very short peaks, we just build up this incredible asset that depreciates and places a burden on the state. I am sure the members who have been involved in local government would understand that generally we do not need to build many new roads. We need to make better use of the ones we have and keep them in an appropriate condition.

Mr HIDDING - That is more of the discussion we had about the south-east. I had not been aware that in school holidays there is no congestion. That is just an astonishing statistic that you need to be aware of. There are other solutions but I am happy to keep discussing that with you down there.

Mr MULDER - I just have a few to finish off with: Rokeby Main Road and South Arm Highway. We have had a fair amount of discussion with this and with the residents and the rest of it.

Mr HIDDING - That is now in the hands of the Public Works.

Mr MULDER - I pick up most of the concerns, but the one that still sticks out at that particular junction is the fact that we are going to create a bus stop where children returning from school are going to have to cross a four-lane highway to get off the bus. I am just wondering what we are going to do about that. The other concerns I take note of and they have more to do with status and with inconvenience than they have to do with road safety, but this is the one that sticks out.

Mr HIDDING - You might like a private briefing on it but I am happy to do it now.

Mr MULDER - I am happy to give them a heads-up if they are interested.

Mr HIDDING - So do you want to do a private briefing later, or do it now?

Mr MULDER - Give us a quick output about what your bus arrangements are there?

Mr GREGORY - You are talking about the bus arrangements around Buckingham Drive at the moment?

Mr MULDER - Yes, or the future bypass ones.

Mr GREGORY - There is a view being put that we are going to make people walk across four lanes of a highway and that is extremely dangerous. What they are doing now is extremely dangerous. They are walking across a two-lane road that carries in excess of 15 000 vehicles a day. They have to look at traffic coming in two directions and there is no central median to get across in one direction. The current arrangement is very unsafe.

We are not asking people to walk across four lanes. In fact, we are going to prevent that from happening. What we have done is to have a look at where the bus stops should be and where the future growth in bus demand is going to come from. The growth in use of these current bus stops is coming out of Glebe Hill and people are walking across this open paddock. You can even see the tracks to get to this bus stop when they are crossing the road. This area is going to be developed and so that movement will not be possible anyway. The areas that are going to develop. So we are going to have a commercial precinct here and this has all been subdivided; there are subdivisions here and this is all going to be generating people.

This whole area here is going to be developed as urban. We have looked at the patterns of where people are going to be coming from in terms of getting to the bus. We are placing our bus stops on the outbound side of the traffic signals at Pass Road and Tyre Drive so people will be dropped off here and then they will be able to head back down Pass Road if they are living in this area. If they are living over here they will be able to use the lights. There is a dedicated shared path running along that side of the highway that they will be able to walk back on. We think that is the best way and in the mornings they will be able to use the lights to get to this bus stop and get the bus up and go through.

For the moment, we are retaining a city-bound bus stop here until all this demand gets filled. But we will review that in the future and if we see any risky behaviour we will remove that bus stop. We certainly are not asking, telling or wanting people to walk across the highway. In fact, we are going to have a barrier on this side that prevents them from doing that.

Mr MULDER - The other thing is is the commercial area there. I know there were moves afoot at one stage in discussions with the legal developer to try to put some commercial zoning between where the highway will be and the development there. Can you give us an update on that?

Mr GREGORY - This area through here?

Mr MULDER - Yes.

Mr GREGORY - This land was exchanged to Glebe Hill because we needed some land over here. So they had an approved subdivision here and we did a land swap. The rezoning is an activity for the developer. The Government is not involved with that rezoning at all.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr MULDER - I accept that, but here is where the Coordinator General starts to get his act together with the Planning Commission and what council wants to do and what the planning commission does not want it to do.

Mr GREGORY - We understand that Lyn Moore is the final stages of having that rezoned.

Mr HIDDING - Very advanced. Clarence Council is very involved.

Mr MULDER - Yes, I am aware of that but, as always, you get these blockers. Thank you for that. The next one that I am looking at - is possible to table those?

Mr GREGORY - Yes.

Mr MULDER - The next one that is on my list is the Tasman ramps. For the third year in a row, can I ask the department to give me at least a picture of what the traffic arrangements will be there? It has been promised to me in two of the previous years. For the third year - and I still cannot lay my hands on the picture of what proposed traffic arrangements are in concern with ramps.

Mr HIDDING - We need to get you a briefing on that.

Mr MULDER - I would be happy for you to agree to table them - an engineering drawing of the proposed traffic arrangements on ramps.

Mr GREGORY - On transport.tas.gov.au there is a complete run-down of the project including a drive-through, and some photo montages. I am happy to get plans and forward them to your office but that is available.

Mr MULDER - If they are up on the website then I will be happy to have a look at those but certainly my attempts to get them in previous years have met with wonderful promises but no results.

The other issue that I have is a matter of congestion and a matter of safety. The main bottleneck on the road heading from Sorell in the morning is at the airport roundabout. You have taxis, in particular, and cars coming from Hobart at fairly low volumes heading to the airport, blocking the entire Tasman Highway who have to give way to people at the roundabout.

Mr HIDDING - But they have the right of way.

DEPUTY CHAIR - They have right of way. It is the old Mornington roundabout writ large again where you have major traffic being disrupted by low volume traffic because of the way roundabouts work. It is not on your radar, yet it is a main congestion and frustrating point for people from Sorell who are trying to get through that particular area. It seems to me there is some rethinking needed about the use of roundabouts at places where low volume traffic has right of way over high volume traffic and how you manage that. Traffic lights would probably be a cheaper solution than a clover leaf arrangement. But you really should put that on your radar as a major issue. It is not a new road, just a matter of fixing the traffic management issue.

Mr HIDDING - Thank you, we will take that on board.

Mr MULDER - On that, we will suspend for lunch.

The Committee suspended from 1.10 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Grants and Subsidies Marine and Safety Tasmania

Mr HIDDING - MAST is an organisation that has very broad support around Tasmania particularly from recreational boaters, but they do a lot more than that, particularly since the national maritime reform changes came in. They are now contracted by AMSA to carry out all the new national regulations in place on the water in Tasmania. That has been a particularly challenging time for MAST but they have come through it well and continue to provide an exceptional service. With that, I am happy to take questions.

I will introduce Lia Morris from MAST, CEO and Director.

DEPUTY CHAIR (Mr Mulder) - I note a fair swag of the funding is hypothecated from the boats and registration and licensing fees which I would like to perhaps see in some other areas as well. This demonstrates how, when you do this and you dedicate money, people do not mind paying taxes if they can directly see the result.

Mr HIDDING - That's why there is such broad acceptance and agreement in this work because there is no grumbling about paying your boat licence fee when you get nice new boat ramps around the place.

DEPUTY CHAIR - It is not me you have to convince, minister, it is the Treasurer.

In general terms in some of the projects you are doing, particularly for recreational boaters, I note that most yachties, for example, have to register their boats as motor boats because they have reasonable sized motors in them. What facilities does MAST provide to the yachting fraternity, most of whom have either moorings or are paying fees, whereas for the trailerable boats there are boat ramps and jetties.

Mr HIDDING - It is a good question and I am sure it exercises MAST's mind and it does mine and I have been pleased to see there is substantial work underway on visitor moorings around Tasmania. The roll out of that is a terrific way to provide not just services for those people but for visiting boats. For instance, at Swansea there is always a lot of talk about a big marina at Swansea which is problematic, but if you had three or four major visitor marinas where even a 60 foot yacht could tie off and they could dinghy over to the ramp, the restaurants would be full of visitors. Something as simple as that. There is economic development in those sorts of things. I will ask Lia to speak to that.

Ms MORRIS - Thank you, minister. In relation to yachts, in terms of the recreational fleet, they make up about 7 per cent. Out of 30 000 vessels that we have registered they are a fairly small percentage but we try to cater for them. We have a set of cruising marinas we are establishing across the state. The Sullivans Cove pontoon system was primarily for yachts to come in and visit, and for the other recreational boats. We have also put a pontoon system in Quarantine Bay. We have done some work at Melaleuca for the cruising yachts. We do keep them in mind. The VHF network, the radio network, is another aspect.

DEPUTY CHAIR - It is a little project of mine. That is on Maatsuyker Island in particular.

Ms MORRIS - And Three Hummock Island.

DEPUTY CHAIR - The other area, and this came out of the study I referred to this morning was the integrated transport options study which identified that one of the blockages to the use of ferries across the river, with some 50 000 people living immediately across the shore and another 20 000 odd beyond, was the absence of public jetties which would facilitate park and ride or a ferry service. We had a ferry operator who was running and he is not going too well these days because there is only two viable jetties for him to leverage off. We were wondering whether there is any long term thought within MAST about integrating with those business sort of options to start to use this beautiful harbour of ours?

Mr HIDDING - MAST cannot respond to the potential for a ferry service, but if a ferry service was to present itself it could consider that.

I have been briefed, not from my department, but from others interested in the community, that a service from O'Possum Bay and the next stop over, apparently that is also an excellent and appropriate - I am trying to think what the area is, I don't live there, but it is a beautiful boating area. Two, possibly three, stops before squirting over to Hobart. A smallish ferry could transfer a good number of people over to Hobart.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I can probably brief you. There was a trial from O'Possum Bay to Hobart for a while and it was basically under utilised because there was a bus competing with it. The idea that comes up in this report and I would encourage you to read it, is that there ought to be numerous stops along the way which would act like a bus route so that the ferry could work its way along the river before taking a load over.

Mr HIDDING - Is this the work that your committee did?

DEPUTY CHAIR - Yes, the integrated transport options.

Mr HIDDING - I have read that.

DEPUTY CHAIR - One of the ideas I had quoted to me, for example, was a lot of people own properties, basically waterfront with a reserve in front of the land and some of those people tend to be fairly well off and some of them would construct a jetty for you if they could apply. You could construct a jetty and you would have one side of it as a private mooring and the other side as a public mooring. They are some of the ideas I would encourage you to look at when it comes to servicing the boating community.

Mr HIDDING - Thank you.

Mr ARMSTRONG - How many local councils do you work with where you have 50/50 funding that comes across? Is it the whole 29 councils.

Ms MORRIS - We work very closely with all the councils wherever possible. It is not a usual thing to get 50/50 funding.

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Mr ARMSTRONG - I know the Huon Valley,

Ms MORRIS - Huon Valley Council is one of the better councils where they are very proactive in terms of marine facilities and marine infrastructure. Not all councils operate in that manner, but we encourage as much as we can from councils, particularly when they are going to own that facility in the long term.

Mr ARMSTRONG - When you go into 50/50 partnership you usually transfer that ownership to that local government authority.

