



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Felix Ellis MP

Thursday 26 September 2024

MEMBERS

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC

Hon Mike Gaffney MLC

Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC

Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair)

Hon Meg Webb MLC

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. FELIX ELLIS MP

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

Adrian Bodnar

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

Donna Adams

Commissioner of Police/Secretary, DPFEM/State Controller

Robert Blackwood

Assistant Commissioner Specialist Support, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency
Management

Glenn Keating

Assistant Commissioner Innovation, Capability and Risk, Department of Police, Fire &
Emergency Management

Jonathan Higgins

Deputy Commissioner of Police, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Mick Lowe

Executive Director, State Emergency Service and Volunteers, Department of Police, Fire &
Emergency Management

Jeremy Smith

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

Mathew Healey

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

Richard Gilmour

Director, Community Infrastructure, Homes Tasmania

Eleri Morgan-Thomas

Chief Executive Officer, Homes Tasmania

Jessemy Stone

Director, Housing Policy and Programs, Homes Tasmania

Sean McPhail

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

Alex Paterson

General Manager, Skills and Workforce, Department of State Growth

Jenna Cairney

A/Deputy Secretary, Business and Jobs, Department of State Growth

Stuart Hollingsworth

Director, Jobs Tasmania

Grant Dreher

Chief Executive Officer, TasTAFE

Will McShane

Chief Financial Officer, TasTAFE

The Committee met at 9 am.

DIVISION 8

(Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management)

Output Group 1

Public Safety

CHAIR (Ms Rattray) - It is day 4 for us, so you can see the smile on my face, and I expect that for many others as well. We would sincerely like to welcome you all here today.

Welcome, minister, and welcome to those who are with you today. As I have already indicated without the broadcast starting, that you have a number of areas of responsibility, and we will endeavour to meet the timeframes that have been outlined for you as well. It is my pleasure to introduce the Committee B members to you today.

From my right, we have the member for Mersey, Mike Gaffney. The member for Nelson, Meg Webb. The member for Launceston, Rosemary Armitage. Tania Rattray, member for McIntyre. The member for Pembroke, Luke Edmunds. And the member for Hobart, Cassy O'Connor. Secretarial support, we have Craig, and Julie is on her way. From Hansard, we have Gaye. That is us. Would you please introduce your team at the table as well, and anyone who interchanges during the course of the day, if you could indicate who they are for Hansard purposes. We're happy to have an overview.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, to my right, we have Donna Adams, Commissioner of Police, Secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management and State Controller. Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police. Adrian Bodnar, Rob Blackwood, and Glenn Keating to my left, all of them Assistant Commissioners of Police. We have Ross Hinkley, our Acting Deputy Secretary. Scott Wilson-Haffenden, and to my immediate left, Dr Anthony Reid, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions. If it works for you, Chair, I'll go into my opening statement.

CHAIR - Absolutely.

Mr ELLIS - I'll begin my brief opening remarks by acknowledging the exceptional work of our police, fire and emergency services who helped our community through the worst of the recent storms and floods. On behalf of the grateful state, my thanks go to the extraordinary Tasmanians who put up their hands to help not only during floods and damaging winds, but every day.

Chair, the Tasmanian government recognises that our emergency responders provide critical assistance when our communities need it most. That's why the 2024-25 Budget invests more than \$144 million in new support that will bolster our frontline police services, and more than \$41.5 million of new investment into our people, equipment, and infrastructure which will significantly bolster our critical fire and emergency services. To name a few initiatives, Tasmanians can expect record police recruitment to continue to crack down on crime, and with 60 additional police, police numbers are at their highest level in history.

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The Budget delivers for our multidisciplinary Arch centres for victim-survivors, that support victim-survivors of family and sexual violence, including establishing a new centre in the north-west.

Our people are also at the heart of what we do, and we are committed to supporting them as they support us all. We have increased funding to our nation-leading health and wellbeing program and are supporting injured workers with substantial ongoing funding.

Building emergency services hubs in Kingston, Rosebury, and Wynyard in conjunction with broadened operational capabilities will ensure our communities receive diligent and timely assistance no matter where they are. This Budget prioritises investment in frontline services, will deliver stronger communities, and makes it clear that the Tasmanian government is committed to investment in our operational capabilities to keep our community safe.

I am also pleased to share that this week, public consultation opened on the police offences amendment bill. The bill proposes key changes that will target hooning and dangerous driving by increasing penalties for those who selfishly put others at risk, introduce an offence of road rage, and toughen provisions on the clamping and confiscation of vehicles used to offend. The community also expects action on knife crime, and this bill will ensure our police have the ability to search a person who is reasonably suspected of carrying a weapon in public and increase maximum penalties the courts can impose across a range of offences. I encourage submissions on the bill through the Tasmanian police consultation website with written submissions open until 27 October 2024.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any overview questions, members? Yes, thank you, Ms Armitage. Yes, thank you, Ms O'Connor.

Ms ARMITAGE - Launceston crime statistics for the last financial year I noticed were very high when compared with other areas in the state. I am reliably informed that that won't be much different for this coming financial year annual report. Can you advise me what are you actually going to do to improve the crime statistics and the crime that appears to be happening far more often in Launceston compared to other areas in the state?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Ms Armitage, and I acknowledge the support that you have provided for our police officers here in Tasmania. It's very gratefully -

Ms ARMITAGE - My independent person, you mean.

Mr ELLIS - Say again?

Ms ARMITAGE - Independent person. I do independent person with TasPol. I thought you were talking about that.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, I didn't even know about that.

Ms ARMITAGE - There you go.

Mr ELLIS - So you provide even more support than I knew, Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Been doing that for 25 years, yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I know just how supportive in the community you are for our frontline police officers. We're seeing some challenges in our state, particularly coming out of COVID. Some of the effects, particularly on our young people when it comes to time spent away from school and mental health from that difficult time, as well as the increasing -

Ms O'CONNOR - Excuse me, I need to challenge that. There's plenty of evidence that time spent away from school did not negatively impact on mental health during lockdowns. Sorry, you just need to stick to the evidence.

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, I think there's pretty strong evidence that when children are not attending school, they have a much higher rate of falling foul of the law. The insidious effects of growing trends in social media is certainly a concern. I will make a few comments regarding Launceston in general, and then pass to the team from Tasmania Police and -

Ms ARMITAGE - Thanks, if you would, because the comments so far relate to the whole state, but Launceston seems to be figuring fairly heavily in negative stats.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. The first thing is to note that when we do data by LGA, local government area, Launceston is the largest, and so that can be a factor. Launceston police station is our largest police station in the state. So, when we also graduate recruits, and I mentioned the 60 new ones that we will be recruiting as part of this Budget and over the next number of years, those police recruits immediately go onto the frontline at Launceston. We have also made some significant upgrades at the Launceston police station in the last 12 to 24 months for the reason that we know that we need to increase our capacity and capability there because it is, as I mentioned, the leading police station in the state when it comes to numbers and capability. I'll pass to Commissioner Adams and her team in regard to Launceston, in particular.

Ms ARMITAGE - I do want to point out, too, and certainly no criticism of Tas Police - they do an absolutely magnificent job - it makes it so much harder for them if we have more people committing crime. But they do a fantastic job.

Mr BODNAR - Thank you, and through the minister. Thank you for those comments about the good work that our people are doing.

Ms ARMITAGE - They are great.

Mr BODNAR - We do do an amazing job in some very challenging circumstances, as I'm sure the committee members could understand.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, we certainly do.

Mr BODNAR - If I may paint a picture, if I can, just where we've come from before I move to Launceston. Even though Launceston does figure heavily in the statistics, when I look at the percentage rate, our increase from Launceston for 2023-24 compared to the previous financial year, it's in the vicinity of just over 8 per cent. When I look at some other areas across the state like Glenorchy, as an example, it's 10 per cent. It's a little bit higher when we look across the state.

If we go back to 1997-98, just as a snapshot, back then we had over 64,000 offences committed in the State of Tasmania. That was horrendous, to be honest with you. What fell out of part of that was the Tasmania Together plan, that 2020 vision. Part of the vision for Tasmania Police was to reduce the incidence of crime across the state by 50 per cent by 2020.

If we skip forward 10 years to 2007-08, we managed to reduce crime by over 30,000 offences; in fact, in that year in 2007-08, we were a shade over 33,000. It was good work by our staff working with the community to get some results. We've performed well, I think, over many many years but we see a bit of a spike when we hit 2022-23. Unfortunately, that year was quite challenging where we see an increase in crime of about 26 per cent. The first time for a long period of time we've seen such a significant increase.

Then last year, 2023-24, we see an increase of just over 10 per cent across the state which, effectively was a little over 3400 more offences in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23. What we have done across the board in order to try to combat the increase in total offences - and I probably should say there's a lot of factors that can influence crime across the community whether it's Launceston or whether it's Glenorchy, Devonport, wherever it may be. We hear a lot of narrative around the cost of living at the moment across Australia. If you were to ask me, I could say, yes, that's one contributing factor. On top of that we've got other things where we can see an increase in family violence, unfortunately, across the board in Tasmania. We've seen that over recent years, which is not what we want to see. We also see challenges with people who are suffering from mental health issues in the community. I know there's been an increase in the jobs that our members are required to attend across the state as well.

Unfortunately, we see other factors that influence crime in the community such as drug and alcohol addiction. In there as well sometimes there's opportunities created to commit crime which is not what we want to see. When I say that, I'm not blaming anybody, but if we develop that shared responsibility and almost a collective obligation to make sure we lock our homes when we go out, to make sure we secure our vehicles - we do see patches around the state where houses are broken into, cars are broken into. Sometimes, if we simply took that step of locking our vehicles and locking our homes, we could reduce some of those opportunities.

Specifically, for Launceston, yes, we have seen a crime increase over the last financial year. Across the board, we implemented the crime and intelligence command a few years ago which has statewide responsibility. I know we've had staff from that command working in Launceston, working hand-in-glove with the northern drugs and firearms unit, and also the CIB members up there on some of our higher profile jobs. When we're doing some of these larger investigations they're not always publicised and there's clearly reasons for that when we're working through an investigation. I know in recent times, I think back in August, there were 30-odd firearms recovered in a short period of time from some searches and around 64 people charged.

In addition to that, we've got the family and sexual violence command that we implemented or established in July last year. Obviously, there's a statewide responsibility there as well. We did fold our drug investigation areas into our CIBs because of the linkage between drugs and firearms. We know in Launceston at times there is an amount of firearm crime. It's concerning but there are times when we see there are feuds between individuals or groups within the community and that's how they attempt to resolve it which is clearly not what we want. We're very cognisant of that and we're working very hard.

There's a number of other initiatives we've implemented there through Taskforce Viper that we've run on and off throughout the year. We currently have a focus group that's running in Launceston which is led by a sergeant of police. There are three members on that and they're addressing some of those antisocial behaviours we see, unfortunately, in the CBD. Shoplifting has been a challenge for us as well through the northern district, but it's been more of a challenge in the southern district than in the northern district. Coupled with that we see some increases in youth crime as well.

That's not inconsistent with what we're seeing across other jurisdictions within Australia, and like an increase in crime it's consistent with what we're seeing certainly in Victoria. When I looked at some statistics recently for Victoria in the calendar year of 2023, they recorded over 523,000 criminal offences for that calendar year and that was an increase of over 40,000 more offences from -

Mr ELLIS - It's more than Tasmania's entire -

Mr BODNAR - It is. You're right, minister. It's more than Tasmania's entire offence rate when we sit under that 36,000 mark. When I look at some statistics in Western Australia, I see an uptick in crime there as well. There are some challenges. We not only see those challenges in Launceston. There are challenges across the board. We have made some structural change, as I said, through crime and intelligence, family and sexual violence. We've run a number of firearm amnesties across the state as well, and we have seen some good results from there. We're continually trying to be responsive to different community needs which fit in with what the community survey told us as well that we conducted last year in October and November. We know out of that the community want to see the people more often.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Armitage, there's probably something specific as well around police numbers and police recruiting in terms of Launceston. The data that I've have is that we've had an increase of 44 officers at the Launceston police station since we came into government. That's around 35 per cent to 40 per cent increase -

CHAIR - I'm not sure where you're putting them. It's pretty tight in there.

Ms ARMITAGE - They're out on the beat. They have to come back to base sometime won't they.

Mr ELLIS - As part of the investment in the station, but you're right we do prefer them to be out in the community. The police car is the modern-day police officer's office which is where we want them to be. The other thing in terms of recruiting - because we know how important community policing is and those strong relationships in the community - is our new approach to northern recruits. As a resident of Launceston, you'd understand that if you had to go to Hobart for 28 weeks to do a recruit course, particularly if you've got young kids, that becomes quite prohibitive, so -

Ms ARMITAGE - I think it's a fantastic initiative.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, so the commissioner and her team have been really forward-leaning in the northern recruit course which is great for Launceston and great for the north-west as well. I don't know if you want me to speak more to that.

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Ms ARMITAGE - We might have a new commander soon. A permanent commander soon.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, we've been through a selection process and that should be finalised before Christmas.

Ms ARMITAGE - It would be great to have someone in a permanent role. It must be difficult being in an acting role.

Ms ADAMS - Yes. Absolutely. We want stable leadership, and we've kept the current acting commander in the role for the stability and providing that leadership and direction, but the position has been advertised as per the recruitment process.

Ms ARMITAGE - I would like to say that Nathan Johnston has done an outstanding job.

Ms ADAMS - We agree.

Ms ARMITAGE - When you consider that he's filled in the breach and he's always available. It's really worth putting on the record when people have done a good job.

CHAIR - Seems like we've covered Launceston and that area quite well.

Ms ARMITAGE - For the moment.

Mr BODNAR - Chair, do you mind if I make one correction to a statistic I recently quoted, if that's okay?

CHAIR - We're always happy to take a correction.

Mr BODNAR - Thank you. I spoke about the 31 firearms we seized. In an article back on 8 August there were 31 firearms seized. There were 20 people charged with 64 individual offences in the four-week period leading up to there. Just to correct that. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms O'Connor, overview question?

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Minister, government received the Weiss independent review into Paul Reynolds in June this year. The state budget was handed down two-and-a-half months later yet none of the four recommendations that relate to Tasmania Police are funded in the state budget. Why didn't you fight to make sure that these really important recommendations which demonstrate that Tasmania police has some serious work to do, were funded? Why didn't you fight for the funding?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms O'Connor. First, I thank Ms Weiss for the exceptional work she did, and also recognise all the victim-survivors of these terrible crimes committed by Paul Reynolds. At the request of Commissioner Adams an independent review was undertaken in relation to Paul Reynold's conduct across his 40-year career prior to his death on 13 September 2018, after a police professional standards investigation. The review provided, as you mentioned, five recommendations, all of which have been accepted by the Commissioner of Police and the government.

Ms O'CONNOR - But not funded by government.

Mr ELLIS - In the review's findings, there are some findings which are whole-of-government matters, some that relate to the Attorney-General. That's things like the Integrity Commission and then there are some matters for Tasmania Police and -

Ms O'CONNOR - Four out of the five recommendations.

Mr ELLIS - Well, probably three out of the five would be the way that I would characterise it. We've fed the recommendations into the broader commission of inquiry work. We think that's appropriate.

Paul Reynolds was a case study in the commission of inquiry and the recommendations that Ms Weiss provided are an important addition, we think, to the aid that was provided to Tasmania Police. In terms of the -

Ms O'CONNOR - Funding.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of the redress scheme, policy work is underway by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the commission of inquiry team. In terms of what the design of that will look like, obviously that's a really important area that we need to get right, because this is a very sensitive matter and redress schemes are complex. Ms Morgan-Wicks, the Department of Premier and Cabinet secretary, mentioned that, but mentioned that work is progressing. In regard to Tasmania Police recommendations, we've been able to progress some work on that already. I'll pass to the commissioner to talk around the restorative practices and even the community engagement work. We have -

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm happy to get to the commissioner. Commissioner, I'm happy to hear from the commissioner soon. I might remind you it was the Greens' relentless pushing that dragged your government into initiating the Weiss review, but -

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, I -

Ms O'CONNOR - Just specifically on the establishment, I'm thankful -

Mr ELLIS - I reject that. I don't think it's -

Ms O'CONNOR - That it was established.

Mr ELLIS - I don't think it's necessary to try to political point-score on this because -

Ms O'CONNOR - No, it's not about political point-scoring.

Mr ELLIS - We have a strong -

Ms O'CONNOR - It's about making sure the history's correct.

CHAIR - Order. Order.