Ms MORRIS - Under the recreational boating fund one of the criteria is that whoever is proposing the works to be done that they have an end owner of the facility because MAST cannot cater for the ownership of that. We have 56 facilities that we manage currently and they are facilities that we inherited when we became a statutory authority.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Speaking as Mayor of the Huon Valley, over the years it has been a pleasure to work with MAST because we had a strategy there that was put in place and we have identified all the areas and now we are looking at the in-fill from where we have gone. It has worked really well with MAST. They have been a real asset to the council.

Mr HIDDING - It has been great.

There is a challenge out there for councils. If they believe there is a demand for a boat ramp or a big upgrade for a boat ramp, they should engage. The chances of them floating to the top elevate substantially. The reason you have a lot of boat ramps is because you were involved in them. I am aware of boat ramp proposals where the council does not intend taking responsibility for it and, frankly, they are not going anywhere and neither should they if they do not have the support from the local council to look after them later.

Mr GAFFNEY - There are some councils that refuse to take them on board because they thought it was MAST's responsibility and they still got it built anyway.

Mr HIDDING - Did they?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes.

Ms MORRIS - There is one, to my knowledge. It was quite a while ago now and I think there were promises made but they never eventuated.

Mr GAFFNEY - Not promises from our side.

Mr HIDDING - It was before Ms Morris' time and before my time. Obviously your fingerprints were all over it.

Mr GAFFNEY - That is right.

Mr HIDDING - You were very clever to absolve your council of it.

Mr GAFFNEY - No, so did MAST.

DIVISION 6

(Department of Police and Emergency Management)

Output Group 1

Public Safety -

DEPUTY CHAIR - Minister, would you like to introduce those you have brought to the table and to give us a brief overview of these output groups?

Mr HIDDING - I have the Assistant Commissioner, Donna Adams, responsible for Crime and Operations; Commissioner Darren Hine and also Secretary to the Department of Police and Emergency Management; the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Scott Tilyard; and Todd Crawford, Acting Director of Corporate Services. I welcome them all to the table.

I do not have an overview as such, but support a portfolio that you are all very familiar with and I am happy for scrutiny to commence.

DEPUTY CHAIR - For the first output in output group1, 1.1 Support to the Community, Minister, would you like to address the outcomes in this particular portfolio in recent times?

Mr HIDDING - In general, things that are not in the budget papers or what do you mean?

DEPUTY CHAIR - I just thought you might like to talk possibly about the trends in crime and public safety outcomes.

Mr HIDDING - I will allow the commissioner to address this output group as somewhat of an overview.

Mr HINE - Thank you, minister and Mr Mulder. Public safety and support for the community is obviously an important output group for Tasmania Police, as all the output groups are. We have had a couple of ups and downs for this year and for the last financial year in relation to this output group, for example, the assaults in public places have come back a little bit. The total public order incidents have gone up about 0.1 per cent, like all 20 matters over a long period. Assaults in public places have gone up a little bit. Public order type incidents have gone up by 20. But the perceptions of safety in public places during the day that has gone higher, which is a good thing. Compared to the national average, the perception of safety in public places after dark has gone up. The perception of safety at home alone after dark is above the national average.

Whilst we do have some issues in relation to this output group, we are working hard to make sure that the public not only feel safe but the statistics are matching that as well. We know alcohol-fuelled violence is still an issue for us, certainly around the entertainment precincts in the state. Public place assaults are starting to decrease in the southern district, but it is still a major issue and that is why we are part of the national operation - Operation Unite - to highlight the alcohol-fuelled violence problem. I am not sure if you want me to give you a general overview on some of the issues.

Mr MULDER - They are very good satisfaction ratings - the performance measures for this particular output group, which is an overarching output group. You have pointed to a couple of

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national programs - is it the delivery of those national programs at a local level, or is it additional programs and police work that produces these high levels of police perception?

Mr HINE - It is a bit of both.

When all the commissioners around Australia and New Zealand get together and highlight the issue of alcohol-fuelled violence, that sends a really strong message, not only nationally but also within the state.

From a state perspective, we have the Tasmania Police Road and Public Order Services, the RPOS Unit, which deals with traffic and public order issues. It operates around the state, so we can move resources into traffic or public order matters when required. Other examples of local programs are the Hobart City Council led Hobart Safer Streets Program, Rising Above the Influence - the Tasmanian Alcohol Action Framework - which, again, looks at some of the causes of drunken behaviour. We have many and varied programs, from both a statewide perspective and a district perspective.

Each district is unique. In the western district, some of their public safety issues are different to the north and to the south. You need a national approach and a state approach, but you also need a community-based approach.

Mr MULDER - When it comes to these highly operational policing issues, can you give us a breakdown between operational numbers and people in support or back office roles?

Mr HIDDING - Do you mean back office in terms public safety?

Mr MULDER - There is frontline policing - 'feet on the street'.

Mr HIDDING - I have never heard that before. Maybe 'flat feet on the street'.

Mr MULDER - How many sworn officers are engaged in so-called frontline duties, including surveillance teams, detectives, and traffic police - anyone engaged in law enforcement, out on the streets delivering programs, including crime prevention? Probably excluding intelligence services and forensic people, who while they may work 'on the street', they are not necessarily exercising the powers of a constable. I do not know whether those numbers have been done?

Mr HINES - We can go back to our baton days, where I think there it was about -

Mr MULDER - I am sure you would not be surprised at my line of questioning, commissioner.

Mr HINE - You are certainly taking me back a long way in relation to operational figures versus those in administration roles. If my memory serves me correctly, in those days 10 per cent to 12 per cent of a police officer's time was taken up with administrative roles. We have never done that survey again and it is an interesting question.

As you said, forensics might not be classed as front line, but they perform a frontline role - they contribute to specific operational targets and they also support the frontline first initiative. They move in and out and get back into the front line when required. I do not have a specific

figure for those who do nothing apart from administrative duties. But even those in what you would call the back office are occasionally - maybe once a week, sometimes in a five week rotational cycle - out there supporting the frontline doing those actual frontline duties.

Mr MULDER - Harking back to some of our experiences, do you accept the proposition that I have made numerous times on the public record that if you civilianise roles that do not require frontline knowledge, skills or powers, sometimes you get a bigger bang for your buck than you do by putting more police officers on the street?

Mr HINE - I think that is a correct premise. You do not need everyone to be trained up to a certain level to do the backroom functions, but occasionally you have to swap people in and out of certain roles. There is a role for those ones with the full suite of powers and there is a role for those who have other skills in the administrative areas that don't need those skills. Getting that mix right is always difficult from not only a personnel point of view but also a budgetary point of view as well.

Mr GAFFNEY - I was interested in your comment about the proactive strategies the police use across districts. I know that in the western district the presence of officers in colleges has been very well accepted. I wonder if that is across most of the state. It is a really good program for younger people not to see the police as a negative but as part of the community. Is that across the state or mainly in some colleges?

Mr HINE - The Police in Schools program is right across the state but I don't have the exact figures of how many at the moment. It is also supplemented by the Adopt a Cop program and quite a number of police officers undertake the Adopt a Cop roles in schools, and that is normally in their own time, so there is a lot of those things as well. There is a really good interaction between the children and police officers and it does break down those barriers between police, kids and their parents and siblings. It can certainly take it on notice and get you the number of police in schools but it is normally about a 0.5 role.

Mr GAFFNEY - I know that the media and the public are very interested in statistics but those sort of programs are really hard to put a value on and judge, because how do you evaluate a program like that other than anecdotal evidence? Those young people coming through the system know a lot of the police and see them more as friends, I suppose, or support, so how do you justify to the powers that be that you should keep that program or should actually have more of them?

Mr HINE - The Police in Schools and Police in Colleges programs are actually paid for by the Education department. We subsidise them to a small extent, but the anecdotal evidence is that it works really well so therefore they put some resources into it to keep it going. As you say, sometimes it is hard to evaluate what it is, but the feedback we get from the schools and students has been so positive that it has continued. It is the same with the Adopt a Cop program. You just get such great feedback from the schools where they are active, and not every school has Adopt a Cop because a lot of the time it is under their own time, but the feedback is just tremendous.

Mr GAFFNEY - At a cabinet level, when all the departments have been asked to look for budget savings, and cost saving, if you are in the Education department and they are providing that funding for police in schools, it might be tempting for the minister for Education to cut that program. How do you have that conversation, because obviously if there is pressure on that minister to -

Mr HIDDING - I agree, I can see where there would be a competitive tension there as to which way to go, but it certainly hasn't come up in our Cabinet because it has not been on the table that I am aware of. The minister for Education would have raised it with me if there was a concern. I think it is crucial that the next generation be engaged early in their lives with road safety education and being comfortable having a police officer around. Often their own parents have had negative interactions with police therefore they grow up believing police are a problem in their lives rather than a wonderful positive to have. Those things can come out of their engagement with police officers at school.

Mr MULDER - So you read my budget reply, then. .

Mr HIDDING - No, I did not. Not that I would be opposed to it but I have a fair bit in my reading file. I am sure I will get to it.

Mr GAFFNEY - There may come a time when the Education minister will say, 'What is the value of this program? Do we have any evidence to say there are so many staff, so many contact hours, this is what is happened and this is the result?'. If that evidence is not available it is easy for a [inaudible]. The other thing I was pleased about on the north-west coast is that around events management and hot-spot times there seems to be a good flexibility within the force to make sure you get police on patrol. Would you like to comment on how that program works?

Mr HINE - That is a really good example, especially in the western district and Hawley Beach. Shearwater is probably a good example during New Year's Eve when there are busy times and therefore extra police officer are put down there in the other holiday areas. It is about having that flexibility and all districts have flexibility. They have x amount of staff and therefore they can move them around where they need to be if there is a hot spot or a concern or a public event going on. The western district do it very well as do other districts. During New Year's Eve there were a number of issues down at Hawley Beach, Shearwater and that area. They policed it with larger numbers and it has not been an issue for quite some time now.

Mr GAFFNEY - Those [inaudible] on the duty of the problem of New Year's Eve.

Mr HINE - They can be.

Mr HIDDING - The problem in Port Sorell was chased off to Bridport where a large policing establishment now goes there every year. I guess they were looking for somewhere else because last year Inspector Hopkins warned them in the newspaper that many young people in Bridport would be spending the 12 o'clock celebrations inside a cell and that tended to cool off celebrations in the area substantially. It is about good strong policing.

Mr GAFFNEY - Have there been any programs you have trialled in the last four years you thought you were not getting enough bang for your buck? Three or four years ago you trialled one of the mentoring programs at Ashley supporting those youths and I do not know if that is still going on. Are there any programs you trialled that you think are not worthwhile from a community perspective?

Mr TILYARD - There would be a range of programs that have been tried because a lot of these things are district-level initiatives where the people within the districts have an idea that they would like to try a particular approach involving young people or public order issues, so we set little programs up and task forces and trials on a fairly regular basis. They vary to the extent to

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which an informal evaluation is conducted but generally speaking most of them have some successes but the extent to which they are successful and might be sustained into the future does vary significantly.

Some of the more recent evidence-based policing research indicates that the effectiveness of some of these programs tapers off after a certain amount of time and that can be as quickly as a matter of weeks or a couple of months. In the past without the benefit of some of this more contemporary research we could probably have run some programs for longer than we should have done. Their true effectiveness has eroded over time rather than moving on to a new initiative completely. That is something we are looking at doing more into the future.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr FARRELL - In regard to PCYCs, what resources does that involve through the general police force?

Mr HIDDING - While the Police Commissioner is looking that up, we are very proud of our commitment to provide another \$250 000 per year to the PCYC network, which has been a wonderful announcement for them since they were falling off the pace with delivering the services. The general budget contribution to the PCYC program is very substantial and the Commissioner will have that there.

Mr HINE - Thank you, Mr Farrell. The PCYC gets nearly \$1 million that we put into it. As the minister said, there was a further \$250 000 per year that is going to go into that area as well. We have a statewide association that we have a member of and we have just done an MOU with them in relation to how we support PCYCs. We provide a business manager in Hobart and Launceston at \$45 000 each. We think it works very well from a 'youth at risk' point of view. We will continue to support them. It is a budget issue but the outcomes are very good.

Mr FARRELL - They are operated by the separate board, as you mentioned, and then resources from the department are in the form of offices and training programs, that sort of thing?

Mr HINE - Basically, there is a statewide association which is independent of the department but we have police representatives on that association. Each club has a committee that helps run the local PCYC, for example, Hobart, Bridgewater, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport, and then all those clubs have at least one police officer there, sometimes two. In Launceston and Hobart we supply \$45 000 for a business manager to help run that club.

It has changed over the years where we are where we have targeting more at the youths at risk. Rather than actually running the club, the committee runs the club so the police officer there helps to target those youths at risk.

Mr FARRELL - I know they have tremendous benefits, particularly in my area at Bridgewater it works very well. I don't know if you have ever done any modelling or whether there is modelling to see exactly what that type of intervention saves you in long-term problems.

Mr HIDDING - There is one model, at Bridgewater. You would be aware that on any given day the truancy in schools in the area can be quite high. Usually on that day, you can go to the PCYC and find them all in there, in a supportive program - not necessarily a program, as they are supposed to be in school but being looked after. They can go into basketball and all the rest of it, otherwise they would be down at the creek or over at the river and getting up to all sorts of things.

Mr MULDER - Does the commissioner plan on cross-charging Education for looking after their students while they are looking after theirs?

Mr HIDDING - It has just crossed his mind, I gather.

Mr HINE - I think I know the answer to that one already.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I have noticed, particularly in the Huon Valley at one of the festivals they had down there, you have officers on bicycles. Are they allocated specifically to festivals or do they operate all year through the Hobart and city areas or are they just used for specific events?

Mr HINE - I know the Hobart division has a number of pushbikes and a number of people trained to ride those pushbikes. These days you can't just give someone a pushbike and ride it. You have to have the equipment, the training and all those things that go with it. They do have a number of people trained and, on occasions, they get them out to festivals of that nature or around the city. I know they have been around the city recently. It is about when they need them, when they think they will be effective and when they have the resources and people who are trained to put them on as well. It is not a set program they have. Again, when they use them they are quite effective and I have seen them around the city quite a number of times. They can get around the city quickly and around the trouble spots, quietly as well, so they are very effective.

CHAIR - Any further questions on this output? Minister, I missed out on a bit of that.

Mr HIDDING - The best bit, too.

CHAIR - I missed out on all the good stuff. Perhaps some of the tables were covered in regard to the violence, or disorder in public places, and those sort of matters, were they covered pretty well?

Mr HIDDING - Yes.

CHAIR - I was interested as we started that select committee and Mr Hine came and gave evidence, and others, too. It is a moving feast and an Australia-wide problem.

Mr HIDDING - Alcohol-related violence is an appalling thing but it was wonderful to see last week that a Supreme Court justice in Tasmania very strongly laid down the law with somebody she was sentencing for a coward punch, outside a night club, and pointed out very strongly that the defence that the perpetrator was so drunk that he did not know what he was doing was absolutely no defence at all. I congratulate her for saying that. One would have thought that everybody would accept it is not a defence and yet it is always the defence. The defence lawyer stands up and says, 'You have no idea what this person had to drink', and it seems to me that there should be some consideration of making that sort of consumption of alcohol an aggravated circumstance rather than a mitigating circumstance because they put themselves in this position by drinking that much.

Mr MULDER - In relation to that particular sentencing, I understood that was under Victoria's new coward punch laws and that was a mandatory sentence.

Mr HIDDING - It was a Tasmanian sentence.

Mr MULDER - Let me go back to the Victorian case where someone was sentenced to 10 years for a coward's punch that resulted in a loss of life and that they had mandatory penalties which resulted in the first ever person going to jail for 10 years as a result of the consequences rather than the intent of their actions. I am wondering whether the Government is giving any thought to giving similar sorts of sway to this particular issue?

Mr HIDDING - These matters stay under advisement. We are already engaged in a number of public discourses about mandatory sentencing and we feel entitled to do that where we are doing it. Also in the area of suspended sentences. There was criticism the other day in one part of the paper about suspended sentences and two pages over there was a person sentenced after five times breaking a suspended sentence. Finally, he is doing some time in carceration.

Mr MULDER - Or the magistrate is a bit unused to handling breaches of suspended sentences and that might be the reason.

Mr HIDDING - Whatever, but the fact is that there were the two circumstances.

Mr GAFFNEY - And there was a good one from the magistrate who, using the legislation as it is, ignored the outcomes so the parameters to be able to do that are already there and that is the other argument.

Mr HIDDING - Exactly, I am aware of that but what I am saying is we are entitled to press our point on these matters. We have developed our views on this but on the coward punch thing I am very concerned about that kind of violence and you see it on footage and someone just comes up behind them and thumps because they can and inevitably because they are already unconscious they fall down and hit their head on the kerb and for everyone who dies there are five who have been hit, in a vegetative state who are not dead but almost dead. It is appalling stuff.

Output Group 2 - Crime

2.1 Investigation of Crime

Mr HIDDING - In this area our commitment to increasing police numbers in Tasmania by 108 police officers - another 108 police officers go to the front line. It is our strong view that the reduction of police officers back in 2011, by some 108 police officers, was short sighted stupidity. We are putting them back. Already there are two new analysts in the serious crime area that are engaged in high level crime detection, and we look forward to that being rolled out over the next four years.

Mr MULDER - Looking at the Annual Report for the financial year ended June 2013, there are some pretty encouraging numbers in the output of crime group two. So we have a falling crime rate with fewer police officers and a pretty strong statement that was an act of total stupidity. How do you deal with the policy logic of that? Fewer police seems to mean fewer crimes.

Mr HIDDING - That would be the correlation, you think? That would be driving the reduction in crime? So, the more police you put on, the more crime there is? How could that be?

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Mr MULDER - I do not know, but the figures seem to suggest that. I am not saying the correlation proves cause. I am just pointing out the correlation. How do you explain that?

Mr HIDDING - He would be far too modest to suggest it is just terrific policing, but I would say that is precisely what it is. And, the reduction in crime numbers is not so encouraging that you would say, 'Let's start cutting police numbers again, even further'.

In fact, we want to see more police officers, particularly to deal with the serious, organised crime we see with OCMGs - the outlaw criminal motorcycle gangs. They are a real threat and I congratulate Tasmania Police for the clean-ups they have undertaken recently. The motorcycle gang club rooms with signage all over it is closed down in Launceston. It is for sale. They have disrupted that activity completely. These people are involved in the sale of methamphetamines - ice - which is a scourge in the Tasmanian community. Every single department of the government is impacted by this dreadful drug out on the street. We intend to increase the capability to fight this type of crime.

Mr MULDER - That type of crime, which has serious impacts on the community, does not turn up in the crime statistics. Those sorts of activities are rarely reported.

Mr HIDDING - You mean the effects on the community generally?

Mr MULDER - The question was - you have a falling crime rate, according to your statistics, and fewer police numbers, so is there a correlation between them? Your answer, or what you are trying to tell me, is that there is unreported crime out there, which needs to be controlled and that is why you need more police.

Mr HIDDING - No. If you want to argue the point.

Mr MULDER - I was not arguing the point, I was agreeing with you.

Mr HIDDING - That shows how difficult your point is. You are agreeing with me and it sounds like you are not. To somehow point to a reduction in crime being related to a reduction in police officers, is something I cannot understand.

We decided that 108 police officers out of the service was not tenable. The Launceston Police Station was close to dysfunctional because of the extra work everybody had to do to keep the place going. We want to put 108 more police officers on the front line and we will. We think it was short-sighted stupidity to cut those numbers in the first place, as did you at the time, Mr Mulder.

Mr MULDER - Is this about personalities?

Mr HIDDING - But you did say that.

Mr MULDER - At the time. I agree, I still support the idea that cutting police officers is not a great idea. I was just pursuing with you the fall in crime.

Mr HINE - Thank you, minister. Mr Mulder since 1999-2000, total offences are about 60 000. We are down about 24 000 at the moment. You were going back two financial years ago and I know you do not have the figures in front of you but it went up about 4 per cent last

financial year. As you know, crime is related to many things. I wish it was just police numbers but that is one of the contributing factors with economic reasons, unemployment and all those things affect the crime rate.

[2.45 p.m.]

We found that last financial year property damage increased by approximately 14 per cent, which took our total crime rate up by 4 per cent, and stolen motor vehicles increased by about 4 per cent. On the other side of the agenda, robberies fell by approximately 27 per cent, public place assaults fell, home burglaries were down by about 7 per cent and business burglaries down by about 10 per cent. Crime rates have been falling for over 10 years now. Last year was the first year we saw them start to angle up a little in relation to property crimes. Many factors were involved in that. It is about targeted policing, intelligence policing, evidence-based policing to look at those issues to see where they are going, but it is mainly property damage and stolen motor vehicles that started to push us up last year.

Mr MULDER - I note you are starting to now move with your extra police officers into reestablishing a serious crime or cold case unit and also the public order response teams. With the organised or serious crime rate, what sort of performance indicators do you have that would give us an indication of the effectiveness of this unit in combating that whole area of organised crime that does not turn up in the crime statistics yet but have a major impact upon the community? It is not just fraud but credit card fraud is a huge area of crime that is under-reported yet it has massive impacts on economies around the world. We might even dive into the issues that the tap-and-go card is causing to the rise in burglaries, for example. The Victorian commissioner is deeply concerned about that. That is the sort of area I am trying to get at, that despite falling crime figures we still have a lot of work to do in dealing with the reality of crimes rather than just the reporting side.