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, we have a strong commitment to ensuring that -

CHAIR - Minister, Hansard cannot record two people speaking at once. We have a question, then we have an answer, and we have no conversation in between. This is what it is: questions and answers. Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. I'll ask the question. Noting that this is a difficult and sensitive subject for anyone who's watching the broadcast, on the establishment of the Weiss review itself, minister, can you explain to us why the terms of reference were written to exclude an examination of how and why the decision was made to hold a full honours police funeral for paedophile Paul Reynolds?

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, I'll finalise the answer on the other two first so that we can ensure that people have an understanding of the answers to your questions. I do reject your characterisation. There is strong across-parliament support to ensure that there's no stone that was left unturned.

Ms O'CONNOR - Absolutely.

Mr ELLIS - We believe immediately upon an examination of the commission of inquiry's finding that there was more work that could be done in terms of Paul Reynolds and our understanding of how Tasmania Police - and the community that Paul Reynolds groomed was vulnerable to that kind of behaviour. Characterising it as a political matter is not helpful. I know the absolute commitment -

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm not. I'm trying to correct the record.

Mr ELLIS - I know the absolute commitment of Tasmania Police, this government and everyone in the community to ensure that that work was done. Now, as we mentioned, there is -

Ms O'CONNOR - The terms of reference.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the commissioner to talk around the resourcing that's already been provided in responding to some of the recommendations. Recommendation 3, for example, we have a new -

Ms O'CONNOR - The question was about the terms of reference, minister, and why -

Mr ELLIS - I'm answering your previous question -

Ms O'CONNOR - A decision was made to exclude -

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, and then I'm happy to -

Ms O'CONNOR - You did answer that.

Mr ELLIS - Well, we didn't even get to the bit where I pass to the commissioner to talk around the resourcing that you asked about. But if you like, we can move on. I'm just trying to be helpful.

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Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you. That's good.

Mr ELLIS - Okay. I'll pass to the commissioner -

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm happy to have -

Mr ELLIS - To give you an update about where we're at in terms of the Tasmania Police recommendations.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you very much, minister and commissioner. Then perhaps we can get back to the terms of reference decisions.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, happy to.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. Through the minister. In terms of the recommendations from the Weiss review, we see that there's quite a lot of linkage with the commission of inquiry recommendations as well. The community engagement is one example, certainly the redress scheme, and also supporting victim-survivors. What we've asked the minister to support is for us to do the work around how we might ensure that both important reviews are considered in the one context. What we're doing at the moment is scoping for the Weiss review. As the minister has indicated, a couple of the recommendations will be led from the whole-of-government taskforce, and the recommendations that are specific to Tasmania Police, we'll provide the minister with some advice once we've completed that scoping on what we think the budget will look like and the resourcing to support those recommendations.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, commissioner.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of Ms O'Connor's other question in regard to the funeral, both the commissioner and I have said that that was the wrong decision from the commissioner at the time. The police manual used to provide no guidance to the commissioner about matters that they would need to take into account in provision of a police funeral. In the document that commissioned Ms Weiss, it was made clear that there would be an immediate change to the manual so that the commissioner of the day would be required in all future decisions regarding police funerals to take into account police professional standards matters that relate to that officer. So -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yet Ms Weiss wasn't able to investigate the funeral because it wasn't in the terms of reference.

Mr ELLIS - So we made the immediate change, and that's important for the future. We've obviously acknowledged that it was the wrong decision. I'll pass to the commissioner to add further to remarks.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you and through you, minister. The terms of reference, in briefing Ms Weiss, the clear instruction from me, leave no stone unturned, and that included a broad-based approach to the terms of reference and anything that she found. If Ms Weiss was of the view that there needed to be further scrutiny on a particular issue, she had the remit to do that and she could come back to me if she had any concerns or wanted to expand the terms

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of reference. Ms Weiss has undertaken the review and provided an extensive report. As the minister says, the decision to hold the funeral was simply wrong. There was no guidance at the time around the criteria for when to hold a funeral. We've obviously made changes in relation to that.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'll come back, thanks, Chair.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I'll follow on from those questions to some extent, with some more data-based questions around the Weiss review. I'm interested to understand, looking back, what the breakdown of the cost categories were that related to that review, including Ms Weiss' services, any solicitor services that were additional to her, travel, accommodation, et cetera. Are you able to provide a project cost breakdown for us?

Mr ELLIS - I'll call the team from Tasmania Police in regards to cost, noting of course that ultimately, when we're talking about these kinds of matters, cost is somewhat secondary. You know, if there's work that needs to be done, as we've shown with this current Budget, hundreds of millions of dollars allocated in this space, that ultimately it's a cost that needs to be borne for the benefit of the Tasmanian community and children particularly for the future. I'll pass to the commissioner.

Ms WEBB - For the record, minister, I don't disagree with that. I'm not asking the question with a view to criticising the spending of the money.

Mr ELLIS - I understand.

Ms WEBB - Just for accountability around visibility of the money.

Ms ADAMS - In the previous financial year, Ms Weiss' costs were \$387,881. I believe there was a subsequent invoice that's come after 30 June 2024 that's not included in these figures.

Ms WEBB - Are you able to provide those details to us?

Ms ADAMS - I can get that for you. I don't have it to hand, but I can certainly get that for you.

Ms WEBB - I appreciate that.

CHAIR - Is that inclusive of any legal advice or anything? Is that the complete cost?

Ms ADAMS - Ms Weiss invoiced us for her complete costs.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

Ms WEBB - So there's not a breakdown of elements within that.

Ms ADAMS - No.

Ms WEBB - On a similar vein, in relation to another review which began under the title of the O'Farrell review and became the Bugg review around the Risdon Prison listening device matter. I'm interested similarly for a cost breakdown around that across its whole iterations, so from the time that it was intended to be undertaken and contracted to be undertaken by Mr O'Farrell and then all the way through to Mr Bugg taking it on. Can you provide a similar cost breakdown for that?

Ms ADAMS - I can say that there were no costs associated with the engagement of the intended first reviewer. The reviewer didn't even commence any work in relation to that. In relation to Mr Bugg, the costs were around \$70,000 for the review.

Ms O'CONNOR - Good value for money.

Ms ADAMS - It was very good value, considering he also then donated the money to a charity.

Ms O'CONNOR - Fairly typical of Mr Bugg.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, absolutely. I want to make sure I've got that right in our figures here.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Commissioner, I don't believe it is in the document, but you're correct around that cost.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I know that Ms O'Connor asked about funding for implementing the Weiss review recommendations, and we've discussed that, but in terms of implementing matters out of the Bugg review, can you specify any additional funding and resourcing that's been provided subsequent to that review or alongside that review to address the matters that it covered and the recommendations that came out?

Ms ADAMS - The recommendations: we've implemented a number of those recommendations and I'm happy to provide. I'll ask Assistant Commissioner Blackwood to work through those if you're interested in the detail. We didn't require any external funding in relation to that. Those recommendations have been managed in advance within our own resources, including our own legal service team and obviously our own under the remit of the assistant commissioner. As I said, I'm happy to work through those recommendations and give you the progress of each of those if you're interested.

Ms WEBB - Is that documented anywhere that is available to access?

Ms ADAMS - No.

Ms WEBB - I would be interested, probably not necessarily to take up time at the table for it. If it is in a form that could be tabled with us so it can become part of the record and for future reference.

Mr BLACKWOOD - I can add information at a really high level if you want the key changes that have been made in that process, if you like. A key part of it is a new committee for each surveillance device warrant that's approved. It's a committee that either I as assistant commissioner chairs, or one of the other assistant commissioners if I'm unavailable in urgent circumstances, and that's where we have the investigator present who presents the warrant application. It's already gone through our legal services and been checked by them and made sure there's enough information there.

Then there's a presentation to me in relation to the application for the warrant. Warrants only then get authorised once they're approved at that level. There's also been a number of changes in terms of training for our members. That includes training for all our existing detectives who are obtaining this sort of warrant. It's also part of our investigative training program for members wanting to join CIB and other detective areas. There's also been changes to the forms based on the recommendations from Mr Bugg as well.

Ms WEBB - Thank you for that overview. Another area I wanted to touch on in overview was RTI. I've been checking in with each department that's in front of us around RTI stats, most recent up-to-date stats you can provide for your response to RTI. I'm interested in average times, I'm interested in the number, but also broken down around how many were determined in full, partially or refused, and your compliance with timeframes in the act as a starting point.

Mr ELLIS - The DPFEM received a significant number of right to information applications in 2023-24. DPFEM received 561 applications for assessed disclosure. Applications are assessed by a dedicated RTI section comprising five staff members who are delegated officers on behalf of the principal officer. Of course, the department seeks to actively and routinely disclose as much information as possible. 2023-24 internal reviews were sought in relation to 13 decisions. That's around 2 per cent of all decisions. In terms of statistical data, I'll pass to the team from Tasmania Police. The most recent data that I have for 2023-24 is 561 received, 51 refused. The number of applications released with exemption applied, 554.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is this information in annual reports?

Ms ADAMS - It will be. I'm not sure all of it will be in terms of information around external review outcomes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay.

Ms ADAMS - I don't think that is within the annual report. The other information, through you, minister, applications we receive for internal review in the last financial year were 13. Internal review outcome where the decision was upheld in full was seven. Internal review outcome where the decision was upheld in part or was resolved by other means was six. Internal review outcome where the original decision was reversed in full was three. Applications for external review by the Ombudsman were eight. External review outcome where the original decision was upheld in full was one. External review outcome where the outcome by means - or upheld in part - was four. We've got nine still awaiting the external review process by the Ombudsman.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. In relation to the RTI, I'm wondering is there an internal departmental policy that outlines the approach to the publication on the website of RTI

disclosures that come through the department that would indicate what guides the decisions and the timelines for that?

Ms ADAMS - We have delegates who have responsibility for the RTI under my delegation, and they determine whether a matter or a disclosure is uploaded onto the website. It's at their discretion. Obviously, if it's public interest it should be put up onto the website. There are some occasions where there's information of a personal nature that may impact that decision, but that's a decision for the RTI delegates.

Ms WEBB - Right. The timelines, then, aren't in a guideline somewhere or determined?

Ms ADAMS - In terms of the timeframe for publishing it?

Ms WEBB - Publishing it.

Ms ADAMS - No, no.

Ms WEBB - Some of the other departments have such a policy and guideline internally.

Ms ADAMS - Okay.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the time.

CHAIR - Homework. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Always looking for continuous improvement, Chair.

CHAIR - Absolutely. We give positive feedback here as well. Ms O'Connor, we're still in overview but I'm also mindful that we do need to get to 1.1, which is support to the community.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Minister, back to the protection of children and young people. Regarding the Paul Reynolds matter, can you confirm, or perhaps the commissioner can confirm, on what date Tasmania Police stopped the professional standards investigation into Paul Reynolds?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the commissioner.

Ms ADAMS - I'll have to have a look at that. I don't think we have that information. I mean, we do, but I don't think I have it within the papers. I can certainly provide it to you on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - We'll put that one on notice. It was discontinued at some point. It's obviously not running today. Why was the file closed again, minister?

Mr ELLIS - This has been an important, I suppose, learning and improvement that Tasmania Police has done in ensuring that matters after someone is deceased - that there's still scope for that work. I'll pass to the commissioner and her team to add further.

Ms ADAMS - Yes. Thank you, minister, and through you. The investigators did follow what was proper procedure back then. An investigation commenced, the perpetrator dies; that criminal investigation simply would conclude and the investigation would then transition to a coronial investigation at the direction of the Coroner. At the time the investigators did follow what was the procedure that we would expect them to follow. Obviously we've made a number of changes in relation to that. We're very cognisant of the need for victim-survivors to be able to have their matters investigated regardless of whether the perpetrator is alive or not.

In fact, I was briefed yesterday in relation to a historical matter where a victim-survivor has come forward and has had their statement taken. There will be some work done in relation to that particular matter and the right support given to that victim-survivor. So there, we've learnt and we've made changes as a result of that. We've made sure as well that the investigators for sexual crimes are experts. There's a real importance around having expertise and being trained to understand and work with victim-survivors.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, commissioner. I really do appreciate your leadership and work on this issue. Minister, we now know that concerns were reported about Paul Reynolds as early as 2008. Did this fact become known during the 2018 professional standards investigation? If not, when and how did it come to light?

Ms ADAMS - I think, Ms O'Connor, you know that I was the person who put that report in in 2008, and the report would've been in professional standards intelligence database. It was certainly put forward and provided to every review mechanism that subsequently occurred, including the commission of inquiry and the inquest. I can only, yes, surmise that professional standards would've had that in a database based on the report that was put back in in 2008.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Noting your previous answer, commissioner, minister, former police officer Will Smith who made the 2018 complaint against Paul Reynolds said he believed young people who made allegations at the time were mistreated by police, which is a sad and confronting thing to have to hear. He said the decision to stop the professional standards investigation let down the young people who'd come forward. He said the radio silence from police caused him considerable personal difficulty. The Weiss review didn't cover these matters. Do you agree it was a mistake that the terms of reference didn't cover these matters?

Mr ELLIS - I believe the commission has already mentioned before the very broad remit in terms of the terms of reference. We were quite clear with Ms Weiss that there were matters in the terms of reference specifically but that other matters as they arose and particularly were provided by members of the community were absolutely within the remit of Ms Weiss.

That's really important because I know that there was a whole range of disclosures as part of that process, and to honour that has been the critical piece of the work. When we say, 'Leave no stone unturned', we really are genuinely committed to that. I thank, as well, Mr Smith for his exceptional conduct and integrity, both at the time and quite clearly since as an exceptional Tasmanian, and we have spoken on these matters together as well.

The commissioner mentioned around the important change - it's important to mention that Mr Reynolds was brought to justice through a police professional standards process. Sadly, that process could not go through a full justice process because of Mr Reynolds making the decision to take his own life, but clearly police internally strongly acted in that matter.

In terms of the closure, the commissioner mentioned that it aligned with the procedures at the time, but the commission of inquiry noted that in a range of different matters, it's important to keep those open. My understanding is that also applied with Mr Griffin, that we are able to now take complaints from his victims, even if they haven't yet come forward. I will pass to the commissioner and her team if there's anything further to add to that.

Ms ADAMS - I can only reiterate again the conversations that are had with Ms Weiss along the journey of the review was that if she was concerned about anything that was going to hinder or constrain her investigation, that she would be able to raise that with me. I wanted this done once. I wanted it done right. I certainly didn't want to exclude the opportunity to look at any issues, and I think that Ms Weiss would support the view that I absolutely wanted this to be an extensive review and address the issues where people had concerns.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, commissioner. There might have been a misunderstanding because Ms Weiss told ABC radio that certain matters she didn't investigate because they were in the terms of reference.

Moving along, minister, the Weiss review explains the need for strong powers when examining child sexual abuse and, on that basis, makes important recommendations for reforming the Integrity Commission. I know this is not your specific area of responsibility, but as you'd understand, it is all connected. Given the stated need for these powers to examine such matters properly, will you refer, as minister, the Weiss review and its evidence to the integrity commission once it has the new powers your government has promised to introduce?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to take advice on that. You're certainly correct that we have accepted that recommendation. It will require government to make amendments to the *Integrity Commission Act*, and the attorney as the responsible minister is working through that process. The Integrity Commission is empowered to investigate all those matters, and -

Ms O'CONNOR - Not fully and properly empowered, which is the point that Regina Weiss made. Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Sorry, what I was more referring to is that once the changes are made, but in general, the Integrity Commission, if they decide to look into any matters that are relevant within their scope, then they have the powers to do that, but I'm happy to take some advice on particular matters of referral if they improve pathways.

Ms O'CONNOR - You'd admit the Integrity Commission does need stronger powers, as Regina Weiss has made clear.

Mr ELLIS - We have been saying quite clearly that we have accepted all the recommendations, including that one.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that line of questioning from the member for Hobart, I must say, and there's certainly a difference. I absolutely fully take on face value the commissioner's statements about providing whatever leeway and extra scope that Ms Weiss identified as being necessary to pursue for her investigations.

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There's a difference between actually starting from the point, setting a term of reference, to deliver full accountability which is where I think the term of reference they've sought, and then I would imagine Ms Weiss, within that term of reference, although she could seek and explore anything she needed within it, didn't go beyond it which is, I think, where we arrived with the comments the member for Hobart alluded to on the radio.

There is still a sense that we didn't get the fullest level of accountability from that review that may have been delivered were the terms of reference different. Is that something that you're aware of, minister, being a view that's held in the community? Can you see where that view is a valid one?

Mr ELLIS - I can reiterate what the commissioner has said quite clearly that we established it so that there would be no stone left unturned, and this is an important part of doing the work to rebuild trust. I'll look to the commissioner if there's anything further to add, but I think we have established this already.

Ms WEBB - I don't have any further comment, minister.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Can I go with the question - that was sort of a supplementary to the member for Hobart.

CHAIR - That wasn't the question.