Mr HINE - You are right. Our total serious crime figures are down. We are starting to see an impact in serious crime but a serious organised crime unit will look at the top end, the OMCs, organised people who are committing crime. The most serious crime of murder will still be death with by local CIBs, that is their role, but a lot of serious organised crime goes unreported - for example, the \$10 million worth of amphetamine that was detected through various means. When we say \$10 million worth of amphetamine, there was another \$10 million worth of amphetamine where people were charged who had connections to Tasmania, it was alleged, in Queensland. We looked at the origins of that and it was in the UK; it will be alleged it came from there. We know there is a lot of serious organised crime that is unreported, we also know about internet credit card fraud and fraud in general. Identity fraud is ever-increasing and it is unreported. When we look at technology and how it is used to commit crime, we talk about the internet but we do not talk much about the dark net, and Silk Road is an example of that where a lot of drugs are ordered on line. No-one is going to report that until it is detected.

Mr MULDER - As to some measure of performance - and I know they are always a bit rubbery - I am not sure whether the Australian Federal Police still do it but they used to talk about organised crime networks disrupted. The classic case would be when we have a suspected organised crime activity going on and suddenly it is closed down and the building is for sale, which I think would be an indicator of disruption, minister.

Mr HIDDING - It is completely disruptive. Indeed, the kingpins of that organisations are all residents of Risdon now.

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Mr HINE - 'Dismantle' is the term. You want to disrupt and dismantle. Most of the Rebels motorcycle gang in Launceston have been charged at some stage and therefore they have certainly been dismantled.

Mr MULDER - We look forward to seeing some indicators in the future in that space in relation to the work of the serious and organised crime squad.

Mr HINE - Assistant Commissioner Adams can probably add a little more.

Ms ADAMS - Another important indicator for us will obviously be the amount of seizures we make in terms of getting those drugs off the street. Another area we want to focus on is the assets and wealth we can confiscate. As you may well have read, we are doing a pilot with the DPP over the next 12 months to target one or two of our serious organised crime entities and focus on the assets and wealth they have amassed through their criminal activities. We think that is another important indicator in the success of this particular unit as we move forward.

Mr HIDDING - The law and justice community in Australia comes together in the form of the COAG committee of attorneys-general and police ministers together. Most of the discussions from the Australian Crime Commission down, other than terror stuff, focus on following the money. A major way to disrupt and dismantle is to follow the money. There is a lot of that going on and it is looking to be very successful. I think the success indicators will start to write themselves in this new space.

Mrs HISCUTT - The commissioner mentioned identity fraud. There was a fellow in my electorate who had trouble proving who he was with all these bills coming in and people chasing him. It cost him a lot of money with lawyers, et cetera. Why is the onus on the real person, the innocent one, to prove that he is right? Is there no other way around that? It is like he was guilty until he proved himself innocent and it cost him an awful lot of money to say he was the real person and all this bad stuff happening around him was not his doing.

Mr HIDDING - I suppose in the absence of somebody else doing the bad stuff, to eliminate yourself it is a reasonable question, and I think most of us need to be able to do that. It certainly would be an extremely frustrating process.

Mrs HISCUTT - It seemed to cost a lot of money for lawyers.

Mr HINES - Of course banking institutions have an interest to protect themselves and they have to prove to themselves who the real person is and who is not the real person. With the number of duplicate identities out there, especially across the internet, they are up for sale these days. You can buy identities on the internet, and credit card numbers that you can go in and buy and do what you want with. I can understand the institutions' policies about proving who you are. It is a difficult situation because it is very easy to take on someone else's identity, they are easy to buy and then misuse.

Mrs HISCUTT - I just wanted to highlight the fact that it is big out there.

Mr MULDER - Regarding the tap-and-go issue with credit cards, what is happening nationally on that?

Mr HINE - We are not seeing it as an issue.

Ms ADAMS - No, but we have the general manager of Visa Australia coming to Tasmania in the next month to outline their approach to tap-and-go. As you have seen, it is an issue in Victoria. Luckily it has only been reported on a few occasions in Tasmania, but it will not be too long before people wake up to the fact that there are some vulnerabilities there, so we want to work with Visa to ensure this does not become an issue in Tasmania like it has in Victoria.

Mr HINE - Some of the other states are not seeing it either but Victoria obviously had an issue. There is dialogue between Victoria Police and the institutions as well and there seems to be a bit of discord in relation to that, but we are certainly not seeing much of it here.

Mr MULDER - The only figures I have seen on this credit card stuff has been Australian Crime Commission reports and it is simply alarming. If you ever wonder why you pay 17 per cent interest on your credit card, it is to make up for all this. Just as an observation, when I was overseas recently within 20 minutes of me paying my hotel bill, someone had pulled something like \$1 500 out of my account in the Philippines - and I was Buenos Aires.

Mr HINE - That is where the internet is used as technology. We are seeing many databases hacked and those that get onto the internet are up for sale very quickly.

CHAIR - That is the reason why I was late. I was dealing with a hoax matter with our bank on the internet.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I read where the Australian Federal Police are pulling out of Hobart Airport and Tasmania Police are taking over that role. Do we get compensated from the AFP for doing that?

Mr HIDDING - Tasmania Police are not taking over that role. The Australian Federal Police are being withdrawn from the Hobart Airport, regrettably. We protested that but it was in the last federal budget and explained to me by the Federal Justice minister, Mr Keenan, that all non-international airports were going to be given the same status of AFP coverage, which is zero. It is the same as the Launceston Airport which has never had AFP.

The establishment comes out because it is no longer an international airport. That is regrettable but somewhat understandable because of the supposedly huge costs to a non-international airport. I would far rather they had looked at a more manageable model, probably lowering the services somewhat, so that every time a plane arrived you did not have two coppers standing on the tarmac, making sure you were going to the right door, for instance.

They certainly fulfilled a service there and Tasmania Police are going to have to include that area as part of their general policing and be able to respond when necessary. I will ask the Commissioner to address that further.

Mr HINE - The AFP will be totally withdrawn from the airport by 21 October. We will not get any compensation for it. We would much rather the AFP continue a policing role at the airport but the total responsibility for those duties will rest with Tasmania Police. We have trained many of our closest police stations in Bellerive in relation to airport policing because there is different legislation and there are different procedures. One of the things that has been thrown up is that if there is an unaccompanied bag, then the whole airport has to close down until the

police clear it. That is not quite right. There are specific procedures at the airport to check their CCTV and check who owns the bags before police are called.

Launceston has an airport and there is no permanent presence there. If there is any issue, the local police turn up and they have had some training as well. It is not an ideal situation but it is a reality we have to deal with. It was said in the media today that if we do go to 'high', in relation to a terrorist threat, then we will be writing to the AFP and asking them to reconsider. I am not sure what effect that will have, but if you do not ask, you do not know.

Mr GAFFNEY - There has been a discussion and a push about getting international flights into Hobart. If that occurs, then there is going to be a better place to go back. Is the fact that the police have been withdrawn a cross against us getting an international airport? At your level, have there been discussions there?

Mr HIDDING - I have discussed that with the minister, Mr Keenan. He said, 'Our policy position is that we will only provide those services to international airports. As you are not one, that is all I can address. If you do become one, give us a call'. He is not laying that down, but the prospect of us becoming international again is not strong. That is because of the hub idea of high-frequency services out of a place like Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, where we are seeing airfares for \$99 between Melbourne and Christchurch. We are never going to be able to get the volume out of Tasmania to sustain those sorts of budget airfares. When I say, never, I know that Hobart Airport is always keeping that option open and alive. Our tourism people are also, but it seemed to be further away recently rather than close.

Mr GAFFNEY - It would be worth the discussion about the New Zealand-Hobart link again.

Mr HIDDING - Yes, on the face of it, that is the only viable possibility but the flights out of everywhere else are so cheap now.

2.2 Poppy security

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, this is something I have always wanted to ask and now I have the opportunity. Being an island state, I am very impressed with the security of our poppy industry but I noticed that the poppy theft is measured in capsules. Last year it was something like 2 800 and something. How does this get reported? Last year it was a larger number than the year before, I believe. How do you get to such a precise number? If you are going up and down your irrigation runs you are going to be knocking capsules off and things like that. Is it because you are going for a count after reports by the farmers noticing something, or a passer-by has noticed something and then you can see an area? Is that how you do it?

Mr HINE - You have hit the nail on the head. It is literally counting how many tops or capsules have been taken off a plant.

Mrs HISCUTT - I presume they are cut with a scissor or something.

Mr HINE - By whatever method - a knife, or whatever they are going to do. That is precisely to get how many capsules are taken in a paddock. There are the police officers who go around, or the people that work for the Poppy Advisory Board who are well trained in relation to that, to make sure that they get an accurate account. In 2008-09, there were 2 200. In the last financial year 3 900 were stolen but 1 600 were recovered. People were charged in relation to

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some of those as well. When you look at the hectares sown, that has certainly increased over a number of years. Last year, in fact, it went down slightly.

Mrs HISCUTT - It went down by 6 000 hectares last year.

Mr HINE - It dropped from 25 000 for the last financial year compared to 31 000 the financial year before. Certainly, it is an area that is important to us from an economic point of view but also the harm that these things cause. Unfortunately, in the last couple of years a 17-year-old youth died and a tourist died last year as well. We have got to get that public safety message but also protect an industry as well.

Mrs HISCUTT - I know that when we were growing them years ago, you could enter the paddock in your car just to take lunch to someone and there would be someone riding behind you. Is that sort of patrolling still happening?

Mr HINE - During the growing season, patrolling is still occurring and we have integrated it within our drug squad rather than having a separate unit to do the poppy patrols. We have integrated the drug investigation service because we know the link between poppy thefts and general drug use is very high. That is why we integrated them and have an intelligence-linked model. Also the farmers and the local community work together. Unfortunately, some people do not understand that they are different types of poppies, and those deaths are very unfortunate.

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, I notice that the funding for the poppy security line is 'steady as she goes'. This figure does not go up or down depending on acreage, hectareage planted, or anything like that?

Mr HIDDING - No, I don't think so. It is an annual establishment assuming that the total could go up and down a little bit.

Mrs HISCUTT - It is just a loaded time on the police during the poppy season.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes. One last question, minister. Now that there are the trials going ahead on the mainland, are we going to be selling our security expertise to help them, or are they doing that themselves?

Mr HIDDING - I suspect they will manage without our assistance but should they require any assistance, it is not something we would sell to them; it is something we would do in interstate cooperation. Police and Emergency Services have a very high level of interstate cooperation because - who knows? We might need them and we often do.

Mrs HISCUTT - Otherwise I am very impressed with the security of the poppy industry here.

Mr MULDER - On a related topic, I understand the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs basically states that the security arrangements, and in particular the criteria surrounding the cultivation of cannabis crops, is to match that of the opiate poppies. In relation to the recent media report in which it was reported that Tasmania Police have deemed the shed at Huon to be unsuitable from a security perspective for the growing of a cannabis crop, I am just wondering, from a police perspective, if this is correct. If so, what risk assessment methodology was used and is it possible for us to mitigate the risk identified in that security assessment?

Mr HIDDING - Firstly, what was reported might have been reported as though Tasmania Police had done a security assessment -

Mr MULDER - I did ask if it was correct.

Mr HIDDING - The reporting was of advice that had been provided to those people that they should not go around saying that Tasmania Police had ticked off on this. Tasmania Police had said quite clearly to them that, once there was an application made for something, they would do a full risk assessment and let them know their full concerns about it and the requirements, but the company did appear to be saying publicly that Tasmania Police have no problem at all with their proposal, which was a vivid leap forward past the fact. Mr Hine may like to add to that.

Mr HINE - It was a telephone call and a telephone conversation. No inspection has ever taken place and no formal application was received by us so we had nothing to assess.

Mr MULDER - I did anticipate that but it is good that it is on the public record because it will be fairly handy for us next week when we start our committee.

2.3 Fisheries Security

Mr MULDER - I notice the marine offenders detected - and once again I am not operating on the latest figures - were 982, 1 290 in 2012 and then down to 1 000 as the target in 2012-13 and looking at the actual was 1 155. It fluctuates but the note says that the figure has been altered to a numerical figure to reflect the reduction in police operational numbers available to investigate or detect crime. The figures, apart from the target figure, do not demonstrate that there was any less activity or getting more offenders with less policing.

Mr HIDDING - The final numbers for 2013-14 are 1 091 so it is still in the frame with inspections at 25 679. I hope you have your vessel patrol hours there but the marine rescue services were 4 488, and 906 for district marine services.

Mr MULDER - I am just querying why that note still indicates the opposite to what is happening.

Mr HINE - It is basically a table set in relation to reduced numbers but they worked extremely hard and actually achieved that number, so it was hard work on the marine officers' part.

Mr MULDER - Then we get to the proposed boat and what role that will have in issues of enforcement, is there an intention to perhaps station one of the boats when the next one comes up north and one down south? I think you and I had some fun one day trying to persuade the bosses that it might be best to leave the Bass Strait purpose-built vessel up in the north instead of spending three hours travelling and heaven knows how much diesel running to emergency rescues which are always happening at the other end of the state.

Mr HIDDING - The SRP process that we were talking about earlier, the structure review process, was informed by a professional maritime consultant, Thompson Clarke Shipping, and I am using them somewhere else in a different division. They are competent and very highly respected marine consultants.

Their recommendations landed much in line with what you were saying. You have one large ship, a 75-footer, that is capable of going out in almost any weather to rescue people who are usually in trouble in shocking weather. But you have only one. Therefore, building smaller boats, when you only have one, you are bound to end up with it at the wrong end of the island. It is an interesting report and it lands strongly on the view that there should be two of those vessels, one north and one south, to provide that sort of capacity, but then back-up capacity from a third vessel which is the *Dauntless* size vessel. That is another 12 - 14 metre. More of the *Fortescue* size, probably a little smaller, to back up those two major vessels. It backs up our thinking entirely. You are more likely to use it there but the last time it went out in terrible circumstances, they saved a life off Maatsuyker in weather that could easily have lost police lives if they had not been on a vessel that good.

Mr MULDER - A final point, the iconic *Vigilant* remains as a working heritage icon?

Mr HIDDING - I cannot believe it is still going.

Mr MULDER - We can believe it is still going because it is made of good Tasmanian special species timbers, built in the Huon, and I might say without a cert process.

Mr HIDDING - There you go. You can get it right every now and then.

2.4 Support to Judicial Services

Mr FARRELL - What percentage, or general amount of time, are the police being occupied by domestic violence issues?

Mr HIDDING - You mean domestic violence when they could otherwise be out doing traffic policing?

Mr FARRELL - Well, doing other policing.

Mr HIDDING - The answer is way too much. Around my electorate, when I speak to local inspectors, I ask what is going on, what is the big issue, and they say DV. We have terrific legislation now which I might have had some concerns about originally but it is very strongly victim-focused protection but it is still an issue out there.

Mr HINE - Family violence is certainly an issue. It is an issue we will continue to work really strongly with. It is something I take a great interest in about, violence against women and I know there are a couple of White Ribbon ambassadors in the room. We are quite active in relation to doing what we can to stop violence against women. The majority of the time women are the victims of family violence.

To give you some family violence incidences - in 2009-10 there were 3 100; 2010-11, 2 600; 2011-12, 2 500; 2012-1, 2 200, and last financial year it was an increase of not quite 100 to 2 300. If you take the family arguments incidents and total those up for the last financial year, it was over 4 000. It takes up a lot of policing time but it is an important piece of policing work. We have seen far too many deaths, far too many injuries and far too much horror committed on women through family violence. It is something near and dear to every police officer and also any law enforcement agency, to make sure we do all we can in this area.

Mr FARRELL - Are there particular times that it is worse than others? Are there any patterns or is it random?

Mr HINE - It can be pretty random in relation to family violence, when it occurs. A lot of it occurs within the home, unfortunately, and a lot of times alcohol and drugs are involved as well. I would not say there is a time it occurs but we know that for an offender affected by alcohol - out of all those matters I detailed there were about 715 where alcohol was involved and 218 of those where drugs were involved and the victims were affected by drugs and alcohol to a far less an extent. It is something we are working towards and joining forces with other Australian states to make sure we continue to look at evidence-based policing to try to reduce this area.

We have a commissioners' conference in October and that is one of the issues we are going to be looking at. We are strong advocates of reporting family violence. We know in family violence situations there are up to 60 per cent that go unreported, where women do not report it. That is far too high and the number of injuries and deaths through family violence is far too high. It is an important area of policing.

Mr FARRELL - Where do we sit nationally, are we better or worse?

Mr HINE - If there is more than one we are worse than everyone else, but we are no better or worse than anyone else. We probably have one of the best programs in the country. Our Safe at Home program is well recognised. There is a review being conducted by Justice at the moment on the program. There have been a number of reviews so we want to do all we can and get better at it. From a national point of view, I believe we have a very good program. In relation to reporting, I could not give you the national statistics compared to anyone else, but we have to look at our community and see what we can do to protect families and women in these terrible situations.

Mr GAFFNEY - There would be some community profiles where the incidence might be greater - do you have the resources available to go into that community with a greater presence, more of an educative one than responsive to violence? Those proactive strategies, saying 'no, this is not all right, and this is what you should be doing'. You sometimes want more incidences supported because you have to get to the root of the problem, not just because of the spike in the profile. You want people to report those things so you can do something about it. Do you have the resources available to say, 'We need to put more into this area for a certain amount of time'? If you are stretched across the board, it is just a reaction to a community problem or an issue.

Mr HINE - You are exactly right, we would much rather people report a matter, then we can intervene in a timely way. Do we have sufficient resources to go in in a proactive way? We work in a proactive way to a certain extent and we work with our stakeholders, whether it is Justice or Health and Human Services. We work with a lot of community groups, and a lot of women's support groups, to make sure we can support them to support the community. It is not only how we react to it when it is reported to us, but it is also how proactively we can do better in this area. Do we have enough resources to go into an area? That is very hard to answer.

Our police officers are interacting with the community and sometimes it comes out through our interagency support teams in a school environment where you become aware of certain situations, so they proactively go in and support that family, try to take some intervention strategies, or get them to work with other community agencies. It is not just a policing role, it is a

greater community role, and working with our stakeholders, whether it is Justice or Health or Human Services.

Mr GAFFNEY - I notice that in 2016-17 there is quite a sizeable \$240 000 increase to your budget. Is that because - you are thinking there could be a budget improvement in the Estimates, but in 2016-17 and 2017-18 there is quite a marked jump in your budget, so you would be pleased with that support to Judicial Services.

Mr CRAWFORD - I think you will find that is consistent across all of the budget line items and it is reflective of increased funding in next year's Budget for an additional pay period, so there is an increase that puts that out of proportion in terms of the annual inflationary increase of 27 pays.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. You did mention the support you had from other services where it links in, and it has been mentioned in our place that the decrease in funding to the Women's Legal Centre may in fact impact on being able to get some of that information. I know that when a person goes there, sometimes a lot more information comes out of the relationship. You did say that you have a good relationship with a lot of different services and is that where you get some of your information from, or the support networks?

Mr HINE - Yes, that would certainly be one of them but it is right across the board. We have someone who sits on a committee from a whole-of-government point of view who works with the other agencies. A lot of information comes from all sorts of places. We have the support line that people can ring but Assistant Commissioner Adams probably might be able to talk to it a little bit more.

Ms ADAMS - There is also a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and most of the government departments are represented at that high-level steering committee to advance a number of actions in respect to that plan. The focus of the plan is to look at family violence from the broad social perspective and also look at support mechanisms, legal advice and places to go for counselling. It is not just around the focus from a police and an enforcement perspective. The resources across the regions and the state are examined as part of that plan and the actions that Tasmania will put in place over the next 10 years that this plan is in place.

Mr MULDER - I think it was only last week there was a media report around the withdrawal of charges against the person who had been prosecuted for protesting outside a termination clinic. It was suggested in various media reports that the law was deficient for circumstances that on their face were indirect breach of this very recently passed act. Was it a deficiency in the law or a deficiency in the investigation? What were the reasons for withdrawing this prosecution of someone, who I might tell you, walked out of the court and promptly repeated that action?

Mr HIDDING - I know nothing about that case at all. I read the tail end of one report so I will leave that to the Commissioner.

Mr HINE - There have been issues with the legislation. Our senior legal officer has been looking at the legislation and we believe there is a deficiency. We have just written to Health, because they administer the legislation, to point out some of the issues that we think there are with it, I think the Assistant Commissioner has been looking very closely at it and so can give you a further update.

Ms ADAMS - The major problem for us is that when the protesting was occurring, the clinic was closed and when you look at the way the legislation is constructed, there are issues.

Mr MULDER - People entering the clinic.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, you need to have people accessing or being interfered with as they access the clinics. At the moment, whilst the clinic is closed and the protesting is occurring, we are obviously limited in the manner in which we can respond.