Ms WEBB - I apologise. May I have this additional question around police retention, if I could, Chair.

CHAIR - You may.

Ms WEBB - Minister, I note the government's election commitment to recruit 60 additional police officers in the Budget here, table 8 point 1. Yet recruitment is only one end of the equation when it comes to viable workforce numbers. Maintaining those numbers is also important. I know that it was canvassed with you earlier in the Assembly scrutiny hearings around this issue, so I don't want to repeat and cover the ground that was covered there to any great degree. I do want to understand better the correlation between retention strategies that are being planned and rolled out, and actual effectiveness of those strategies.

Here is my question. Can you confirm that this calendar year has seen over 65 resignations or retirements from the force? Is that considered an expected annual rate of officer turnover at this point in time?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose the first thing to say is that Tasmania Police has a strong track record in terms of net growth of police officers. We continue to recruit strongly. Obviously, we have an ageing population in Australia so we continue to need to work on that workforce renewal, but certainly, we continue to grow our establishment. That's why when I say we're already at historically high numbers, that's because recruitment - we continue to see net recruitment of police officers, and with an additional 60 more, that that is a really good thing. Obviously, our workforce is changing. Young people have a different expectation to what their

careers might look like as well. I will pass to the commissioner to maybe add further around this important area for us.

Ms WEBB - Specifically, to reiterate the question, minister, it was around confirming that there had been 65 resignations or retirements in this calendar year to date, and is that considered an expected annual rate of officer turnover in that way?

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister, and through you. I will get the 65 confirmed by the assistant commissioner in one moment. We do quite substantial planning around our recruitment intake to ensure that we get the growth positions. We actually planned for 100 separations in a calendar year. I will get the assistant commissioner to make a few comments and confirm the 65 for you.

Mr KEATING - Thank you, and through the minister -

CHAIR - Would you like to move that lovely microphone over there? It helps everyone.

Mr KEATING - Through the minister, I can confirm that this current calendar year, there are 56 separations for retirements and resignations, but this does not include trainees. We don't include trainees in that figure because they effectively haven't graduated as police officers at that point in time.

Ms WEBB - Do you have a figure for trainees, then?

Mr KEATING - Yes, 14.

Ms WEBB - Fourteen, okay.

CHAIR - Out of how many?

Mr KEATING - At this point in time, that would have been - this calendar year, we would have had five, including last year's courses. It's close to 100 trainees we would have put through in that period calendar year so far. Those resignations would also be from some trainees that started last year as well.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Thank you. So that's 56, and then the trainees, 14. So that's 70 altogether.

Mr KEATING - Correct.

Ms WEBB - And I think the commissioner may have touched on the next question I had which was around projections for staff attrition and with resignation or retirement rates, and I think would that be the 100 that the commissioner mentioned through you, minister?

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. Yes, we have a projection of 100. We planned for, and our recruitment target is for between 160 and 170, which provides us the opportunity to bring on 60 to 70 growth positions each year and that is the plan we have for the next six years.

Ms WEBB - Okay. So around the retention strategies - and I know, minister, you were asked in the Assembly's group hearing about the retention strategy, so I don't need them described in detail again here. The question I have is about how those retention strategies are monitored and evaluated. How do we know they are being as effective as we want them to be. Is there a process or a planned way that that happens?

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. A very difficult way to really evaluate retention, because there are a suite of incentives, conditions, parental support, professional development. It is very difficult to actually gauge what it is that resonates with a particular individual. We did talk about, on Monday, our re-engagement policy which we have just introduced, which has seen six former members now rejoin Tasmania Police. That policy has only been in for a short space of time, so we will obviously be keen to see how successful and actually talk to those members about what were the drivers about returning to Tasmania Police. We are thinking the fact that they come back at the same rank, their same salary and their same qualifications that they had prior to leaving, is an incentive for them when they go to try something, and we encourage them. We encourage them to use the skills that they acquire through Tasmania Police if, in another employment, if that is what they are seeking to do.

We have, as I said, six examples of where we have officers that have come back, and we have been able to recognise their full status and qualifications at the time that they left. We will see how this strategy actually works. One of the things that we do when anyone does leave, unless it is a retirement, is a separation survey just to understand what the drivers are.

Surprisingly the majority of people are leaving happy. They are just looking for another life challenge. What we are hoping is that with the policy and the conditions that we do have, should it not work out for them, that they are more than willing to come back to Tasmania Police. I think the actual reengagement policy - and I compliment the Assistant Commissioner on the work that he has done here, because we have been asked by other jurisdictions to provide that policy.

Mr ELLIS - I only spoke with the federal government's Job and Skills Council public skills, which takes in police, fire, and emergency management, the other day, and one of the things that they noted around the country is because police officers are so highly-trained and highly-skilled and have such a wonderful and diverse skillset, that they are in high demand in the public sector and also other tiers of government.

Whether that is working closely with the tech sector as they continue to grow their footprint in Australia or federal regulators, there is a high range of different people who are crying out for the kind of skills that we help provide to our officers. It is a good thing that they are in demand. It is a good thing that they are very highly regarded. Of course, often the challenge with good people is making sure that they continue to want to work with us.

CHAIR - One last question in overview, Ms O'Connor, and then I am moving out of this area. If the member is ready with her question?

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry?

CHAIR - That's you, Ms O'Connor. One last question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Former police officer Will Smith, as you know and acknowledged earlier, his courage, was the person who made the complaint against Paul Reynolds that led to this investigation. He has talked to the media about the strong friendship between the former commissioner for police and Mr Reynolds, and I am certainly not alleging any misconduct here. In the absence of other answers, people in the community and victim-survivors particularly are asking the question as to whether this had anything to do with the funeral decision. We still haven't really established the foundation for the funeral decision. I wouldn't have thought you would need a protocol to know that you wouldn't hold a police funeral for a paedophile, but anyway. Have police internally reviewed how and why the funeral was held, and if so, what did they find?

Mr ELLIS - I believe we have already established that it was the wrong decision, and that decision by the former commissioner has been acknowledged as the wrong one by both Commissioner Adams and me. That is why we made the change as part of the protocols, so that it was much clearer now. It is quite clear as well that in Ms Weiss' review she noted that Mr Reynolds groomed the entire community that was around him. One of the most troubling elements of the situation was that sporting bodies that he was involved in, at a whole range of different levels, almost effectively fell under his spell. And -

Ms O'CONNOR - It is a skill of sociopaths.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly. It is quite horrifying the number of people who came into contact with Mr Reynolds in the general community and were effectively bystanders, unwittingly, to his behaviour. Ms Weiss makes quite clear that that work around combatting grooming is so important. It is part of the reason why the recommendation that talks around community engagement is so important, so that Tasmania Police can help the community gain an understanding of that kind of behaviour. It is not just government institutions where people misuse positions of power and authority: it is also things like sporting clubs. That is why -

Ms O'CONNOR - Churches, for example. Yes.

Mr ELLIS - A whole range of different areas, yes. And whether that is our commission of inquiry or the national royal commission, they have shown that any area where an adult can have a position of authority over a child is an area that we need to be vigilant, and we need to have the right structures around us. That is why we talk about child-safe organisations. I will pass to the commissioner to talk around any evaluation that has -

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister, and through you, the sole decision-maker for the funeral is the Commissioner of Police. We did establish that the family did request the funeral and that is normal in the circumstances of the death of a police officer, that the commissioner would meet with the family and ask them about their arrangements for a funeral. I haven't spoken to the former commissioner directly to confirm that, but that is the advice that we were provided.

Ms O'CONNOR - That might have been a helpful conversation to have, with respect. It might have been. Thank you, Commissioner.

Ms WEBB - Can I check with the department where the best place to ask a question is from the key deliverables under commission of inquiry - Police Professional Standards line item? Is there a line, sorry?

CHAIR - Can we get some guidance?

Ms WEBB - Can I ask it in overview, or can that be put into one of these others?

Ms O'CONNOR - 1.1, I reckon.

CHAIR - Support to the community.

Ms O'CONNOR - Policing in the community.

CHAIR - All right. We will go there. We will go with that then. Nobody has offered anything else.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - The member for Launceston has a couple of questions.

Ms ARMITAGE - We are actually in 1.1, are we?

CHAIR - We are in 1.1. Otherwise we will probably be still in overview at the end of the day.

1.1 Support to the Community

Ms ARMITAGE - I thought we were still in overview. Minister, would you be able to give me the current number of officers, or even the number probably for the last financial year is a better way to go, of officers on worker's compensation?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Ms Armitage. We acknowledge that police officers and other emergency services and responders experience situations that the majority of the public cannot imagine, and we are committed to supporting the physical and mental health of all Tasmanian emergency services responders, and that is both career and volunteer.

We have committed significant resources to working through this area with our people. In terms of legislation, for example, we have established a presumption of PTSD for police officers, removing step-down provisions and a range of different areas so that police officers are no longer effectively required to shoulder that burden alone, that it is a responsibility that we all have to support them. I will pass to the Commissioner and her team for the latest statistical update.

Ms ADAMS - Could I get a point of clarification? Are you asking for just Tasmania Police or all the department?

Ms ARMITAGE - No we will just go TasPol, I think makes it a clear number, if that's okay.

Ms ADAMS - Okay. For Tasmania Police we have 201 open current workers comp claims. Fifty-nine of those claims relate to physical injury; 142 relate to psychological injury.

Of the 201 we have 108 staff who are actually totally incapacitated and unable to work. We've had 56 return to suitable duties, and we've had 37 staff return to pre-injury duties.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. Do you still have - and I'm just trying to think of the name of it that you talk about the psychological - there was an ability for officers to go online and do a self-check.

Ms ADAMS - MyPulse.

Ms ARMITAGE - Right. That's still available? When they do that though, that doesn't come up? That doesn't put any flags anywhere does it, that someone's done it, or not? I've talked to officers in the past and the concern was that once you do something like that, almost you're labelled. Is there an ability for people still to do that without a flag coming up that you've actually done it?

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. MyPulse is totally independent of Tasmania Police. While we host, obviously, the screening tool on our website the assessment of an individual once they've completed it is managed by an external provider. It's really important that there is the confidentiality around it or otherwise we won't get officers actually, you know, putting their hand up and feeling confident to do it. This is around trying to identify at an early stage any risk or concerns that an individual may have so that we can try and do some proactive intervention at an early stage.

That is managed through an external provider that manages MyPulse for us, and if a person comes up as - there's three - it's like a traffic-light system. You can return a green, it can be amber, and it can be red. If it's amber or red, then within a certain timeframe the external provider will contact that particular police officer and arrange for some counselling or for some professional support through an allied health professional to work through what might be the issue that was identified.

We've had some examples where excessive consumption of alcohol has been flagged through MyPulse. We've also had some examples where sleep deprivation and obviously not getting into a pattern of sleep is impacting upon a worker in a workplace. Also, we've had examples where we've identified staff who have concerns around being able to process critical incidents. We get provided with a report at a high level, so when I -

Ms ARMITAGE - No identification?

Ms ADAMS - No identification. So we get some themes, of, yes, you as a department should invest some more time on providing some tools and evidence around sleep and managing sleep as a shift worker, but we don't get the detail about, how many officers that actually relates to and where they might be. It's critically important that it's confidential so that there's trust in that particular tool.

Ms ARMITAGE - If an officer came up, though, for example, with orange and they decided they didn't want counselling, what would then happen? Would the controlling area - if the officer said, 'No, I can manage this myself', would they then come to you to say, 'Well, you have an officer'? Can they still be confident that regardless of whether they're green, orange or red that no one is going to no whether they say, 'No, I don't want the treatment', or?

Ms ADAMS - No, it's totally confidential. The external provider will do everything they can to help the officer and understand the importance of at least getting some of this advice or at least seeing their GP. We also within the department have psychologists where our staff can also come forward and have confidential appointments and treatment through our psychologist. We've got a fantastic initiative that we've just recently introduced where we've broadened our partnership with the University of Tasmania. We have social workers who do their practice and actually go out - I think they have to do 1000 hours as part of their qualifications to become a social worker. We've actually got a number of the social workers coming into our wellbeing area as well to expand the opportunity of providing members with wellbeing support in a timely way, in addition to the psychologists that we have and the psychologists that we use more broadly in the community where the department pays for those costs.

Mr ELLIS - This is probably one of the reasons why the wellbeing program is such a key investment for us. It's now up to \$4 million a-year, and in speaking with some interstate jurisdictions, Tasmania is regarded as the nation-leading wellbeing program which is encouraging. Sadly, it's one of those areas that we wish it had been around for longer. If we think back to some of the terrible incidents that might have happened in our state over the past 30 to 40 years, you just think if that support was available at the time in a different time, and we need to continue to invest in this space so that we're able to support people throughout their entire journey.

We've got officers who are with us currently who have had a long career seeing some really difficult things. Sadly, less than a decade ago, the wellbeing support program was very small. You know we're talking less than a handful of people involved.

Ms ARMITAGE - While we're talking about supporting our officers, I am wondering about the workers compensation overpayments that the government wants back.

CHAIR - Good luck with that. If it was me, I'd have probably spent it.

Ms ARMITAGE - My question really is, how did it happen to start off with? How was it discovered? Is it a significant amount? A really significant amount? We're talking about mental health and it's not, from my perspective, and I know this is public monies - but these people haven't - well, my understanding is they haven't actually taken money themselves. It was a mistake.

CHAIR - It was an error.

Ms ARMITAGE - It was an error. How has this happened? How was it discovered? Was it a significant amount that the government wants the money back?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Ms Armitage. This is a matter that we're working through sensitively with the -

Ms ARMITAGE - For the people involved, I'm sure it's very stressful.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. It's an important matter for us to work through sensitively with the individual members, Tasmania Police, fire, SES, who've been affected and have received these overpayments. A review is underway to get a sense of the full scale and quantum. These can be quite complex payments in terms of step-down provision so it's important, we -

Ms ARMITAGE - I understand step-down.

Mr ELLIS - yes, and so it's important that we work through to get it right. It's very disappointing and we're working through that process with individuals that we -

Ms ARMITAGE - You don't think though that there are people that are on workers comp, and we've mentioned the number, particularly the number that are on psychological stress if some of those people, whether it be police or fire and SES, the actual extra stress of them having to find money, as the member for McIntyre said, that maybe you no longer have is not adding to that stress?

Mr ELLIS - As I said, Ms Armitage, this is a sensitive matter -

Ms ARMITAGE - I appreciate that.

Mr ELLIS - that we're keen to work closely with those people who are affected. We've got a review underway that I don't want to pre-empt so that we get a full understanding in terms of the -

Ms ARMITAGE - So we don't really know how it happened?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Armitage, I'm getting to that.

Ms ARMITAGE - All right. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - We've got a review underway. I've requested from the department to ensure that we don't see this happen again and that work has been progressing. I'll pass to the commissioner to add further.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. It's disappointing that this has happened because we do want to support our injured workers and ensure that they're getting the right wellbeing support and we're doing everything we can to support them in hopefully returning back to work. Making the calculations when there are step-down provisions - it can be really complicated when we're talking around provisioning overtime, considering allowances and of course the step-down provisions change the longer a person is actually off on work.

It was identified by one of our team. We've got an external expert that's come in to ensure we understand the full extent of the issue. It's important not to - I don't want to suggest that it's an issue that is extensive or it only relates to a few until we actually get the information from the external reviewer. We will then understand what the quantum is for each person, and we will work with each person to ensure that we provide support through this process. We will also seek advice in regard to how do we respond to the issue. We will take legal advice, and we will respond according to the options that are provided to us.

We certainly haven't made any decisions in relation to that, but only to reiterate what the minister has said, that we want to work with each individual and we want to continue to support them. I know this will cause them stress and concern, so we want to understand the facts before we move to a resolution and problem solving the issue.

Ms ARMITAGE - Finally, just on this thing and then I'll let others come back to me later, but minister, do you really believe if it's not their fault they should be paying it back, particularly in the current circumstances? I know they're all going to be cancer sufferers, particularly with perhaps fire services in other areas. Should they really have to pay it back?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Armitage, we're working through this process. Obviously there's legislation which we need to get an understanding of as well as our requirements under the law, but of course we want to work closely with those people who've been affected.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'll come back to it after.

CHAIR - Before we leave this area, can I have the full complement of staff numbers, thank you? I know the member for Launceston asked about workers comp numbers, but the actual full staff numbers.

Mr ELLIS - When you say full, as in?

CHAIR - For TasPol. Tasmania Police.

Mr ELLIS - As in a total number of police officers?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - I think on Monday, we were 1498 with recruits.

CHAIR - I apologise. I haven't been listening or reading anything from Monday.

Mr ELLIS - No, no. That's okay. I was making sure I wasn't forgetting in such short order.