Mr HINE - We have written to Health to point out those issues and it is the Health minister's legislation.

Output Group 3 - Traffic Policing

3.1 Traffic Policing

Mr MULDER - It is interesting to see that, with the decline in traffic outputs and traffic policing, the fact is that the traffic outcomes have not really been affected because we all know there is a long-running trend. It is not quite certain if you stop enforcing a particular traffic law today that necessarily there will be a million offences tomorrow, so there is a bit of lag there. But is it time now to experiment as you get more people to maintain your level of traffic policing activity and investing in things such as crime prevention, the Police in Schools Program and maybe embedding some of the commission - Victoria seems to be working - of these people into long-term outcomes in terms of public order. I thought the minister had read my Budget speech because that is exactly what I said - about police establishing relationships with people at a very early age. Having police officers working with young people, getting the male role model and cultural issues sorted out. Is the forward plan with extra policing to send them back into traffic, or are we going to move towards a more strategic use of resources over a longer period of time than annual reporting intervals?

Mr HINE - It's probably a combination of government policy and where the extra numbers need to go.

Mr MULDER - I think we are all on the same song sheet, so it should be fine.

Mr HIDDING - The policy says the extra police are going into serious and organised crime and that includes the cold case unit and public order response teams. As it currently stands, public order is part of road policing, but that is a matter for the commissioner - if he wants to change that, as more capability becomes available. While those policies are, on the face of it, prescriptive, they still allow the commissioner a lot of leeway in rearranging the activities of 1 228 police officers, which is our target.

I have given him encouragement today by saying we strongly back the police in colleges and in schools projects. A police service needs to be of such a size and maturity that it tick all the boxes. They need a very strong, robust policing capacity when it is required, particularly in the community and on the roads, because our serious crashes are unacceptably high. It has to be a policy right across the government on traffic policing - on road safety with the Road Safety Advisory Council, et cetera. MAIB, or Road Safety, provides an amount of money every year for Tasmania Police.

I would encourage more of those types of involvement, as police numbers rise.

Mr HINE - The blue paper that the Chief Commissioner in Victoria put out raised a lot of those issues about the traditional policing, compared to policing into the future. There are also a lot of arguments about experimental policing, and evidence-based policing to support theories of future policing. It is time we had discussions about the best use of resources and where to put them - whether you embed them into the community or you use them in the traditional Peel model that we have had for over 100 years.

One things we tried was how we did RBTs. We found over 54 per cent of our RBTs were through mobile patrols, rather than 19 per cent through static RBT sites. We changed the way we did it and we found it quite successful to be much more -

Mr MULDER - It is random breath testing for anyone who has been on Mars for the last 10 years.

Mr HINE - Sorry. That is one example of how to do things a little bit differently and think outside the square. The blue paper certainly raised a lot of issues. Academics around the world are still grappling with some of those issues where we need to think differently, because the world is changing. But, you still have to hang on to some of the Peel principles of basic policing and doing what the community wants and expects.

We can put a lot of effort into fraud and e-crime, but if we are not dealing with volume crime as well - burglaries and things of that nature - then we are not doing our job.

Mr MULDER - Sometimes it is hard to remember the objective is to drain the swamp when you are battling alligators. I could perhaps refer you to an excellent paper presented to the Australian Institute of Police Management entitled *What Would They Know*.

Mr HINE - I can only imagine -

Mr MULDER - Yes, indeed.

Mr HINE - Or a saltwater crocodile maybe.

Laughter.

Output group 4 - Emergency Management

4.1 State Emergency Management Services

[3.30 p.m.]

Mr HIDDING - I invite to the table Chief Fire Officer, Mike Brown; head of the State Emergency Service, Scott Tilyard; director of Corporate Services, Scott Wilson-Haffenden; and director of the State Emergency Service, Mr Andrew Lea, to join us.

We are very proud as a government to have brought about something the emergency management community has been talking about for some time now, and that is to bring the State Emergency Service into a position where the director reports now through the Chief Fire Officer. This is not an amalgamation or anything but a repositioning within the department and a reporting line but it is more important in terms of thinking within the department and the community.

I am very proud of the SES. I have been involved in one of their training days and since then have taken a particular interest. I have met so many of their people and volunteers and they do a great job in the community. Other than a small unit, they are almost exclusively a volunteer-based organisation, with terrific people involved. Incidentally, quite a large number of those volunteers are also volunteer fireies, and why wouldn't they be? They are that kind of person in the community but when they are on SES days that is the uniform they will wear. There will be no single uniform for that, as a group, so it is not an amalgamation in any way. That would be a diluting of a terrific volunteer asset base. But the structure, the thinking, the operation of both services is so strongly volunteer-based that it is sensible that they are together. It is good, strong public policy. There has been nothing but warm approval right throughout the emergency management community for this and I am very pleased to have announced it in this Budget.

I may as well cut to the chase. In budgeting terms, the annual expense of the paid staff of SES will be taken up by the Tasmanian Fire Service and initially funded from savings in the corporate management review that is currently underway. There are some benefits from the pay pause that applies to TFS but because they are a special deposit and trust fund situation, the savings from that are available to them to spend on something else so they are able to accommodate that and also some other efficiencies.

The operation of the SES is essentially on the protection of private property and assisting local government, and the operation of the TFS is on private property, particularly structure fires in the case of corporate property. The stars are aligned in many ways and we are able to do it and I am very pleased. From this point on the director of SES will also be at the table for these sessions but if you direct the questions to me, I will direct them to the Chief Fire Officer, or in an overarching sense, the secretary of the department, Darren Hine.

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, with regard to the operational aspect of on-the-ground work, if we move the SES into the Tasmania Fire Service, does that mean if there is a search and rescue that the fire department will be involved in that or does it still go the search and rescue department?

Mr BROWN - There is nothing more proposed at the moment except, as the minister explained, there is the reporting lines from the director of SES in Andrew through to myself because, as has been explained, there is a whole lot of synergies and things in common in terms of our organisations and management. Nothing changes at this point in time. There has already been talk about opportunities that could be sought, but at the moment it is really those reporting lines as we described. As for search and rescue, Tasmania Police for the most part has statewide responsibility for search and rescue through the marine and rescue services organisation and SES has played a big role in for many years, but from time to time TFS has provided support to search and rescue efforts as well, under the direction of the lead agency in Tasmania Police.

Mrs HISCUTT - Are the SES mainly called out to give a hand with a fire or a search and rescue. Percentage-wise, what way do you reckon that goes?

Mr TILYARD - I am just looking up the statistics for the differences between search and rescue callouts and other types of support arrangements. We get about 25 call outs per year for search and rescue - that is straight from the statistics from the last two years. For what we call miscellaneous operations, and that is other types of callouts such as support to the Fire Service for bushfire-type support, that varies quite considerably between about 60 and 100 types of

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operational callouts per year. The hours committed and number of people involved varies quite significantly depending on the type of operation they have been called out to support.

Mrs HISCUTT - Does storm damage callout come under miscellaneous?

Mr TILYARD - No, storm or severe weather response callouts are separate, and each year they range between 150 up to close to 1 000 in a really busy year, but over the last two years it ranged between 150 and 360.

Mrs HISCUTT - How many SES volunteers do we have on our books at the moment?

Mr TILYARD - We have, on average, about 550 volunteers, and that has been fairly steady for about the last nine years.

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, all I can say about the SES is they are a wonderful group. Having been involved in a search and rescue myself, those people do their job professionally and there is nothing more I can say other than congratulations to them all.

Mr HIDDING - At the training day I was at they have specific and really quite challenging jobs to do - some are really quite mundane, but challenging in how they might go about them - but in one particular task the team leader was a diminutive blonde lady who was arranging the activities of six or seven big guys in this group and did a great job with that, and then a week or two later I saw in her workplace and she is a scientist. Giving up her weekends and that kind of thing is just indicative of the kind of people that are involved.

Mrs HISCUTT - What percentage of these people are also army reservists?

Mr HIDDING - I don't know. I don't think they would have too much time.

Mr TILYARD - We don't have that statistic available right now, but from just my recollection of who I know are in the military reserves, I can think of about a dozen at least, and there would be more.

Mr HIDDING - It is a community service character.

Mr ARMSTRONG - What sort of time is taken up by the SES in protest activity? I believe in the forests, at times, they have been called to cut people from machinery, et cetera. Have you got a breakdown?

Mr HINES - SES were, a few years ago, called to intervene in protest activities especially on chain-ons and lock-on devices but we have now trained our search and rescue personnel to take over that role because we realised the impost on volunteers and so we have trained our people up from a search and rescue and a policing point of view to be able to defeat lock-on devices.

Mr ARMSTRONG - That is good. That was the question I was going to ask you. Thank you.

Mr GAFFNEY - Following on from that, how often in the last 18 months have you had to do that?

Mr HINE - Not very often. As in lock-on devices and protest activities we have not had a lot of those situations where police have had to come along and deal with them.

Mr GAFFNEY - Would you be able to find the number in the last two years?

Mr HINE - In relation to lock-on devices or protests?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, lock-on devices and protests.

Mr HINE - We can take that on notice.

Mr HIDDING - There wouldn't be many because this is when they were behaving for the round table process.

Mr GAFFNEY - In 2016-17 and 2017-18 there is a million dollars difference. I am wondering how that works. Is it the same with the State Emergency Services? It goes up to 2 142 and then suddenly it goes to 1 139.

Mr HINE - It is the same situation as we have said before about the different pay. That is the pay situation isn't it, Todd?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Can you clarify which table?

Mr GAFFNEY - I am on table 7.5, 4.1, between 2016-17 and 2017-18. There is no footnote to explain why.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Yes, that should be consistent with that additional pay period. It was because the expense will be greater with the 27th pay.

Mr GAFFNEY - Is there that much difference?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - It would be reasonably significant. A large proportion of the Emergency Management that remains within the department is based around grant funding from the Commonwealth or the,

We will probably have to take that one on notice. I think it is the Disaster Resilience funding. Certain programs are over maybe two or three years and it is most likely it will be the cessation of some of those programs. We can clarify exactly which ones.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, because that is why we are here today.

**Output group 4 -
Emergency Management**

4.2 State Security and Rescue Operations.

Mr MULDER - I think the only issue is the 27th pay. I guess there are some questions about the potential impacts on Tasmania Police of the Director General of ASIO's suggestion that he is about to raise the alert level nationally. We know that is a national alert level so I am wondering what implications that has for Tasmania Police and even in the context particularly of the

withdrawal of Federal Police from the airport, whether that on a state of high alert means that we must take care of items, things around critical infrastructure, such as transport.

[3.45 p.m.]

Mr HINE- It has not been upgraded as yet, as far as we are aware. It is within Mr Tilyard's portfolio. You are right, if it does go to high, we have already started planning in relation to what that means. I will hand over to Mr Tilyard to explain some of the issues that we are considering.

Mr TILYARD - As you mentioned, Mr Mulder, the current Director-General of ASIO has commented publicly over the last couple of days that he is considering an increase in the national threat level to high. This will be the first time since the public alert system, which is a separate system associated with the risk of a terrorist attack in Australia and that may also change in conjunction with that. That system has been in place since 2003 and the threat level in Australia has been assessed as medium. The consideration is being given to increasing the threat level to high and then there will be a separate but related discussion around what that might mean to the public alert level.

As the commissioner said, as soon as we became aware that this was a possibility, we commenced our planning processes. There are arrangements that we will follow in a transition from an alert level of medium to high, certain things that will happen around enhanced patrols and security. We will be talking further with the community about what that means, as will the Government, I am sure, because people will be interested to know how it might affect them. Over the next couple days there will be some more communication in relation to that matter.

Mr HINE - It is critical infrastructure and places of mass gathering. All those things come into account that we need to have a look at to see how it is going affect them and whether it is extra patrols, tightened security and vigilance.

Mr MULDER - I believe the basis of this change in threat level has a lot to do with returning to your harbours. But that no doubt is a factor in the consideration of Tasmania Police's response?

Mr HINE - It is fair to say that is a matter for ASIO to look at. They are the ones who influence the threat levels. We will react to the threat levels rather than what is driving that threat level.

Mr LEA - There is considerable open-source information available at the moment, including the Director-General's comments in the media over the last couple of days, which indicates that aspects like that are of concern.

Mr MULDER - Going across to the other area, the road accident rescue, I noticed that has been shared responsibility over many years between the fire department, the ambulance service and the State Emergency Service also has a role in different bits and pieces. I wonder whether, with this combining of the agencies, there might be some bringing together of those identical functions being executed in different areas?

Mr HINE - Some years ago, Ambulance Tasmania relinquished responsibility to the Fire Service for the urban areas and the SES continue with the rural areas of road accident rescue. That is the context of it.

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Mr BROWN - In 2006 there was a transfer of road cash rescue responsibilities out of Ambulance Tasmania in the metropolitan areas to the Fire Service and the Fire Service has been undertaking that role in the metropolitan areas. The SES undertakes that role in all the other areas of the state, apart from Triabunna and that is another story as to why the Triabunna Fire Service has that role there.

It is a good model that sees us integrating a lot of our training, equipment maintenance and acquisition and the like. We share a lot in training, preparation, equipment and the rest.

Mr MULDER - In bringing together the reporting arrangements, I am wondering about the accommodation. Is it intended to move SES into the Fire Service accommodation or vice versa?

Mr BROWN - Nothing further is planned or intended for accommodation as it is at the moment but we do at every opportunity where we are looking at new premises to move into, new locations out of rural areas where we can co-locate. The Fire Service has a number of stations that are co-located with SES - I think there are 13 with SES - and there is another similar number with Ambulance Tasmania as well.

Mr MULDER - Is that two sheds on the one block or one shed where both organisations operate from?

Mr BROWN - No, it is the one building. They might have their own vehicle bays but they share amenities and things like that.

Mr HIDDING - The new Devonport Police Station accommodates SES as well. In rural areas I see co-locations as being terrific. St Marys is ambulance and fire.

Mr MULDER - How close is this based on the West Australian FESA model?

Mr BROWN - It is slightly different. This is just about the reporting arrangement from the SES director through to myself and then there are budget arrangements whereby we carry the budget for SES. FESA has become more integrated. In saying that, there is still an operational identity that is completely different between the various agencies within FESA. It is a bit broader in FESA in that it is also surf lifesaving and some marine functions as well.

Mr HINE - It is fair to say the operational arms of SES will retain its own identity, the operational arms of the TFS will continue its own identify and the police will retain their own identity, but behind the scenes of corporate services we are doing that review so see where the synergies are in relation to that. Whether it is Police, SES, Fire or Ambulance looking at a building, we make sure there is an opportunity to co-locate and get the best synergies possible.

Mr MULDER - At the operational level there never seemed to be a problem with the services working together. It was only when you got to who thought they were the boss at the time. I look forward to that being streamlined.

Mr HIDDING - There is terrific support at all levels from this initiative.

DIVISION 6 -
(State Fire Commission)

CHAIR - We asked a question the other day of the Planning minister. We talked about the general issue of fire management plans and the development applications coming through local government entities. That has created quite a bit of angst and expense in the community whereby even a very small development application in a residential area has required a fire management plan.

Mr HIDDING - This is a lot of concern at the municipal and building level over the BAL levels and imposition in planning terms. Blocks that have some nice trees and vegetation over the back fence are substantially cheaper than elsewhere because you cannot build much on them. It severely limits what you can build in some subdivisions. While there is no appetite to look at changing any of that as such in terms of our Government looking at unnecessary red tape there is a review of building approval structure in Tasmania and that will no doubt be looked at.

CHAIR - In some cases in closed residential areas within rural areas the amount of fire risk is minimal, they are already enclosed by residential housing. I know where subdivisions have been done in a rural area where they are totally surrounded.

Mr HIDDING - On the flip side you still drive around Tasmania and in the middle of the bush you see a little clearing and a big house on it. You look at that and think, who approved that? It is a tiny little driveway that a fire truck would not get up because he would not be able to reverse out.

The Victorian bushfires were vicious and we had fires 18 months ago but did not lose any lives, which was a miracle. Most states have taken up most of the recommendation of the royal commission from Victoria. When you put a new structure in place you can go over the top. I will let Mr Brown talk about that.

Mr BROWN - The issue of new building codes coming in with fire regulations is very real and as the new schemes are prepared for each municipal areas the new codes start to take effect. That will mean that things such as planning considerations and subdivisions will need to take into account bushfire risk and people need to be accredited to undertake that bushfire risk assessment. There is some science around that and people need to become more familiar with the building codes that apply to building in bushfire-prone areas.

Our effort in more recent times, and we have not had a great deal of resources to be able to divert to this, has been training up accredited people to be accredited by me so that we can make that happen. We have gone from zero less than 12 months ago to accrediting more than 30 people now out there in the industry who can do that work. Where people want to build and develop in bushfire-prone areas they can engage one of those people the same as they might need to engage an engineer when they are building or someone to do the soil testing or that kind of thing.

In relation to the mapping, there is work currently happening now. We have had the mapping done on a very raw data perspective provided by DPIPWE but now we have to ground-proof that mapping and that is currently with three councils - Hobart, Tasman and another - we will be doing that work with to do some ground-proofing on that mapping to ensure we have the product as good as it can be before it goes out to council. In the absence of that mapping councils and planners are using the previous prescription which is about the area being declared bushfire-prone if it is within 100 metres of a hectare of standing vegetation. It is not pasture land, it is standing vegetation. That can apply for the time being but in the longer term certainly the mapping is going to be more helpful in that regard.

CHAIR - I think it needs to be because some council planners have been taking the view that for a small clump of trees within 100 metres or so you require a bushfire management plan. I am only talking about two or three trees in some instances and \$1 200 or \$1 500 later somebody has had to add that on to the rest of their entry approval. I have seen a lot of that happen and maybe some councils have taken a different view than others.

Mr BROWN - We wrote to all councils explaining what we are doing, explaining the time frames and explaining those definitions. It would have been about four or five months ago that went out and we developed our website. Our website also provides the details of the people who are accredited to do those sorts of assessments and perhaps we need to promote that again with councils with some more communication.

Mr HIDDING - Can I take the opportunity to speak to the \$28.5 million commitment. It is a huge commitment in our election, and in this Budget, for a statewide fuel reduction burn program. The Government has committed to this over four years to mitigate the risk to people and property by wildfire. We have already taken steps to implement this policy commitment. A plan is currently being developed and it will be finalised prior to Tasmania's main burning season, which is autumn.

The plan will be informed by a strategic fuel management report which has been undertaken by the State Fire Management Council, which is a council that sits within the TFS, based on that landscape risk assessment. In the meantime, agencies have commenced with their spring burn programs and we understand the critical importance of fuel reduction burning to reduce the risk of bush fire to property and lives. We know, however, that 44 per cent of treatable land is in private hands and in other states where this has been considered, it has been a public land only burning, which is a program that results in, for instance, in Victoria annually setting fire to the Mallee because it was publicly owned and it was the only way you could reduce it because the rest of it, and particularly the land that was dangerous to humans, was in private hands. We are coming up with a tenure blind approach which is public and private land and the State Fire Management Council with its new chairman who I will be appointing very soon, will be out there in the community encouraging and engaging strongly with private landowners to participate in this strategic fuel management reduction.

For the members of this committee, if you were to go back to the ABC's iView and go to the *Catalyst* program, there was a program some three months ago in which the Tasmanian Fire Service, and particularly Sandra White, the director of this council, and Mr Brown and others who starred in that program demonstrated that Tasmania is going to be almost at the forefront in the world of this kind of strategic targeted fuel reduction particularly around the areas of human risk. After all, we could set fire to the south-west every year and claim it is some kind of target but we do have targets and we are able to aim at those but if we are going to go in where it is hard first, and that is where human life could be, and is, every year at risk from a wildfire in land near heavily built up areas.

It is vital that private landholders will be encouraged to undertake fuel reduction on their land and not discouraged by overly prescriptive regulations or the threat of litigation. Under this policy we will reverse the onus of proof when it comes to environmental impacts and require it to be proven that a fuel reduction burn will have an adverse environmental effect for a permit to be denied.

We will also work to change the culture within government, the bureaucracy and the wider community, in favour of fuel reduction burning. We are committed to making it much easier for landowners to undertake the fuel reduction burns with a fuel reduction first policy. The funding builds up over a four-year period, reflecting the needs of the relevant capabilities and this is a massive new undertaking.

The Fuel Reduction Burns Program using this tenure blind approach to capture both public and private land will be applying target levels to distinct areas for fuel reduction burning around the state to reduce the risk to the Tasmanian community.

Parks and Wildlife and Forestry have commenced spring burns some of which will likely form part of the final statewide fuel reduction plan. The Fuel Reduction Burns Program will be overseen by a steering committee comprising the heads of agency of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment; the Department of Premier and Cabinet; the Tasmanian Fire Service; Forestry Tasmania and the Chair of the State Fire Management Council. There are three ministers involved in this process. The Minister for State Growth, Matthew Groom, because that is where the funding sits and he has got Parks and Wildlife, which is a huge land manager; Forestry - also big land managers; and the State Fire Management Council is in my portfolio and will be driving the formulation of the plans. The fire management area committees around Tasmania will be adopting these plans and getting to work on them.