CHAIR - I've got nothing in this area.

Mr ELLIS - 1498 including trainees, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you. Awesome. Mr Edmunds.

Output group 2 Crime

2.1 Investigation of Crime

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. In Output 1.1 page 233, with regard to the figures in the table 8.3, I'm interested if possible, and I understand the footnotes say this will be in the annual report, can we get any indication on how we are tracking when it comes to public place assaults? I see that there's a 2023-24 target that says less than the three-year average, but considering the increase in 2021 to 2023, I would be interested to know if we are seeing that number tail off or if we're seeing it increase, bearing in mind the comments about the footnote.

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Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the commissioner, if that's all right.

Mr BODNAR - Thank you, minister, and through you. Mr Edmunds, to answer your question, unfortunately we have seen that trend increasing when it comes to public place assaults. For the financial year 2023-24, the figure was 1,176 public place assaults. Now, that's certainly above where we want to be, and when I look across the state, the majority of those occur in the southern district followed by the northern district and then the western police district.

In the southern district, we had 560 public place assaults recorded. For the northern policing district, 391 public place assaults. Western, 224, which should leave one I think, and I'm not sure where that last one came from, but unfortunately we have seen an uptick.

CHAIR - Disappointing.

Mr ELLIS - That's the thing, Chair. It's disappointing that we're seeing this kind of behaviour in our communities because we've got no tolerance for it. Generally speaking, Tasmanians live in really safe communities, and public place assaults can be quite confronting to people that are going about their daily business. So yes, it's very important that we get on top of them.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. Is there a strategy in place to tackle this, especially now that we've seen two years in a row where it's in four figures?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We mentioned before around the increase in police numbers.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, I understand that.

Mr ELLIS - High visibility is really important because it does send a very strong deterrence to people that they -

CHAIR - Certainly is on the road.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly right, Chair. When people see our officers in public, it's a reminder that at that time but also in general there's a strong police presence in Tasmania and, indeed, we have some of the highest rates of police officers per person in the country, which is good. But we need to ensure that we're vigilant around that. I'll pass back to the commissioner and team. Thank you.

Mr BODNAR - Thanks, minister, and through you. I mentioned earlier about some of the taskforce activities that we run across the state, and they are used to tackle some of these antisocial issues which clearly public place assaults fall into. I spoke about the focus group we currently have running in Launceston as well. Some of the other initiatives we've implemented are around some of those random spot inspections we do with some of the licensed premises nowadays.

I recently spoke in the other committee about some recommendations from a coronial finding; in fact, there was two coronial findings that recommended random spot inspections be conducted with members from liquor and gaming, particularly around the nightlife precincts and things like that, just so we're making sure that the licensees are abiding by the relevant

legislation, making sure security guards are licensed as well and performing their functions appropriately.

We've also recently signed off on an information sharing agreement with CBOS as well through the Department of Justice around better sharing of information when it comes to security guards and things of that nature. I know in recent months we've done a couple of those - when I say 'done', we've completed a couple of those activities down here in the southern part of the state and we'll certainly expand those across the northern and western districts.

I have met with the commissioner for licensing in relation to these. I have provided details of Tasmania Police contacts across our three geographical districts, which is effectively inspectors in charge of the main divisions across the state. There're a few different things we're doing. One of the things that we found through the community survey was, there were 35 per cent of respondents who responded to our community survey in October/November last year, they want to see the police more visible. We're quite conscious of that. We're cognisant of it. We're trying to do that through our public spaces, which includes our road policing activities as well.

CHAIR - Too much grog and bad manners, my dad always said.

Mr ELLIS - It is interesting how key working with some of our partners in the I suppose nightlife and liquor related regulators is in this space, and obviously Tasmania Police, we're a response agency with that and we need to ensure that, as a community, we're also taking ownership of the problem and not letting a night out get away on us.

Mr EDMUNDS - To that point, and that's the question I was going to ask, these public place assaults, do you find they're typically in the sort of - it's hard to break down into sectors, but are they more in the sort of nightlife rather than, say, at shopping centres or - where is it happening, I suppose?

Mr BODNAR - I suppose anecdotally, if I can use that term, we do see an increase on those Friday nights, Saturday morning, Saturday night, Sunday morning. In saying that, please don't think I'm being disrespectful to areas where there's a lot of licensed premises because I'm not, but we do know that intersection between alcohol, if people do consume too much alcohol, the conflict that sometimes is generated. People's emotions run crazy at some times, and then we do see these unfortunate assaults take place. I think from a policing perspective, it's important to note that one out of every two crimes and offences in the state are cleared by our police officers. We do some exceptional work across the board, right across the board not just in the public assaults arena.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Just to cover more data ones, if that's okay. I don't know if you have the 2023-24 numbers for the public order incidents, the family violence incidents and the offences against the person as well?

Mr BODNAR - Yes, certainly. The public order incidents, what we were aiming there for was a three-year average, which was 19,289. Now, the final figure there was 20,727. We're over there.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

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Mr BODNAR - Now, the other two, Mr Edmunds, please?

Mr EDMUNDS - The family violence incidents.

Mr BODNAR - So family violence, the target we wanted was less than or equal to 4285. Unfortunately, the figure was 5353 family violence incidents across the state. What we have seen, unfortunately, is a gradual increase in family violence over the last five years, and we working hard -

CHAIR - Do you think its more reporting as much as anything?

Mr BODNAR - It's really positive that people are coming forward, Chair, and reporting to us, because in the past, again anecdotally, some people may see a stigma attached to it. We don't want that. We want that removed. With the establishment of the family and sexual violence command in July last year, we are really working hard to turn this around. I spoke about before in the crime space, there really is a collective responsibility that we need to try to turn it round.

The last one was offences against person?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. What is an offence against the person?

Mr BODNAR - Effectively, it covers a lot of assaults and things of that nature.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay. No worries.

Mr BODNAR - So there's a broad category.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Mr BODNAR - I won't go too much into the detail if you're happy.

Mr EDMUNDS - No, no. That's fine.

Mr BODNAR - What we were aiming for for 2023-24 was equal to or less 5475, and unfortunately the final figure was 6618.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Mr BODNAR - Unfortunately we're seeing a steady increase in relation to those offences as well, which is disappointing.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you.

CHAIR - Before we leave the performance information, satisfaction with police services, percentage, the actual, for 2022-23 was 78. Seventy-eight per cent of what? Do we have a new 2023-24 target?

Mr ELLIS - We assume that'd be respondents, but -

CHAIR - It says 'satisfaction with police services'.

Mr BODNAR - Yes. The national average in 2022-23 - and this would come from the Social Research Centre connected with the Australian National University - the national average was 74 per cent. Tasmania actually achieved 78 per cent. There's an annual survey that's conducted. Last year, from memory, for 2023-24 there were in the vicinity of 20,000 respondents to this national survey.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr BODNAR - Now, our actual result in 2023-24 I believe was around 73 per cent, so a little bit lower.

CHAIR - Bit of a drop-off.

Mr BODNAR - Little bit of a drop-off, yes.

CHAIR - Okay. I have a supplementary on this actual one.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. Sometimes you read in the paper where they say the people were known to each other. I'm wondering if you keep statistics on the offences where it's a random on the night out where people don't know one another, or they are known to each other and it was something that would've been brewing and was, like, a family or a whatever situation. Do you keep details on that sort of granularity?

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. We don't keep statistics in relation to it. It is normally in the body of the offence report. The reason that we are so proactive in terms of the media is we want to ensure that the community doesn't have a level of anxiety that we've got an offender who's striking at random people in the community. It is around a reassurance piece and it is included in the narrative of our offence reports. I couldn't give you a statistic to say, 'This percentage are offences that are known, where parties are known,' without going through each of the reports.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. I'm also wondering, is there a certain percentage of the group that are involved in those sort of occurrences that are repeat offenders, and do you monitor that? If somebody has had four or five, they'll go down a different pathway, perhaps, with the judiciary. But sometimes you hear 20 of those offences were caused by the one person or there's some repeat offenders in that category.

Ms ADAMS - The critical thing around a recidivist offender is around our approach to bail. We have to deal with them in the same way as if it was one offence as, you know, if it was 20 offences. But it does change our approach to bail where, again, it's a decision for the presiding magistrate. We may in some cases present an opposition to bail, and that would be based on the level of offending and the community harm as being reasons for that opposition.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. If it was two people or more than two people even known to each other, once that occurrence has happened do the police have a higher presence monitoring that person and that situation once they go back out into the community? Do you know what I mean?

Ms ADAMS - I do.

Mr GAFFNEY - Like, they are aware of what's happening and keeping an eye on it.

Ms ADAMS - We will certainly ensure that we've got the right high visibility in an area where there might be some community concern around a particular incident. In regard to the actual offender we have a very strong and robust approach to curfew checks and checking bail. So bail, for us, there are parameters placed on an individual and they're required to behave in a certain way when they're on bail. One of our very important strategies to us is to ensure that people are complying with their bail.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - Mr Edmunds, your last.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you for your time at this table. I'm interested in the three questions or reports about perceptions and then the target going forward is to be greater than the national average. Some of those numbers are quite high and look pretty good. I wonder for the 2021-22 and 2022-23, are those numbers above the national average? Where do they track? I could put that on notice or come back later if that's - but it looks like you're pretty organised, yes.

Mr BODNAR - Through the minister, if that's okay.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. Thanks.

Mr BODNAR - So if we go back to 2021-22, perceptions of safety in public places during the day, the national average was 92 per cent.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. We beat it.

Mr BODNAR - We achieved 93 per cent.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Mr BODNAR - That category for 2022-23, the national average was 91 per cent and Tasmania achieved 91 per cent. Last financial year, the national average was 88 per cent, so it had dropped slightly, and Tasmania achieved 91 per cent. So we were either equal to or above. The next question around perceptions of safety in public places during the night, in 2021-22 the national average was 54 per cent. Tasmania achieved 58 per cent.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Mr BODNAR - 2022-23 our target - the national average was 54 per cent and we achieved 56 per cent. For the last financial year in that category the national average had fallen to 49 per cent; we achieved 55 per cent. The third category you spoke about, perceptions of safety at home alone during the night, 2021-22, the national average was 89 per cent; our actual result was 90. 2022-23, the national average was 87 per cent; our result was 89 per cent. The final year, 2023-24, the national average was 79 and we'd achieved 88 per cent. So effectively,

in those three categories over the last three financial years, we've either met or exceeded the national average, which is a really good result for Tasmania.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, it might be also worth adding to that as well on a previous data point with Tasmania, 72.7 per cent in terms of service satisfaction with policing services. That compares to the national average of 58.2 per cent. We're exceeding that by nearly 15 per cent. We have seen a small drop.

Obviously we need to work to rebuild trust. We are also probably seeing an increase in sovereign citizens in Tasmania. Probably not quite to the same degree that we're seeing in other jurisdictions, but certainly Tasmania Police continues to far exceed the national average in satisfaction with police services. I ask the commissioner and her team if there's anything further to add on that one.

Ms ADAMS - It's fair to say that the reduction that we've had this year we've had the Reynolds review and we've had the commission of inquiry, and there's been examples where we haven't been providing the level of service and responding to critical incidents that the community would expect. I think that we have to be realistic about that and that we've let the community down.

As a leadership group here - and I know for the 1400 police officers behind me we're not happy that that has been played out in the level of satisfaction. We've got a pretty strong commitment to the community to turn that around. That's one of the reasons that we ask to get their feedback directly last November with our community survey.

CHAIR - Thank you for that honesty in regard to that response.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, appreciate that. Thank you.

CHAIR - I'm going to Ms Webb first and then I'm going to come back to Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - That's all right. Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. I'm going to ask around the reporting of child safety concerns and in relation to child sexual abuse or grooming, just to flag that as a sensitive topic in case for anyone watching or in the room. The intent of asking is because I know that there's such a lot of effort across departments and across the board trying to ensure we're plugging any gaps that we might have previously experienced in reporting systems, and how we address this across different departments. I'm just trying to ascertain how the systems are working at the moment trying to make sure those gaps are plugged.

I'm aware that we've got statutory requirements under both our Children, Young Person and Families Act and also our Criminal Code around the reporting of concerns about a child being abused, and they involve both reporting to Child Safety Service through the ARL line and to the police if a crime is suspected. Those obligations are there. A typical example that I encountered is when a public servant in another department - and let's say, typically, like the Health department. We've got a public servant who feels they need to make a report about something they've observed or become aware of that they have a serious concern about. The requirement of them, and there would be mandatory reporters typically if it was somebody, say, in our health department, they've got a reportable conduct scheme as well that they have

to comply with. The expectation would be, I believe, that they would report internally in their department through their internal systems, that they have to contact the ARL and the child safety system via the ARL and contact police directly if they believe that there was a risk that there was a crime being committed. My questions are these around that.

Is that correct that those three methods of reporting would be expected for that public servant? Is there an expectation from Tasmania police that if there's an internal report in the department and an ARL point of contact that then the avenue to police is through those methods of reporting rather than another direct report to Tasmania police?

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. The simple answer to that is there is no wrong door. If anybody is concerned or they may have only had training around reportable conduct and that's the door that they enter, the information will be referred to us. That's sort of the message that we provide to any member of the community or anyone in another department is that we want you to report and there's no wrong door because those referrals will come to us, whether it's through one mechanism or another. We will receive that report and be able to assess it and take action where it's required.

Ms WEBB - That's really good to hear, and I understand that that's the intent. Are all officers in Tasmania Police up to date with training and understanding of that? The reason I'm asking is because - and I'll bring specific matters to you outside of this context, but I'm just trying to get clarity around the broad process here. If someone's attempted to do just that, report through other means but also report to Tasmania police and then been told, 'Oh no, you have to go back through those other means and they'll bring it to us', that that wouldn't be part of the policy that's expected at the moment?

Ms ADAMS - No, and I'll hand to Assistant Commissioner Blackwood who can give you some detail around the extensive training that we've undertaken and the continual journey that we have in ensuring that every officer understands their obligations in managing very sensitive but highly important and a priority for us in terms of child safety.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Every officer has undertaken training in relation to reportable conduct and the need to take reports whenever they get information and what they have to do to it. But an important change we've made more recently is the setting up of what we call a child safety referral assessment unit. Previously when child safety referrals were being received internally, they would go to one of three geographical locations in the north-west, north and the south. We've now set up a unit within the safe families coordination unit, which is obviously a multidisciplinary area with other agencies there.

All child safety referrals are coming in to that unit to be assessed, and that's with police and intelligence analysts there reviewing those reports. They are so much better situated then to speak with other agencies and to evaluate and actually really build on those reports and determine where they need to go, and whether that be to a particular investigative area to do more work on, whether it's a case for information only and it's building up a picture. We are seeing a lot better quality in our response, but what we're also dealing with is a huge number of reports. Last financial year I think there was over 14,000 - 14,334 child safety assessment reports that were received.

Ms WEBB - Thank you for that detail. I appreciate it, and that central way to have the reports come through from the child safety service sounds good. The area that's been brought

to my attention as potentially having some hiccups at the moment is when people are directly contacting police and they also have contacted those other methods and being told when they've used the - I think it's the 131 number, that that's only if children are in immediate risk and they should go back through those other processes, internal, departmental or child safety. Thank you for clarifying here on the record, and what I'll be able to do is go back to people who've raised it with me and ask them to bring it to you directly in instances where that seems to have fallen down as a process.

Mr HIGGINS - Can I perhaps add some clarity to that? I'm aware of what you're talking about, and that's the change from agencies reporting to - well, previously a few years ago when I was in the assistant commissioner role, so it used to be that one port of - right through the commission of inquiry it was the one port of call. We then moved that to the family sexual violence command, just to the administration area, and found that we needed to look further, so it was going into the radio room with the 1300 number. But we're finding there is - I guess coming out of the commission of inquiry there's a nervousness in agencies. When you described reporting to police, reporting to ARL, doing the reportable conduct, people are doing that because they think that it has to be every single one as opposed to any door does come to us.

This was raised with me last week, the radio room in particular, and the radio room have advice what they can do. Their advice about the child in immediate risk is valid, and very valid, but we are going to revisit this with agencies so there isn't that confusion in our radio room which get a lot of calls about everything around the state, not just instances like this, so it takes that confusion out of it. People are trying to do their obligation under the Criminal Code and looking at it so stringently that it must be Tasmania Police as opposed to perhaps it's the ARL, perhaps it's reportable conduct, perhaps it's police to come in. It is something that we're learning and we're trying to get better with it, but it will probably take some time until we - and we won't always get it right. So that way people aren't necessarily getting contrary advice when they ring up to actually report something.

Ms WEBB - That's important, isn't it? Certainly, we do not want them to feel like they've been turned away when they've been trying to make an effort to report a concern that they have. On that, the police are told safety service have a MOU, I believe, about shared investigations, and I'm just interested in some stats on how many dual investigations have been undertaken by police and child safety service across the past, say, three financial years. There're definitions, I think, in the Keeping Children Safe MOU about dual investigations. Have you got stats on those?

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. No, we don't. In the Arch centre we've now got staff embedded in the Arch centre. Police will always take the primacy in relation to the investigation. It wouldn't be something that we'd have a statistical representation to be able to provide.

Ms WEBB - So it's not like those investigations are identified in some way and then able to be collected in a dataset?

Ms ADAMS - No, and we'd have a lot of stakeholders that might actually support us through an investigation. We obviously have the ultimate responsibility for investigating crime. It wouldn't be something that we would have, as I said, a statistical breakdown on.

Ms WEBB - Is that MOU then still up to date or does it need to be updated with the new circumstances?

Ms ADAMS - The commission of inquiry did provide some feedback or some commentary in relation to the MOU, and we are working with the Department of Education and Young People to do that. That is one of the recommendations that will be aligned with the appointment of the chief practitioner, I think is the term that education is using, and the changes will be made under the direction of that particular expert.

Ms WEBB - Is that similar to the MOU with the AYDC also that TasPol and AYDC have had about investigations there? Is that also to be updated or has it been updated already?

Mr HIGGINS - Through you, minister. Yes, that's something to be updated but be properly thought out and formulated because it's about any attendance to those facilities and the protocols that exist there, whether it's uniform or specialist investigators or otherwise. So that's still being worked through.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Appreciate that. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Armitage, and then I'm heading back up the table.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. Just going back to our workers comp and mental health issues, and I'm not going back, minister, to the overpayments. But as has been mentioned, currently 13.9 per cent of Tasmania Police's workforce is on workers comp with approximately 70 per cent of cases related to mental health issues. The one area I did neglect to mention or to question is about mandatory psychological assessments. Now, do TasPol still do mandatory psychological assessments for officers in high-risk areas?

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. We do have a program where there is a requirement for what we - we call them wellbeing checks, but they are obviously assessments of our staff. There are a number of areas across Tasmania police that are required as part of being within those positions that they need to undertake those assessments. As an example, our crash investigation area would be one of those. So, yes, the wellbeing unit obviously manages that and working with the individual to ensure that those assessments are undertaken. There was also the coroner, in relation to the suicide deaths of police officers, also made commentary around us looking at how we might broaden the current program that we have at the moment.

Ms ARMITAGE - I've have a few further questions about that.

Ms ADAMS - Okay.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, that's all right. It was only I was going to ask how often they go. One of the issues that's been raised with me about - well they're called mandatory psychological assessments in my notes here - that the mainstream workforce I understand doesn't have these. But as a preventative strategy given that frontline responders are first to critical events and they're the first to car accidents. They're the first to many critical events. Whether it be a suicide. They're the person that's called that finds that person. Would it be a good preventative strategy that given the frontline responders are the first that they also have these wellbeing checks. You know, when you look that 70 per cent of the cases are mental health issues.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. The wellbeing checks are in addition to our critical incident stress management program. I'm a frontline officer, I'm working at Hobart for instance, and I go to a significant critical incident. Within three days I'll be contacted by a critical incident stress peer and there'll be a sequence of questions where I'll be asked - which is really about - to do an assessment of how I'm tracking after attending that particular incident.

In some instances, it will be necessary for me to then have an assessment with a psychologist because I haven't been able to debrief appropriately, and we want to have that immediate support. We do that. We have a very strict criteria around the type of incidents that require a mandatory check-in by a critical incident stress peer as a result of attendance at that incident. Then in addition to that in areas that we identify as being high-risk, we then have the wellbeing support checks that are in addition to the critical stress program.

Mr ELLIS - It applies across the department as well for all of our emergency responders. For example, I attended a fatality as a volunteer firefighter earlier in the year and had a call from a peer who is in ambulance. Having that kind of cross-check and different support and that's really important that it's available for everyone.

Ms ARMITAGE - Absolutely.

Mr ELLIS - Because as you say it's our police, but it's our other services and it's not just career people that are seeing it every day. It's people that see -

Ms ARMITAGE - Well fires. People forget how often they go - the things that they see.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. And whether it's something that you're exposed to often or something that you're exposed to infrequently, but you know it's kind of not your normal line of work. Having that support is really important for all our first responders.

Ms ARMITAGE - Is the budget sufficient for the wellbeing area?

Mr ELLIS - It's increased significantly and that's why you'll see as part of the \$4 million, the growth that we're seeing in the wellbeing support program is vital because we need to support our people in ways that, you know, in sort of the bad old days, in decades past there probably wasn't really a culture in Australia of seeking support when you needed it. It was sort of, 'I'm tough. I'll be able to cope'.

CHAIR - 'Harden up', they used to say.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, exactly. Whereas things have really changed and for the better. Making those investments so that we can support people throughout their careers rather than just at the end where maybe they might be permanently incapacitated. That's the right thing to do and it's a really good investment too. I'll pass to the commissioner if there's anything further.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. It's important to note that that wellbeing check model is reviewed regularly and there's been an extension to the model, and I talked about high risk areas and I gave an example around a crash investigation. We've also extended that to remote police stations as an example. Just to give you a figure of the number of wellbeing

checks that we did in the last financial year. We did 946 wellbeing checks which include a check-in with a psychologist or an allied health professional. I think that the minister highlighted the increase in funding which will enable us -

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, I wanted to make sure the government was giving you enough money to do it.

Ms ADAMS - The program has continued to expand over each of the years as we do more research. We understand the accumulative effects of stress and being a first responder. It's a challenging job and we're continually looking for what's best practice. We're happy to be innovators in this space and, as the minister said, a lot of the other jurisdictions are very envious of our program because we do take a very proactive approach in trying to prevent the harm before it actually results in a worker's comp matter.

Ms ARMITAGE - While we're talking about their welfare, I was looking at the call for the adoption of a new six-on six-off roster following the successful trial at several of the small stations. I noticed that PAT says the current roster requiring officers to work seven consecutive night shifts, is 'increasing the likelihood of adverse mental health outcomes'. Currently, we know what the workers comp is. Survey conducted. Minister, through you, the six-on six-off as has been recommended by the Tasmanian Police Association - will that be considered for officers to go six-on six-off as opposed to what they're actually doing now which my understanding is, was trialled in some of the smaller stations around the state quite successfully.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We've been trialling a range of different rosters over the last few years to get an understanding of what's the best one for Tasmania Police and our members, but I'll pass to the Commissioner to -

CHAIR - Yes. We probably need to tighten up our responses. It's all great information but I know what's going to happen. We're going to run out of time. So, thank you.

Ms ADAMS - Rather than describing it in great detail maybe just answer the question.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, I'm happy to know if it's being considered. I noticed PAT recommended it to try to encourage, to keep officers, so they have a better working life, six-on six-off.

Ms ADAMS - I'll be very quick. The member safety and wellbeing is the number one priority for me as Commissioner and the leadership group that sit beside me. The actual trial of rosters began back in 2020, and it's been a journey to trial a number of different rosters to try to, as you say, break up that block of seven day night shifts. The goal is to ultimately manage and reduce fatigue that can come from working shift work.

What we've done on each occasion we've evaluated each of our rosters and while the six-on six-off is popular with staff it actually is not reducing fatigue. It's actually increasing fatigue and it's doing that because the roster needs to be supplemented by regular overtime shifts. The shift is already 10-and a-half hours we're expecting a police officer to work. Then there are regular, and I mean frequent and regular, requirements for our staff to work beyond the 10-and a-half. It puts them into the red zone of working 12 and 13 hours where we know that the impacts of fatigue can be significant on decision-making and problem-solving.

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What we're asking our staff to do is to trial another roster next year so that we get another opportunity to then sit down and look at the benefits and the risks that have been associated with each of the rosters.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do you know what the one next year will be at this stage?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, we do, and next week the deputy and I will -

Ms ARMITAGE - Are you not able to say yet?

Ms ADAMS - No, I can. The members have been provided that. It's a six-day on, so two days, two afternoons, two nights. Then four days off. I will do a round of station visits next week. I'll start to talk to our staff in relation to the challenges that we've had with the roster review and really what we're trying to do. I've got work health and safety responsibilities and I have a review that tells me that a roster can only work effectively through the supplementation of overtime.

Ms ARMITAGE - That sounds good. That sounds really good, and I'm sure PAT will be impressed with that.

CHAIR - All right. Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Minister, the Weiss review made it really clear that cultural change is needed in Tasmania Police. That there was a culture of mates looking after mates. We'd like to understand what's been done to address those cultural issues and I'd also like to understand what's changed potentially in terms of how police recruit. I'm sure you'd agree, minister, prevention is always better than cure.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Ms O'Connor. I commend the Commissioner and her leadership team for the outstanding work that they're doing in this space and ensuring that our police act with the highest degree of integrity and professionalism. They are key values for the organisation. I've said it before but I'll say it again: they are - we have an exceptional leadership team and the survey results nationally demonstrate quite clearly that while Tasmania Police still has improvement to do among the leading police jurisdiction in the country and probably in the world as well. You'll also notice that in our police professional standards a high and increasing number of complaints made against police officers are made by their peers in Tasmania. That's really encouraging.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's what happened in 2008, wasn't it?

Mr ELLIS - Significant change has happened since then in terms of other oversight. But that rate is growing. That's encouraging, because it's Tasmania Police saying, 'We own this culture and the need to continue to improve.' We have always opportunities for continuous improvement. One in three, I think - and I'll be corrected if I haven't got that number right - of complaints in that space are actually originated by our team, because our team are holding their peers accountable when things are not going right or when they're concerned that things are not going right.

You also see significant investment in terms of training. We mentioned before around child safety where that culture is being led right through the organisation. When we talk about

all officers being trained, we're including the people here at this table. That's taking exceptional ownership of the fact that culture belongs to everyone in an organisation and we need to - that we always need to continue to improve and change needs to be led from the top but also led at every part of the organisation, too. I'll pass over the team to -

Ms O'CONNOR - I would like to understand how it works practically and structurally to give effect to cultural change that's necessary to prevent another Paul Reynolds and to protect children and young people, and then also what is it that's changed in recruitment processes for Tasmania Police so that we're psychometrically testing people and filtering out those who might prey on kids using their position of trust and authority.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the Commissioner.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister, and through you. It's a great question because culture is very challenging for organisations. We've made significant inroads in setting the standards of behaviour and expectations amongst our police officers. One of the first things that we did was to re-look at our values. Our values were in place for over 25 years, and, to be honest and frank, they were selected by the leadership group of the organisation at the time. If you don't get -

Ms O'CONNOR - A bunch of blokes in suits.

Ms ADAMS - If you don't get the buy-in from staff from the bottom then you're not going to get a commitment to changing behaviour and culture. We undertook a journey where we had a bottom-up approach to our values. We had 700 members of our staff participate in workshops and define, redefine, what was important to them and what was important to us in terms of how we're going to behave.

Accountability, integrity, respect and support: they were the values that our staff identified, and they - then we've identified the behaviours that we expect of each other at every rank to be in alignment with those values. Then those values are obviously a key part of who we recruit. If you're not aligned with our values then, you know, you're not going to be suited to our organisation.

Ms O'CONNOR - How do you filter that out? Through you, minister, how do you filter that when you have some young person who wants to be a Tasmania Police officer come forward and seek employment with Tas Police? How do you identify whether they share the organisation's values and how do you identify whether they're a risk?

Ms ADAMS - It's quite a rigorous recruitment process for an individual that they have to undertake. Many gates. It does include extensive psychometric testing. It then also includes bringing them down to the academy and putting them into scenarios and testing their judgment and decision-making around certain scenarios to get an understanding of, under pressure, what's going to be the driver for their behaviour. You get some really valuable insights into some of those unconscious bias that you might see if you don't get that opportunity to put them in a pressure situation.

The recruitment gateways, there are many, and we hope to get to a point where the number of recruits and the people that actually graduate, we've got the right people. As we've heard earlier, we've had 14 recruits who haven't got through our program. We have that rigour.

PUBLIC

Sometimes we still don't have the right recruit. I can't sit here and say we're not going to have somebody that's going to behave against our values. But what we do do is the professional standards determinations are aligned to our values.

Mr ELLIS - Please note that not all fail because they are not safe to employ. Commissioner, just to quickly note that not all those recruits didn't make it through because they weren't necessarily safe.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, no.

Ms ADAMS - No, no.

Ms O'CONNOR - Personal circumstance.

CHAIR - Sure.

Mr ELLIS - I know you didn't mean that.

Ms ADAMS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - And just for them as well, yes.

Ms ADAMS - Yes. No, thank you.

CHAIR - I was thinking the same thing, minister.

Mr ELLIS - No, that's all good. All good.

CHAIR - Personal circumstances change every day.

Ms ADAMS - Yes. Importantly, it's not just about complaint conduct, it's also about recognition. When you see somebody who actually behaves in alignment with our values, we need to showcase that. I get letters and I have people in the street that'll talk to me and say the way that police officer came to our house and delivered that death message, sat down, had a coffee with us, actually explained the process, there's a level of respect and support for that community, and we need to showcase that. We've got a whole recognition framework that also reinforces when officers behave in alignment with the values. The other thing for culture, you need a diverse workforce.

Ms O'CONNOR - Hear, hear.

Ms ADAMS - Yes. We are leaders in the country. Forty-one per cent of our organisation are women. It's not just about gender. It's also about the core community and the communities we represent. We are very active in ensuring that we broaden the way in which we recruit our new recruits to be representative of Tasmania, and we will continue to do that, because with diversity you get challenged. You challenge the status quo. That's the commitment which we have. We know it's a long journey. We know we'll have hiccups along the way. But we've got a framework now to call out the behaviour, and that's an important thing that everyone has bought into.

PUBLIC

Ms O'CONNOR - Hear, hear.

CHAIR - That's a good place to suspend our hearings this morning and take a break. We'll be back at the table at 10 past 11. Thank you, everyone.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Chair.

The committee suspended from 10.57 a.m. to 11.10 a.m.

CHAIR - How many nights have police sought accommodation for families due to the family violence incidents, particularly relating to, perhaps, hotels, motels or caravan parks? If there is a regional breakdown, that would be very useful.

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to the team. At the moment, there is a little bit of a crossover with my Housing portfolio as well, and -

CHAIR - Would you rather me leave it till later?

Mr ELLIS - No, that's fine. I am happy to discuss now if the police do have some data on that. I also note how important it is that we make investments in this area. As part of the budget we have actually committed to 100 new Family Violence Rapid Rehousing properties, so that is a trebling of our current 50. We need to continue to invest in that space, because as more people are making the decision to come forward and report, that is often also meaning that we need to continue to support them in terms of their housing and shelter requirements. I will pass to the police, if we collect that data.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Yes, sure. We don't collect that data because there are a number of other agencies that will assist in placing a victim into a residence. A really important approach we take to family violence in relation to victims is wherever we can, if it is safe for them, for them to remain at that place where they have been living, and it is the perpetrator that gets moved from the residence. Obviously, we always prioritise the safety of the victim and if for whatever reason it is not safe that they remain at home, and particularly maybe when an offender is at large, that is when we will look at that emergency accommodation. It is a very strong policy position is there that the victim, and the children should remain in the premises with the offender being moved.

CHAIR - Thank you. We will have some additional questions in our next output group later on in the day. Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. That follows on from the last two topics pretty well. I am going to ask about internal police reviews, so internal matters.

Mr ELLIS - As in police professional standards?

Ms WEBB - Yes. I am interested to know the data around how many internal police reviews have been undertaken over the last two, three to five years. Let's just say for the last five years as a dataset. In that, are you able to provide, obviously in a deidentified way, just in a numbers way, a breakdown of the - across categories of issue or allegation that prompted the internal review and also the rank of officers involved. I am also interested in the duration of

the internal reviews and then the outcomes. Is there a dataset that you can present to us that would provide numbers on that across a time series?

Mr HIGGINS - I will have to take that one on notice.

Ms WEBB - That's fine.

Mr HIGGINS - It's not something I have in front of me.

Ms WEBB - Alongside that, I am particularly -

Mr ELLIS - I will double check. We do have a summary report, 'Articulating professional standards outcomes and complaints', and we have committed to publishing further and annual summary reports. I am just seeing whether we have something publicly available on that.

Mr HIGGINS - Do you mean by the Family and Sexual Violence Review Team? Is that the committee that you mean?

Ms WEBB - I am also going to be interested to know about internal police investigations of other police that relate to domestic or family violence. That is a particular subset, but the first question I asked was around, broadly, the professional standards of police investigations of other police. Those matters and the data around that, across those sort of breakdown areas that I mentioned. I am not sure that there is that granularity in what is presented publicly. Maybe there is, and if you could point me to it in a publicly available format that's fine.