It is a whole new way of thinking, best summed up in that Catalyst program. The take home message is that there is a reason we live in Tasmania - because it is the most beautiful place on earth. But it will only remain the most beautiful place on earth if we accept that smoke and fire is part of our landscape, of living in this landscape. You cannot have what we have, and no fire. You will end up with the big fires like Dunalley and you will lose the lot. There will not be a stick left standing.

That is a challenging message for many people in Tasmania who complain of too much smoke in the air, but we need to change this message. I ask members to accept that to keep people safe and to maintain the beautiful lifestyle we have here, fire is part of living in this landscape.

Mr GAFFNEY - I have some questions about the State Fire Commission. First, I congratulate the Government on the continuation of the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods program - it is a really good program. I note the program is to be delivered in a multi-faceted format - community forums, workshops, field days, bushfire rehearsals, bushfire ready programs and property assessments. Does it specifically target bushfire prone areas or does the program engage the wider community? Is it specifically targeting those areas?

My second question - is there any method of measuring the program's effectiveness and if so, has this been done during recent instances of bushfire?

Mr BROWN - We have targeted the communities we are going to be aiming the program at, based on discussions with local communities and looking at our data - where we have had the worst fires, where we have had impact and where we have potential. It is not something we are putting out there as a general program at the moment. We think we are going to get more bang for our buck, so to speak, by targeting it at certain communities. It is very much about working with communities in a variety of forums, like face to face meetings at the local hall, or at the local

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fire station, engaging the local volunteers as well. They are working with and understanding the community issues with fire.

Mr GAFFNEY - Do you have a way of evaluating it?

Mr BROWN - We intend to evaluate it, like our summer and winter campaigns. We always have a campaign ahead of winter about house fire risk and ahead of summer about bushfire risk. We use independent evaluation services to look at the effectiveness of our programs and advise as to how we can make changes and improve in the future.

Mr GAFFNEY - It has had a good response and it seems to be a good initiative.

The next question is about the fire fighting appliance replacement program. I note that the Budget allows for a fire truck replacement program designed to increase the operational age of trucks from 25 plus to 20 years. What proportion of the fire trucks in service currently exceed the 20-year target?

Mr BROWN - I will have to take that on notice and get back to you with those figures, but I can say that the age profile of our vehicles has improved markedly over the last five to 10 years.

Mr GAFFNEY - The second part of that question is - \$19 million being allocated to this program over the next five years. Is it expected that all trucks in the fleet will be 20 years old or less by 2019? If your aim is to get to there, and you have been given this much money, is that possible? If you could take that on notice?

Mr BROWN - Yes, I will. The maths, in terms of our fleet numbers, means that we need to put an average of 22 and a bit new trucks on the road each year. They will go into areas of higher use. For every new truck we issue there are sometimes as many as five or six other reissues because someone with a 10-year-old vehicle might get another one that is five years old.

Mr GAFFNEY - So it becomes self-perpetuating after a certain time. Is that 2019? Is that when you see that you will be under the 20-year average and long through?

Mr BROWN - Can I just add to that? We have certainly looked at the age profile because that has an impact on the safety of the vehicle, maintenance costs and everything else. The two big objectives for us, which I think we have now met, are that every heavy truck is dual-cab, meaning we have our whole crew within a cab for safety reasons, and all our fleet is diesel rather than petrol vehicles.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, I saw that.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - In relation to that, the focus at the moment has been on those heavy pumper replacements which obviously are a larger cost and a smaller number. We do about 14 of those per annum. Hopefully this year those will get us through. Then we will move into the light tanker and we can do more of those in any period; that is a total of around 430 appliances once we get into the tanker mode. We will do around 20 - 40 of the smaller tankers a year. The average can be misleading in that as well in that if you roll out very new vehicles you potentially have very old vehicles but our aim is to get all of our vehicles under that age profile. Whether we will achieve that is dependent upon some of those old vehicles which can be employed in less-used areas.

Mr GAFFNEY - There is also the extent of hours of work for some of those vehicles as well.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - Interestingly enough, in the corporate plan 2014-15 to 2018-19, you describe a straight-line method of depreciation being applied to motor vehicles, planning equipment and fire appliances. Will the reduction operational life capacity credits higher depreciation for the TFS or is that depreciation being factored into the purchases?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - I guess it is factored in a straight line at the moment. We are reviewing that because a higher value in our vehicles will lead to a higher depreciation potentially. Again, it might be a rationalisation of some of those older vehicles which we have had for a period. A number of those are almost fully depreciated. That is something we have to do a little bit of work on. I would not imagine that straight line will remain consistent. The encouraging thing though is that what we have been investing in capital has been equivalent to that depreciation so it is maintaining the standard of the capital across the commission.

Mr GAFFNEY - I saw there is \$5.7 million being allocated to replacement and refurbishment of fire stations but I couldn't see anywhere in the plan where those stations were. Do you have that list for the next five years?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - We have a couple of projects identified but one of the things that we have traditionally struggled with is allocating the funds and not getting those projects completed in the time frame. We are in the process at the moment and particularly as we discussed earlier, the capacity to align stations with SES in that as well. This re-appointing arrangement will enable us to do some more forward planning in that space. Whilst we have identified two or three stations for replacement, much of that funding is about keeping our capital base at a level playing field. There will be a lot more work to do before we allocate exactly where those stations will be.

Mr GAFFNEY - The Red Hot Tips program that was instigated in 2013-14 had a total cost of \$463 000, so there is \$154 000 budgeted in 2013-14. Could you advise how that money was spent, or how do you record that program? Now that you have so many million dollars being put into the last one -

Mr HIDDING - We are counting on this Red Hot Tips continuing. It is an absolute key part of engaging private property owners.

Mr GAFFNEY - Do you keep a record of the property owners you have had over the last 12 months and, if so, could you provide that for us? I could not find it anywhere in the documents. The last one is the State Parliamentary Council. I will interesting in looking at that, given it is Governors back from 1979. You nominate a chair person as you have mentioned. If you nominate does that mean the Governor ticks off on it? If he says no, I do not think that is good, do you know what I mean?

Mr HIDDING - Indeed, the Queen decides whether my chairman gets the gig or not. It is a Governor's appointment but on a recommendation from his executive council.

Mr GAFFNEY - I looked at the role they play and it is an important role. What is the budget allocation for that council? I know that some of the positions are nominated by a local government or another authority or the farmers. How many paid positions on that, and what does it cost to run that council, because they meet quite regularly it seems.

Mr HIDDING - The ones from outside, the TFGA appointment, would attract a small sitting fee. It is probably provided by the TFGA but I am not sure and they would probably claim travelling costs of the TFGA. The chair, we have set that, as it is a much higher order job now than it was before I came on, given this particular role. The previous chair person was on a per meeting sitting fee. We set this job because of the role of going out into the community having to sell this new message of fire being part of our landscape, at the same position as the chairman of the Road Safety Advisory Council, which I think is in the mid-\$30 000. We have linked it as a band level to that and at that rate, we can expect not only a quality person but a person who will have the time and means to be out in the community, widely, around Tasmania, selling this activity.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. The membership is at nine? There is the chief officer of the Tasmanian Fire Service and a nominee, so there is two of you in part of that. Secretarial support, where does that come from?

Mr HIDDING - That is provided by TFS.

CHAIR - Okay, members any more questions for the Tasmanian Fire Service?

Mr HIDDING - We should all be very proud of the Tasmanian Fire Service. I think it is the only one in the Australian jurisdiction where volunteers and professional fire fighters are all in the same room. All sitting around the same table. Some would say it is a miracle how it all comes together but they are all people who love their state and we should all be very proud.

CHAIR - Minister, Mr Mulder has one more question.

Mr MULDER - I had the President lean on me to ask one. So do not blame me. Just a question about the Dunalley fires, last year. There were some issues about the radio network and its ability to operate in some of those particular areas. I also note that we are still pouring money into the mobile radio network. I am wondering what the [inaudible] were and how we are going to deal with them and, in the future, whether this mobile radio network will be susceptible to what was the major failure of communications during a catastrophic event. Mainly, if we have towers that are burnt and lost transmission towers. An opportunity to sell the praises of this wonderful mobile radio project, which I think has appeared as budget line item for the last 20 years.

Mr HIDDING - It has. I will answer that by saying that there is a very strong commitment by this Government to finally achieve the whole of government emergency management, radio network. It is not that simple, we cannot give everyone the same radios and say go forth and all use that. There are issues, such as typography. Out in the bush in certain circumstances that band width works better in the city. That particular band goes through brick walls better than that band width. I recall when the EDAC system was first installed in Tasmania and the Swedish managing director of Ericsson flew to Tasmania to see this island for himself he could not believe what people were telling him. He was saying, 'Surely, as a company, we can fix any challenge', and they said, 'You haven't been to Tasmania'.

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He came to look and he understood that we have the heights, we have temperature differences, we have the ranges, hugely dense areas where hardly anyone lives - the challenges were so extreme.

The good news is that there is a team across the agencies, including ambulance, that are working very closely on an interoperability project and shortly we will be able to say more about that. I can indicate to the committee that it is looking good and we would be hoping that this summer we might see the first iteration of a whole new standard so I will have to say more about that soon.

Mr MULDER - The issue with the radios and communications for the fire service, in particular, I think it was -

Mr HIDDING - You mean during that bushfire?

Mr BROWN - Our entire dedication system remained stable right through the whole period. It will work and continue to work through the whole fire situation.

Mr MULDER - You have vulnerabilities with towers losing the power?

Mr BROWN - There were communication towers on commercial networks and mobile phone networks that were impacted.

Mr MULDER - You don't have these towers doing things like that?

Mr BROWN - Yes, we do but they are all in places that either were not affected or were protected.

Mr MULDER - Was that because of good protection mechanisms around your towers that the commercial operators didn't use or was it just the luck of the gods?

Mr BROWN - It was probably a bit of both. One of the things we do in our pre-planning is we identify where all these communications infrastructure facilities are and we will put effort and resources into doing what we can to protect them, knowing that they are very important in the support of the internet.

Mr MULDER - And continuity of business through battery back-up?

Mr BROWN - Yes.

CHAIR - I think we are done. Minister, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much. Scott, do you have something else to add?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - In regard to Mr Gaffney's question earlier in regards to the SES payments, we can confirm that change is because there is money provided from the Commonwealth for the National Partnership Agreement and that is over the next two years. That will be drawn down over the next three years by the SES who administer that, hence an increase of about \$300 000 from 2016-17 when we expect it to drop back \$1 million to normal.

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CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister, and thank you to your staff and everybody here today.

The Committee adjourned at 4.23 p.m.