Mr HIGGINS - I might be able to address it through the minister.

Ms WEBB - Okay.

Mr HIGGINS - In relation to overall complaints for 2023-24, there were 186; 94 of those were internally raised, and eight included diversity and inclusion in relation to that.

Ms ADAMS - So these just aren't specific to family and sexual violence?

Ms WEBB - No, this is the broader ones.

Mr HIGGINS - Let me have a look and see if I find the other.

Ms WEBB - I will repeat again - and perhaps it will be easier if I give it to you on notice - the nature of the allegations that prompted the internal review or investigation, the rank of the officers involved, the duration of the review periods and the outcomes. Are there particular categories of outcome that you can group those into.

Ms ADAMS - I can say that the review committee has reviewed from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. There have been 25 family violence reports reviewed by the review committee. To give some context, they -

Ms WEBB - So are these relating to police officers as perpetrators?

PUBLIC

Ms ADAMS - Police officers, yes.

Ms WEBB - Are you able to give me data across a time period, across a five-year period?

Ms ADAMS - The review committee has only been in place -

Ms WEBB - Sure. But would you have data about this?

Ms ADAMS - Since they have started.

Ms WEBB - Presumably prior to the review committee starting, when reports were made about police officers as perpetrators, that was captured somewhere in data?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, we should be able to get that for you, if we can take that on notice.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, I will put both of those on notice then. Similarly, there is some granularity around that that I would quite like to ask for if I can in that question on notice. Then without reflecting on the quality of the professional standards processes and that arrangement, there are calls by a range of people, including me, to be honest, in the public domain around the need for a more independent external police oversight and complaints body. Do you have a view on that, minister? Is it something that you have sought advice on, or sought to look at, or review in some way?

Mr ELLIS - That is what the Integrity Commission does, so maybe if we provide a bit of information.

Ms O'CONNOR - They're not fully, properly empowered to do it, though.

Mr ELLIS - Maybe if we provide a bit more information about the Integrity Commission oversight that we have over our processes and that is -

Ms WEBB - That's okay. You don't need to do that in relation to this question. I am very familiar with what the Integrity Commission does and does not do in relation to this. I was checking with you, if it is something that had been on your consideration or that you had sought more information or review about in any times recently or intended to in the near future.

Mr ELLIS - Obviously the Weiss review recommended that we continue to expand the Integrity Commission oversight of police professional standards, and we have accepted that recommendation. The Attorney-General is working through that. Noting as well that, say for example, in the Reynolds matter, the Integrity Commission oversight of the 2008 matter did not happen because the Integrity Commission legislation came in in 2009.

Ms WEBB - It didn't exist then, yes.

Mr ELLIS - So that is an important update, I suppose, for the community in terms of their understanding of the independent oversight that now exists of Tasmania Police professional standards.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - To be clear, minister, there is no guarantee that the Integrity Commission would have looked at that matter necessarily under the current arrangements. It doesn't re-review every matter that has happened internally through professional standards, does it?

Mr ELLIS - There is a number of different reviews, and perhaps, Ms Webb, if we provide an understanding of what that -

Ms WEBB - That's okay. I am mindful of the time, minister, so I wanted to check in with you about where you were sitting on that development.

Mr ELLIS - Obviously the Integrity Commission reviews police professional standards matters, and we have identified, through the Weiss review, opportunities to increase that oversight, and that is an important part of what we do. I also note as well, though, that Ms Weiss recommended very clearly that police continue to have a role in this space for the reason that it is vitally important that police continue to own the challenge of internal culture.

So external oversight, important. Internal oversight, also equally important because we have a range of different roles to play in terms of continual improvement, and police have a strong role to play. I will pass to the Commissioner and her team if there is anything further to add.

Ms ADAMS - I will make a couple of comments, obviously just for time. We do any serious misconduct matter which would include any child abuse or any sexual crime is a mandatory report to the Integrity Commission. What we have done as a result of the Weiss review is we have taken that step further, that at the completion of an investigation of that type we provide the file, the full file, to the Integrity Commission for them to audit that file.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - I've got more matters.

CHAIR - Couple more?

Ms WEBB - No, a different matter, and I'm happy to share it around and come back if we have time.

CHAIR - All right. We're going to be leaving here very soon.

Ms WEBB - I could probably cover it in the next line.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you. I have a series of questions, minister, in regard to the number of guns currently registered, guns currently held by police, antique firearms, family violence orders that hold a gun licence. Am I able to provide those to you by correspondence at a later time? Are you happy with that?

Mr ELLIS - Always happy to do that, yes.

CHAIR - All right. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - I'll double-check that we'll be able to provide them.

CHAIR - Is that okay? I don't want to take up a lot of time.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We'll probably have a lot of that data here, but happy to.

CHAIR - I'll provide those. It's just a running series relating to firearms. I think we're safe to leave 1.1 and head into investigation of crime. Thank you.

Output group 2
Crime

2.1 Investigation of Crime

CHAIR - Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. What were some of the fastest-growing areas of crime in need of investigation that are also in need of resourcing? What type of cybercrime or organised crime, scam detection, prevention, gang activity, youth crime. What is probably the fastest area that we need more resourcing that's taking precedence?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the team shortly in terms of some of the areas. But can I strongly re-endorse to the committee that family and sexual violence is an absolute number 1 priority for us. It's an area of growing need, and a community that is feeling more confident to report, which is - it's important that we continue to match that so that that experience, people feel supported. That's why we're investing so much into our Arch centres for victim-survivors where police and social support services work together to give victim-survivors more agency in the way they receive support, whether that's through a criminal justice outcome that they might be seeking initially or they might be seeking just social support and those services. That's an area of significant investment.

The commission of inquiry: there's about \$39 million of additional investment for DPFEM so that we can take more action in that area, and our new family and sexual violence command that supports the Arch centres also supports the sex offender register reporting program, which there's additional resources for in the budget as well. Our sex crimes unit, that is absolutely a top priority for us. It's an area of growing need in the community. It also, can I say, too, Ms Armitage, drive some of our other crime. Youth crime, there's a very strong correlation with -

Ms ARMITAGE - Family violence.

Mr ELLIS - Young people who are the victims of family violence or in a household where there are victims of family violence. If we can take strong action in that space we often have - that often can play a part in terms of the bigger picture in terms of crime reduction. I'll pass that to the Commissioner and her team to put -

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. I'll make a few general comments around -

Ms ARMITAGE - Just on the area that's taking most resources, really.

Ms ADAMS - It's really challenging, because crime types fluctuate. We're seeing an increase in shoplifting at the moment, which is retail theft. We've had a 35 per cent increase in retail theft. Sometimes they're -

Ms O'CONNOR - Poverty.

Ms ADAMS - Sorry?

Ms O'CONNOR - Poverty, probably.

Ms ADAMS - There are certainly media reports around the impacts of cost of living. It's very difficult to understand what is a driver of crime. As the minister has indicated, we've seen an increase in family violence matters reported. There're some benefits to people having confidence and coming forward to report those matters, but it's also concerning, the level of family violence within the Tasmanian community. Sexual violence and sexual crime and child sexual abuse, we've also seen increases in those crime types. We want people to feel confident to come forward so that we can hold those perpetrators to account.

I mean, our approach in Tasmania, we're a small state. There are always new and emerging crime types. The internet is a facilitator and enabler of some of that crime. We work with our interstate counterparts in relation to utilising some of their capabilities, because what we need to do is to invest in the areas that are important to our community members. Some of the cybercrime investigations requires specialist skillsets that we will utilise from our interstate counterparts. We are around ensuring that we get a response that meets the victims' needs, and where we can we can investigate those matters. To actually say what is the particular crime, it's very difficult.

Ms ARMITAGE - It changes. The surges change.

Ms ADAMS - It does, absolutely. What we do want and one of the things that we will roll out towards the end of this year is our online reporting for minor crime. That's how we will start. What we do want is communities to report crime, because we need to know where the risk is so that we can ensure that we've always got the resources and the responses and that we're reassuring the community through our response. The community tells us through our survey they want to be able to report crime online, so we'll start with minor crime first and see what the uptake is.

I would expect I'm sitting here next year and probably will be telling a committee that we've seen an increase in reporting, because I expect a lot of people will report online, given the uptake we've seen with our online crash reporting.

Ms ARMITAGE - Rather than having to speak to someone.

Ms ADAMS - Yes. If anyone wants to speak to a police officer that will always occur, but there will be a - yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do they always get instant report numbers? My understanding was, and I have been told this by police officers, that if I have anyone that needs to ring and report, whether it be crimes small or large or whether it be noise reports, always ask for an incident report because sometimes something is written down, but if it's not given in an incident report

it doesn't often get logged and then, of course, it doesn't go into stats. Are your officers told, 'Always give an incident report number regardless of what the call is about?'

Ms ADAMS - Yes. That's an important thing for victims, is to be able to make insurance claims and the insurance companies will always ask for 'What's the incident report number and the online offence reporting?'

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, that will, but are they always given now? Because I'm not sure. I have been advised that sometimes that doesn't always happen. Officers are advised they should do that?

Ms ADAMS - They are, and if victims don't get that report we certainly are happy to provide that to make sure that they can then claim back on insurance for any theft or damage that's been caused.

Mr ELLIS - And there also might be just a reminder for the person reporting to take down the offence report as well so they've got a good record when they're -

Ms ARMITAGE - Sometimes they don't know to ask for one.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, but just so that they're conscious of it so that when they may need to go back there's -

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that they have that information to hand themselves as well.

Ms ARMITAGE - Just one last on this one, then I can go later.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - What steps are being taken to improve the efficiency and efficacy of investigations? I can give an example. I can recall quite a few years ago now that some painting to the front of a building in the CBD was done.

CHAIR - Of Hobart?

Ms ARMITAGE - No, it was Launceston. What? As if it was Hobart. I mean, it was Launceston.

CHAIR - Of course it was Launceston.

Ms ARMITAGE - And the officers attended that morning. I think the incident occurred overnight, probably a Saturday night. Officers attended that morning, but then they were going off-duty. Now, had they gone to the suspects and it was known who the suspect was - this was a public house, so they knew who the suspect was. The suspect had been ordered out. It was an artist - did some terrible - a lot of - quite a bit of damage. Had they gone to the suspect's home that morning they would've still had red paint all over their hands, but, of course, they went off-duty and didn't go for the next week, so there was no way of actually accusing that - well, you could accuse that person, but there was no guilt.

How do you go with that? If someone is dealing with an incident, is it still that they're the only person dealing with that incident, the person that it's actually assigned to? Then if they're off-duty, as in this case, it's like, 'Okay, I'm just about to go off-duty now, I won't be back on for X amount of days and then I'll go and talk to this person.' Is that how it still works?

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister. A couple of things. Can I please highlight that the current roster is six on, six off. You go off, on six days off you're not likely to speak to a police officer for six days. That is again -

Ms ARMITAGE - So that is the same, yes.

Ms ADAMS - That is one of the reasons, one of a number of reasons, why this particular roster, I don't believe, is a roster that is what the Tasmanian community expects in terms of making a report.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

Ms ADAMS - What I can say is we've now built in some supervisory oversights in relation to our offence reporting. If that offence report went in it needs to be validated by a sergeant, and through that review process, if there are obvious steps that should be taken in a timely manner. We would hope that that particular oversight would pick up the requirement to make the additional inquiries, and if those officers had finished, that report would then be reallocated to someone else for those inquiries to be undertaken.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you.

CHAIR - And the red paint would be still on that person's hands.

Ms ARMITAGE - It would have been too.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of efficiencies, Ms Armitage, one of the things to probably note as well is Tasmania Police's strong action with recidivist offenders. We spoke before around some of our task forces that are very strongly focused on the small number of people in our community that commit a high number of crimes. That also includes our sex offender register and the big increase that we're seeing in terms of efficiently targeting those people. I might pass to Tasmania Police if there's anything to provide in that space.

Mr BODNAR - I think that's been effectively covered.

Ms ARMITAGE - One of the biggest problems for Tas Police, isn't it, is when you catch a perpetrator and then when they get to court, they really are just let out. It must be one of the hardest -

Mr ELLIS - Obviously the separation of powers -

CHAIR - We won't reflect on the judiciary.

Ms ARMITAGE - I was going to ask you how you -

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - But there's a reason why we do mandatory sentences, Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, actually -

Ms O'CONNOR - That's because you don't understand therapeutic justice.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm sorry, Chair, but the minister has mentioned mandatory sentences, so I do need to ask this question now. Do you agree with the DPP's suggestion earlier this week to the committee that Tasmania should consider offering criminal defendants greater discounts for early pleas to reduce the backlogs in the court system? Which is totally against mandatory sentences.

Mr ELLIS - I don't have the background. I'm sure the minister at the time provided some information on that one.

Ms ARMITAGE - Sorry, minister, but you did mention mandatory and I thought this is totally opposite to mandatory sentences.

Mr ELLIS - But it's a very important tool.

CHAIR - Minister, it pays not to open the door here.

Mr ELLIS - It's a very important tool.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I'm interested in inquiring how the failed war on drugs is going in Tasmania and how much police resourcing is allocated towards, for example, users of cannabis. Are you able to or is Tas Police able to provide to the committee data on charges for cannabis possession and use year on year since 2020? The same for charges of cultivation and obviously trafficking under the drugs misuse act. Do you have the same data available? We're interested in seeing if there are any trends in the use and Tasmania Police's response to methamphetamine.

Mr ELLIS - Obviously we have a very different policy approach to the Greens. The Greens policy to -

Ms O'CONNOR - Evidence based.

Mr ELLIS - Legalise hard drugs would be a disaster.

Ms O'CONNOR - Evidence based.

Mr ELLIS - It's clearly been a disaster in Oregon.

Ms O'CONNOR - Have you ever heard of a country called Portugal?

Mr ELLIS - It's clearly been a disaster in Oregon where they've walked back those programs. Our focus is very much in terms of the traffickers because people who traffic in drugs fuel organised crime in this state, which is -

Ms O'CONNOR - That's why you decriminalise, but anyway.

Mr ELLIS - Which is a threat to law abiding citizens around our state. It's part of the reason why we take such strong action against outlaw motorcycle gangs and a whole range of others. Regarding the specific questions that you ask around some of those other areas, when it comes to cannabis possession and use, there is a range of different diversionary programs that we undertake. I'll pass to Tasmania Police.

CHAIR - We'll certainly stay away from the political aspect of any questioning. It doesn't work here. It may in another place, but not here. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you. Through you, minister. We'll get the figures for you. We'll take that on notice if we can, back to 2020. I'll just make a couple of comments. I would expect that there'll be really low numbers of any interdiction by police in regards to cannabis use. It is not a focus for Tasmania police in regard to people using drugs. Our very clear focus is on those that traffic drugs, bring drugs into the state and impact the lives of, in particular, young Tasmanians. That is our focus. We also have a diversionary program in place to divert people from the criminal justice system, and that is the approach that we do take where there is an interdiction regarding use of an illicit substance.

Again, focused on those that bring the drugs into the state because we've seen significant harm and also crime that will subsequently be committed from those that are addicted to drugs and obviously wanting to continue to be able to be in a position to buy the drugs, we have to hit the suppliers and the traffickers. As I said, from a statistics perspective, we can get those for you on notice. We obviously watch the wastewater reports that come in from the Australian

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Ms O'CONNOR - Tasmania really has a very high level of illicit substance use, doesn't it, according to those, and it's consistent across datasets?

Ms ADAMS - Cannabis always features really high and there are a couple of locations. One is always Hobart because it's closely associated with the hospital where we see a lot of prescription medication that would normally be prescribed for a particular person feature in obviously those with that testing. So that does skew the results. We use it as an indicator, a piece of intelligence, but it will indicate that cannabis is the drug that you will find in those wastewater reports above any other drug.

Ms O'CONNOR - Through you, minister. I'm also interested to see what the trends are in terms of methamphetamine 'ice' use and Tasmania Police's response, the number of interdictions over it and whether we're seeing - so sort of six or seven years ago, there was quite a marked increase across the state, and I'm interested in seeing what the trend data is.

Ms ADAMS - I'll take that on notice in terms of our seizures. It still does feature in the drug operations that we do undertake targeting those particular traffickers. We have also seen the emergence of cocaine in Tasmania as well, which is concerning because there were five years ago very limited seizures of cocaine. We've seen an increase. So in terms of the figures over that period of time, I'm more than happy to take that on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. In terms of one of the most lethal substances we've ever invented, fentanyl, are we detecting any fentanyl in Tasmania?

Mr HIGGINS - Perhaps I might answer that one. Through you, minister. So not fentanyl as we're seeing in the US or in limited amounts in other parts of the country, but it doesn't mean it won't happen. The fentanyl results that we're getting from the wastewater treatments tend to be licit fentanyl within the hospitals and prescribed medications -

Ms O'CONNOR - Prescribed medication, yes.

Mr HIGGINS - We can already see, internationally, the effect it has on people and particularly places like San Francisco and others where it has an enormous impact on their communities.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is there a risk here that it's being cut into heroin and people are buying something without knowing what they're -

Mr HIGGINS - There's always a risk in buying illicit drugs. There could be anything in them.

Ms O'CONNOR - Because there were reports of that some years back here.

Mr HIGGINS - Yes. There's always risks in any illicit substance that you won't know what's actually in it. As far as the fentanyl that it's being cut into I believe its cocaine -

Ms O'CONNOR - It's cocaine, is it?

Mr HIGGINS - That's not something we've seen here yet.

Ms O'CONNOR - And how do we -

Mr HIGGINS - That's because we haven't.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, thank you. I mean, it's a difficult communications challenge, isn't it, to communicate to people who might buy an illicit substance, whether it be heroin or cocaine, and if we're seeing that fentanyl's coming into the country, how do we let people know that there's extra risk here for them?

Mr ELLIS - There's fentanyl that we know about coming into the country in other jurisdictions, but also, because it's illegal, there's also the risk that we don't know as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right.

Mr ELLIS - But I'll pass to Tasmania Police.

Mr HIGGINS - I'm not exactly sure it was fentanyl, but in Victoria in recent months there was a -

Mr BLACKWOOD - Nitazene.

Mr HIGGINS - Nitazene. There was a warning that went out -

Ms O'CONNOR - What's that?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Nitazene is even stronger than fentanyl that is being cut into other drugs and there's been fatalities. There were three fatalities in Victoria recently in relation to it, also New South Wales. We're monitoring it and working with the Health department on it as well in case there are presentations in the hospital and not to go and catch that person but for us to be aware if it is in the state. Then, as you're talking about, having that communication campaign to say, 'Hey, we actually are seeing drugs cut with nitazene which can really have very quickly fatal consequences'.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. Thank you, Chair. Through you, minister. How do you communicate with drug users around these risks?

Mr HIGGINS - Through you, minister. The Victorian government - I'm not sure if it was Victoria police - went public and said they tested it and they had a number of deaths and they essentially did public messaging.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is that something that Tasmania Police might consider, and we hope it never comes to that here should it happen - that there's an open level of communication.

Ms HIGGINS - If need be, absolutely.

Ms ADAMS - We have a very strong governance with health where we meet in relation to what we see as emerging issues from illicit and licit drugs. We rely on information, and we rely on getting out information to GPs and pharmacists as well so that there's a number of opportunities to monitor and detect where we've got people doctor-shopping, if that's the term. There's always that balance about causing concern in the community too early with a message such as that. We need to be informed, and it needs to be evidence-based, and we'll certainly take the information that's provided us by our health counterparts and also our interstate counterparts.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Commissioner.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. I wanted to ask a couple of questions around the partnership with Hobart City Council and the CCTV arrangements that have been recently reported on in the public domain in the media, if I might. The starting point really is I'm interested to know what consultation occurred prior to the program's introduction of this partnership. Particularly for example with the TLRI who understood a privacy review in this state, and our legislative arrangements around that earlier in the year. But consultation broadly, did any occur before introducing this system?

Mr ELLIS - Probably the first thing to say is we want to thank our local government partners when it comes to law enforcement. This kind of intelligence is very important for ensuring that our communities are kept safe and that offenders are brought to account. I'll pass to the team from Tasmania Police.

Ms ADAMS - I'll make a few comments and then I will ask Assistant Commissioner Bodner to add to my comments. Hobart City Council undertook the installation of CCTV. That was a decision of the council. We had some very early opportunity to utilise the CCTV to respond to some serious public order and crime issues within the Hobart CBD which assisted us in actually detecting offenders and being able to make some very early arrests and reassure the community with some really, yes, very undesirable behaviour and also very dangerous behaviour.

There wasn't a partnership as such when the decision was made to obviously broaden the CCTV in the Hobart area. What we've seen is an opportunity to work with them to then use the footage and the valuable tool to also help in our strategies of making sure that we've got the right police in the right time in the right place based on the footage.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I understand where it would be valuable to utilise footage that's been captured that might have important evidence of a crime that you might go then and collect from Hobart City Council from the CCTV system in some sense to utilise. I understand the new arrangement, though, allows for a direct contact between the cameras and Tas Police so that there can be real-time looking and monitoring of those CCTV cameras from Tas Pol. That's my understanding of where we've moved to with it.

What I'm interested to know when was that decision made, and the question about consultation related to the decision to allow that functionality, which is a different functionality than going to collect evidence through footage from CCTV cameras more broadly?

Mr BODNAR - So just through the minister if I can then, Ms Webb. As the Commissioner was saying there was an opportunity for us to get live feeds from the City of Hobart, which for us is a great opportunity when it comes to resolving and clearing up crime. We don't have a person, whether it be a state service employee or a police officer monitoring these cameras 24/7. They are not sitting there waiting for it.

What we do do, we use this as another good tool to increase our situational awareness. I know within a couple of weeks of Tasmania Police, in particular our members of the Hobart station getting access to these cameras through the live feed, there's a couple of examples of where crime has been cleared up really quickly. I learnt this through a recent Heads of Crime forum I attended. One example was an offender who had entered -

Ms WEBB - I'm so sorry to interrupt you. I'm sure we'll be happy to share those stories. We've seen some in the media already and I'm not disputing the value that must have been gained through accessing the cameras. What I'm always interested to ask about when we have what could be seen as an expansion of powers for police of any kind - I'm interested to ask about the arrangements we put around that and the decision-making that took us to it. Not because those powers shouldn't be there or available, but there should be accountability around them.

My question is going to focus on some accountability measures relating to this arrangement, if I may, and we can probably get through them quickly if I ask the member just to stick -

CHAIR - We need to get through them quickly.

Mr ELLIS - Answers are important as well as the questions, Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Absolutely. That's right. That's why I'd like to get straight to the answers. No consultation as such, because we moved into it because the functionality was there and we took advantage of it, is what I'm hearing. Are you satisfied, minister, and through you to your department, that this use of the cameras and the way that we might manage the surveillance and any data capture around it is within the law in Tasmania? Has there been a legislative review and assessment done of this activity?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to the team from Tasmania Police in a tick regards the legislation, but I'll certainly say the community is very strongly supportive of ensuring that our police officers have the tools that they need and the ability to respond rapidly to an unfolding event in parts of, for example, Hobart, which ensures that police are able to keep the community safe and even better able to bring offenders to justice. There's very strong support for that. I'll pass in terms of the legislative arrangements.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. As Assistant Commissioner Bodnar has said there's no live monitoring of those CCTV 24/7. It's used as an investigative tool. That is one tool of many that Tasmania Police utilise. We have numerous businesses that have identified that they have CCTV and provide us footage in relation to crimes and the approach and the way in which it's been utilised, I think is very much within the current legislative framework that exists.

Ms WEBB - Has there been a formal review of that to ascertain that?

Ms ADAMS - No, there hasn't been. As I said the partnership has only just started. It's only been a very recent thing. It's only in its very early stages.

Ms WEBB - My understanding is that in other jurisdictions, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, for example there's legislation that would regulate this sort of use of optical surveillance and we don't have that legislation in Tasmania. I'm interested about that. That's why I'm trying to see if we've done the work to think it through. Is there a formal MOU with Hobart City Council around this arrangement that you could table for us?

Ms ADAMS - I'll have to take that one on notice. I'm not sure.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Then can the cameras zoom in and do they have any audio functionality to them?

Mr BODNAR - Through the minister, Ms Webb, I'm not aware that the cameras have any audio function. I understand some cameras might be able to change positions or pivot if that's the right word, to get better footage. For clarity, we're not surveilling people. You mentioned the words 'optical surveillance'. We're not surveilling people. We're using that footage if an incident occurs to give us situational awareness so our people can respond, and they can respond safely. It's a really good tool that we've got access to.

Ms WEBB - Yes. There is a distinction between obtaining footage. If a crime is committed, you identify there was a camera proximate to it. You seek the footage from the owner of that camera. There's a difference between that which is a well-established investigative thing and being able to in real time be observing public places through the cameras of another agency. In this case Hobart City Council.

Let me be really clear so I'm not misconstrued. I'm not objecting to this per se, but we have a power that's available to an authority, in this case the police it's always important to understand the accountability measures around it. Because we would always have misuse of power checks and balances. Are there any checks and balances around this in terms of misuse of this functionality? Like for example how it's recorded, the use of it is recorded and reported? What oversight mechanisms there might be around the use of this and its monitoring and reporting.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, it's been quite well-established this is Hobart City Council's recordings. They provide them to Tasmania Police, and are used in that way, but I'll pass to the team if there's anything further to add.

Ms WEBB - Except they're talking about being able to watch live - we can watch in real-time is the new functionality.

Mr ELLIS - If there's an unfolding event where people are committing a crime -

Ms WEBB - I'm just checking about that.

Ms ADAMS - Obviously, we don't record the footage.

Ms WEBB - No. That's fine.

Ms ADAMS - If anyone was to breach and use the recording in any way, it would be dealt with as a code of conduct matter.

Ms WEBB - How would that be captured? Is there monitoring around the use of it then? Monitoring and reporting that would then allow a check and balance, then, about potential misuse?

Ms ADAMS - No. This tool would be managed in exactly the same way as when we are provided footage from a business, a petrol station, where they've captured footage of someone who's committing a crime or they've acted in a suspicious way, that they're concerned about their behaviour. That's exactly how we use this tool as well. It's there to provide us with an opportunity to reassure the community that we're there and present to solve crime.

Ms ARMITAGE - Can I add a quick supplementary to do with the cameras? It's just a little bit historical, but probably about 30 years ago - and I don't know if it happened in Hobart, but Launceston police used to have civilians, and I must admit I was one of them, that used to go and monitor the cameras. I had an occasion I did see one of my boys on it once, but that's beside the fact. When I phoned him and he actually -

Mr ELLIS - Just going about his daily business, of course, I'm sure.

CHAIR - Volunteer police now.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, I've done lots of things. But is that a consideration? It used to work quite well, because you're actually of a night, particularly when your officers are out, you've got fewer officers on at the station to have - and, of course, civilians, just for a lack of

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a word that's not 'police officers', sitting in there for a period of time when it is real-time. When you saw something happening on one of the cameras you could call an officer and say, 'Okay, you know, George Street.' I appreciate at the time all the pubs and clubs closed at 3 o'clock. But it just seemed to be a really good plan that the cameras were monitored.

Mr ELLIS - Could we just reiterate these are civilian-owned cameras at Hobart City Council, but -

Ms ARMITAGE - No, I'm talking about the council cameras, because they were basically council cameras that were monitored.

Mr HIGGINS - Yes. So perhaps as the only person that has worked in Launceston, it was neighbourhood watch as well that used to manage those, so it was volunteers like yourself.

Ms ARMITAGE - I was probably a neighbourhood watch member that actually -

Mr HIGGINS - Yes. Volunteers doing it on a Friday and Saturday night, and it was very effective. We have talked about that. I need to clarify with these cameras: the cameras are only in the public places. There is no legislation that covers sort of the public places. There's legislation that covers the recording in private places.

Ms WEBB - In this state, yes.

Mr HIGGINS - In this state.

Ms WEBB - Yes. That's what I was -

Mr HIGGINS - So as far as any regulation or anything, there is no - public places can be captured.

Ms ARMITAGE - Just whether it could be considered. I thought it was - Jonathan, it was good, wasn't it?

Mr ELLIS - We love community engagement in police.

Mr EDMUNDS - Perhaps the council could get the aldermen to monitor the cameras as volunteers.

Mr ELLIS - As a former alderman yourself, let's say - or were you a councillor?

Mr EDMUNDS - I would not like to do that.

Mr ELLIS - But anyway, that's a very -

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. In table 8.4 I was just wondering, for the seven topics where it's got the target, if you do have those numbers ahead of the annual report, if they could be provided.

Mr BODNAR - Yes, certainly. The target in relation to total offences for Tasmania Police was 27,591. That was the target, and our actual was 35,998. Total offences clearance

rate: our target was the three-year average, which was 50 per cent, and actually achieved was 50 per cent.

Serious crime: our target was the three-year average, which was 906, and the actual was 1204. Serious crime clearance rate: we were aiming for the three-year average, which was 75 per cent, and the result was 76 per cent. Offences against property, the three-year average target was 20,802 and the result was 27,902. Offences against property clearance rate: three-year average was 40 per cent, the rate achieved was 42 per cent. Serious drug offenders: the target for 2023-24 was 252 and the result was 233. I think that covers off any rate.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

CHAIR - Apologies to anyone who spends a lot of time on poppy security but we're going to skip over that one. We did it yesterday.

Mr GAFFNEY - No.

CHAIR - Do you want to do that, honourable member?

Mr GAFFNEY - I've got nothing to ask.

CHAIR - I had questions but I was going to forgo them because of time. Something that you need to ask?

2.2 Poppy security

2.3 Fisheries security

Mr GAFFNEY - Just one quick one. This year in the last 12 months, any hospitalisations because of poppy theft that you're aware of? I know that we had a death some years ago from it, so I wanted to put that one on the table. Have we had any incidences that would need explaining?

CHAIR - He did steal.

Mr BODNAR - Through the minister. Mr Gaffney, personally I'm not aware.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - All right. Good answer, short and sharp. That's what we like.

Mr EDMUNDS - Just a maybe hybrid 2.2 and 2.3.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Could I again, if it's possible for the table 8.4, get the poppy security 2023-24 and the marine offenders one?

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Mr BODNAR - Yes, certainly. The poppy security, the target for 2023-24 was the three-year average, which was 1.66. The actual achieved was 2.15.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thanks.

Mr BODNAR - Marine offenders - three-year average for 2023-24 was 1130 and the actual was 1176, so about 40 above what we're aiming for.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. Thank you.

Mr EDMUNDS - I know we're under pressure to get through outputs, but I wanted to ask, last year we had an update in Estimates the PV *Van Diemen* would be due early 2024. I wonder, did that arrive early 2024?

Ms O'CONNOR - Is this in fisheries?

Mr EDMUNDS - Marine security or fisheries security, sorry.

CHAIR - Is there anyone still at the table who can remember the PV *Fortescue* or you all want to leave that one?

Mr ELLIS - It was one of the briefs that I got when I first came in.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm looking forward to fisheries security.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass over to AC Keating at this point.

Mr KEATING - Through you, minister, yes. PV *Van Diemen*, the replacement, is still currently under construction but it's due to be here in Hobart by the end of this month, weather permitting, for movement from Perth to Hobart.

Mr ELLIS - October, yes. October.

Mr KEATING - I do have, if you're interested, some photos of that short progression of that particular vessel.

Mr GAFFNEY - Will it fit the dock? Just thought I'd ask.

Mr KEATING - It's a 24-metre police patrol vessel, so it's the same size as the previous *Van Diemen*, so it should definitely fit in our berth.

Mr GAFFNEY - That's good to hear.

Mr ELLIS - The community might be interested to know that one of our police vessels has now been sent up to the Papua New Guinean royal constabulary as part of a partnership with us and the AFP.

CHAIR - Not the *Fortescue*, though.

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Mr ELLIS - Providing a great service. They love it up there and pay a little compliment to our marine team. It's amazingly well-maintained is the reports we're getting back.

Ms ARMITAGE - Just while we're on vessels, Tas Police has a very large vessel stationed at Beauty Point. Can't remember the name of it. Can you tell me where the crew for that boat are stationed? Are they now stationed in Launceston? Previously they used to be stationed in Hobart. I'm just wondering if they are now stationed up north.

Mr BLACKWOOD - We have marine offices located - the main office is in the south of the state, but we also have marine offices located in the northern and the western district. Normally when the two large vessels, when we have both of them here, being the previous *Van Diemen* and the *Cape Wickham*, we'll have one moored in the south and one moored in the north. Generally we'll have a mixed crew, and so there'll be some crew probably from the office in the south that would go up and take that vessel out along with members from northern as well.

Ms ARMITAGE - So we do have now. As I said, we didn't previously. Can you confirm that there are members in the north that take that vessel out?

Mr BLACKWOOD - They may not be the skipper of the boat. Our skippers are based in the south, but that -

Ms ARMITAGE - So everyone is in the south that basically crews the boat. Yes.

Mr BLACKWOOD - No, not necessarily. There are dedicated marine police at St Helens, for instance.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm just talking Launceston, seeing the boat is at Beauty Point. Are there any in Launceston.

Mr HIGGINS - Perhaps I'll cover that part.

CHAIR - There's no skipper in Launceston.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Jonathan.

Mr HIGGINS - So to actually skipper those boats is a Master 5 to actually do it.

Ms ARMITAGE - I understand. Master 5, yes.

Mr HIGGINS - Those skippers are based in Hobart. Having it moored at Beauty Point allows them - we've done this very recently when we went to Flinders Island. They're able to deploy it quickly. The George Town members set it up. A skipper goes in, they take it out if it's needed to go out quickly. If it's a planned operation they group there at Beauty Point and off they go.

Ms ARMITAGE - I see them regularly on it, so I'm not sure whether they're going to - what are they actually - I have to ask them next time.

CHAIR - New stop and -

Mr ELLIS - A lot of important work done in marine team across a whole range of different areas.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, thank you for that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Minister, is there data available on poaching instances, interdictions by Tasmania Police for abalone poaching and the like?

Mr ELLIS - Maybe rock lobster as well in terms of marine, that sort of stuff.

Ms O'CONNOR - Rock lobster, just to have a -

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - I mean, the sort of work, obviously, that fisheries security is doing.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm just wondering what the on-water crime rates are like.

Mr ELLIS - So I think we mentioned the marine offenders before in terms of 1176 actual this last financial year. I don't know if there's any further update.

Mr BODNAR - All we could say there - through you, minister - Ms O'Connor, is that that covers a raft of fisheries offences. We'd have to go back through some of the statistics to see if we could sort of hone it down as to how many offenders were charged for, say, rock lobster offences, abalone offences, marine and safety offences, things of that nature. It covers the whole gambit.

But certainly we have a strong engagement with our fishery peak bodies, particularly with some of the changes that came in recently around the way that some of the fisheries were regulated including rock lobster and, yes, Tasmania Police work closely with them.

Ms O'CONNOR - Has Tasmania Police marine division been called out to investigate any cases of animal cruelty associated with industrial fish farm operations? The shooting of seals and the like, which we know happens.

Mr BLACKWOOD - We would need to take that one on notice, but not that we are aware of.

Ms O'CONNOR - I might do that. Is that not part of the marine division's area of responsibility?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to take it on notice. Obviously we would have to be talking about an offence.

Ms O'CONNOR - How much of the time and resourcing of the marine division is allocated towards security around industrial fish farms? Is that a particular focus?

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Mr BLACKWOOD - No, it is not a particular focus. The dedicated marine staff will undertake regular patrols. But in particular, when they are doing those patrols, also focusing on compliance activities with commercial fishermen as well. There aren't dedicated patrols for supplying security to fish farms.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, that's good. I was out in Storm Bay not long back and we had a dedicated patrol stop by and make sure that we were compliant and I am glad to report we were. So, there is more -

Mr ELLIS - We will take your word for it, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - We definitely were, otherwise you probably would have read about it. Because there was a senator and an MP -

Mr ELLIS - 'Don't you know who I am'?

Ms O'CONNOR - No. There was a senator, an MP and a judge on the boat, so I am very glad we were.

CHAIR - That's a fix.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm very glad we were compliant.

Mr ELLIS - Did you walk into a bar later?

Ms O'CONNOR - So would it be fair to say that the marine security division's work is more around rec fishers' compliance and boat users' compliance, and then there is some work that is undertaken on commercial fisheries, but that would be more around abalone, for example, and rock lobster rather than the squid fishery and the big boats that are out?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Yes, for sure. During the rock lobster season, we make sure that we are regularly out there and we're checking vessels and we're boarding vessels to check their catch. But there are also regional marine police who would do that more, the checking of vessels, and we have got a safety role there to play as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, yes.

Mr ELLIS - Encouraging anyone if they have got concerns around an offence, that applies to marine as well. So always able to report through Tasmania Police.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I ask if we've got any -

Ms ARMITAGE - Is that -

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry?

Ms ARMITAGE - I've got a supplementary on the -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, okay. I wouldn't mind finishing my line of questioning, thanks, member for Launceston. Can I ask if we are seeing any trends in rock lobster offences or

poaching or overtake? Or is there, from what we understand, a general level of compliance as far as we can tell?

Mr BLACKWOOD - From what we can tell, a general level of compliance. I actually had the pleasure of going down to Port Davey with one of the vessels late last year. Every vessel that we went past was checked, and all bar one was compliant, except for one cray that was undersize by about two millimetres. So generally, we are seeing really good compliance.

Ms O'CONNOR - Last question, flathead. Is there a role for the Marine Division in checking the catches there, given the decline in the fishery?

Mr BLACKWOOD - There certainly is, and marine police in connection with NRE, particularly when the rules change around flathead took a really high visible approach, particularly around jetties when boats were coming ashore, from an educative point of view as well, around flatheads.

Ms O'CONNOR - That work is still continuing, through you, minister?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Yes, through the minister, it is.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Do you think there is a broad level of community understanding about the changes to the flathead fishery and the need to make sure there is fish for the future?

Mr ELLIS - We have spoken around that broad compliance and continuing to educate people around our fisheries is standard business across government, but yes.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Yes. Through you, minister, I would agree.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. A supplementary and then we are leaving the fisheries security. Thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. Now, just looking in the budget documents, 235, the marine offenders, for the 2022-23, 1081. I am just wondering what proportion of those are boat safety infringement, versus those that are offenders who break the law taking fish illegally? Do we break that down as opposed to the, as I say, fish offenders or people that maybe don't have the right equipment in their boat?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Yes. We would have to take that one on notice, but there would be what we would, masked offences, which are those safety - you know, not having lifejackets and flares.

Ms ARMITAGE - It would just be interesting to see out of that number whether, you know, the vast majority were actually people that weren't doing the right thing in their boat as opposed to people with fish. So -

Mr BLACKWOOD - We will take that on notice.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Not all offences are safety and fish, as well. There are some other offences committed at sea, too.

Ms ARMITAGE - I think I know what you are talking about.

Output Group 3
Traffic Policing

3.1 Traffic Policing

CHAIR - I am just going to skip now to 3.1 which is policing, and I am interested if, at table 8.5, you are on target for the random breath tests? It is quite significant, the target for 2023-24 was \$270,000, and I am also interested in the cost of the Over is Over campaign.

Mr BODNAR - Through the minister, Ms Rattray, I can say that in relation to our target for 2023-24 for random breath tests, unfortunately, we have achieved less than half of what our target was: 132,738 random breath tests.

CHAIR - Okay. A bit busy doing something else? That's fine if you have been.

Mr BODNAR - It's about getting the balance right as well. Because sometimes when we are doing our larger-scale traffic operations, we don't always get those - I suppose the interdictions where people are committing an offence. It is the balance between being out, being seen, so people understand if you are doing the wrong thing on the road, there is a strong likelihood that you are likely to be apprehended and caught by Tasmania Police.

Because of social media and things like that, when we do set up some of these operations, word gets around very quickly as to where we are. We have to be quite nimble and flexible with our thinking about where we move, do we break down. Mobile phones, social media.

CHAIR - They post it?

Mr BODNAR - Yes. Very quickly, very quickly. So that is the challenge that we have. Sometimes when we are more mobile we will get greater interdictions and unfortunately we have got some examples of very poor decisions that drivers have made, particularly at that higher end of the scale when it comes to drink driving. It is very disappointing.

Mr ELLIS - Maybe AC Bodnar will talk about the trends in drug driving in relation to this as well.

Mr BODNAR - Yes. We saw a bit of an uptick in relation to our drug drivers, and when we look at our target for 2023-24 it was 5,500. Now, we sat at 5,300, so effectively we are there. And I suppose a reasonable comment to make is that drink driving is not socially acceptable like it may have been back in the 1970s. There is more of a trend now for people to take illicit drugs and drive, which is a concern for us, obviously.

CHAIR - Right. The cost of Over is Over, if that is possible?

Mr BODNAR - Sorry, through the minister, that is run through the Road Safety Advisory Council. So that would probably need to be directed to the Chair of RSAC.

CHAIR - Yes. That's fine. I'll ask it on the floor of the house sometime. Mr Edmunds, we are moving on because we want to get to the SES.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Just if it is possible, the other actual numbers from 2023-24 around high-risk traffic offenders, speeding offenders and the other two that we didn't get to.

Mr BODNAR - Yes. The target for high-risk traffic offenders was at or equal to 30,000. The actual detection was 16,584. Speeding offenders, our target for 2023-24 was 40,000. Our detection was 18,376, noting there was a lot to state growth through the speed cameras, I must say.

Mr EDMUNDS - Are they in addition to that number, or are they including -

Mr BODNAR - So the speed camera statistics are counted separately to Tasmania Police. They sit outside our numbers. Drink and drug driving offenders, our target was 4,000, the actual achievement was 3,424. We have spoken about oral floor tests, fatal and serious crashes, our target was at or equal to 276, and what we achieved was 278.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, cool. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Now moving onto a really important area, 4.1, the state emergency services. Does anyone need to come to the table for that? Thank you. We don't like to see anyone sit, sit and not get an opportunity so please come.

Output Group 4 Emergency Management

4.1 State Emergency Services

CHAIR - Thank you to those who have left the table. We very much appreciate your input into today's committee hearings. It was well-received, thank you. Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair.

Mr ELLIS - Do we need to do introductions?

CHAIR - That'd be a really good idea. Apologies, I'm trying to make up time.

Mr ELLIS - That's all good. I'll be quick. Commissioner Fire and Emergency Services Jeremy Smith is to my right. To my left further down the end I'll start from Mick Lowe, director of SES and Scott Wilson-Haffenden, director of finance, and we've introduced Anthony Reid already.

CHAIR - Yes, and who's not participating, you already told us.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Well the first thing I want to do, having the opportunity to have the SES at the table is to thank you for your incredible work looking after Tasmanians and particularly after the floods. Minister, I'm sure that you are aware of projections from the Bureau of Meteorology that this year's summer temperatures are likely to be 60-80 per cent higher than average. Budget paper page 243 shows funding for the state emergency service is extremely modest given the scale of the weather extremes and their frequency that we're likely to see in the weeks, months and years ahead. Why aren't we -

Mr ELLIS - Can I just double check, when we're talking state emergency services, Ms O'Connor, sorry to interrupt, you're talking more broadly around fire and SES?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. That's cool. Yes, just so I'm not -

Ms O'CONNOR - I know we've got the state fire commission coming in here, but the question's specific to the SES and the incredible work that they do on a shoestring. So, minister, do you accept that the SES, in order to be able to do its extremely important lifesaving work should be properly funded to do so and that at the moment the funding is inadequate?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely. This is a key part of -

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm glad to hear you agree.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I completely 100 per cent agree and this is an area that's absolutely critical for us as a parliament as we come up over the coming months. We announced a week ago that the Fire and Emergency Services Act, the new Act to replace the Fire Service Act, will be brought back into parliament. Now we've made some changes around that to what was initially consulted based on feedback from the community and certainly the levee structures – the changes will need – any change in that space we need further agreement on. We need to continue to work together. The importance of the state being a strong contributor to SES is so important. In the past SES has largely been funded through local government, and you can sort of see why it evolved like that in the early days.

Ms O'CONNOR - As a volunteer organisation.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. Yes. Closely attached to community and those sorts of things but the reality is that we're all Tasmanians, and wherever you might be involved in a car accident in Tasmania, you should receive the best possible lifesaving services, and that comes from ensuring that our SES are funded and supported by the state.

So that's a key part of ensuring that we can continue to grow and build. Now there's a range of areas where we're looking to invest further in the SES; \$5 million all up in terms of vehicle upgrades because that was an area that local government was looking after. Major investments in terms of our new emergency services hubs in different communities around the state and a lot of those are actually in areas where the SES facilities are clearly the poorest. The Wynyard one, for example, and very grateful for the partnership that we have there.

The Wynyard one's a shed out the back of a suburban house, and the opportunity to bring that together with fire, police and ambulance actually in that location in Wynyard is really

encouraging to build on that capability because you're absolutely right. We're seeing more frequent and more severe natural disasters in this state and around the world.

Ms O'CONNOR - Unnatural disasters even if you think about it in the context of climate change.

Mr ELLIS - Well certainly climate change is the key driver for a lot of our concerns to ensure that we're investing in this space. You know, I've been on the record around our absolute need to do more and the Fire and Emergency Services Act that we'll be bringing back into parliament will be the next step on that journey, but we will need to continue to work together as a parliament and as a community to ensure that we continue that journey. Because we're entering a more dangerous future and doing that with an aging population is a big challenge, so we need to continue our focus.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, minister. It's refreshing to hear a conservative government minister be so honest about the reality of global heating.

Mr ELLIS - More woke than you think, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, you're an intelligent man, but then there are climate deniers in your party who are also arguably intelligent who continue to stick to their old beliefs. But has work been done, and it would be a broader police fire and emergency management body of work, I'm sure, and you'd be working with DPAC – but in terms of the SES just looking at what the bureau is projecting and the long-term trends that our scientists tell us we're facing. What sort of scoping work has been done by the SES on how it will need to adapt and scale up in future?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I'll pass over to director of SES, Mick Lowe shortly. We need to continually invest in and continue to grow our volunteer base because when we talk about resource to risk, our people are our biggest resource. We need to grow that despite the national trend among all volunteering organisations of declining numbers, we need to actually over-exceed that. We need to grow our organisation.

The other big one is around climate modelling and resilience and that's been an area where the SES has really been among the nation leaders in terms of our ability to map the impact of things like flood on our communities, and get a picture of what further work we need to do for that resilience and make some investments, but look I'll pass over to -

Ms O'CONNOR - While you're passing there's a question here about how you engage with communities on such things as rapid evacuation plans. I'd be really interested to hearing any work that's being done in that space as well.

Mr LOWE - Through you, minister. This is something that we're working very hard across SES on. Within SES there is a part of the organisation known as the Flood Policy Unit. They are working across the community and across Tasmania. One of their responsibilities is the Tasmanian Flood Mapping Project. That's about having accurate mapping that we can use as both a predictive model, but also use to inform planning, both pre-incident and during incident across the state.

That is a project that's jointly funded by the Tasmanian and Australian governments and is being rolled out at the moment and was used to great effect just recently. The Flood Policy Unit also does community flood plans and community flood guides. The flood plans are to assist the municipal areas to address their particular concerns. They're inward-facing, and that's complimented by community flood guides, which is community-facing to help communities be able to prepare for the impact of flood across the state.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you very much for that answer. That does raise the next question which is, is part of that work – and I presume it is – is the preventative work. If you've got the mapping that tells you where the risk is, you can see what you need to strengthen in terms of, like, fast infrastructure fixes or whatever it is that you need to do to mitigate the risk of lives lost and property damaged.

Mr ELLIS - And you think about, say, projects like the – I was just there yesterday – the Latrobe flood mitigation works. The levee around the town. That's been a great investment for Tasmania and believe it or not flood levees are some of the highest return on investment that you'll find for any physical infrastructure that you can possibly build. Because the money that you spend ahead of time in resilience saves you a lot of money in terms of recovery.

Ms O'CONNOR - Stop making sense.

Mr ELLIS - I give the federal government their dues, this is an area where they're looking to really step in as well, partnering with states and local government to invest in that resilience ahead of time. Also invest in response so that we can ensure that people are kept safe and then hopefully that - we're not going to ever reduce the recovery bill because we are seeing more frequent and more severe natural disasters but reduce an even broader impact. Some of those physical infrastructure investments are really important. We need to continue to partner with both levels of government. I'll pass back to Mr Lowe if there's anything further to add there.

Mr LOWE - Thank you and through you, minister. This is where the flood modelling that is being conducted enables those statewide flood risk assessments to be done. That informs and that's where we work with local government and across the whole of government and other stakeholders and agencies to use that to ensure that when there are projects that are conducted that we have an understanding of the level of protection that is afforded and that that can be assessed ahead of time.

What does that mean? We have the annual exceedance probability. Think of that as very broadly being whether something is going to be a one in 50 or one in 100-year event. When you build infrastructure, you want to have a clear understanding of what's the scale and nature of event that that infrastructure is capable of protecting against, and that's where that work that the flood policy unit does is just so important to inform those very large investment decisions.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Just finally, it's not a question, it's an observation that when we used to talk about things being one in 50 or one in 100-year events, we're now seeing they're happening every three, four or five years. So obviously there's a different kind of metric that you apply to the assessment, given the uncertainty and chaos that's involved with global heating.

Mr LOWE - Yes, absolutely.

Mr ELLIS - In Mr Gaffney and my community, we've had 3 one in a 100-year floods in the last 10 years.

Ms O'CONNOR - Right. Do the maths on that. They're one in three-year floods. Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. We'll go to capital investment program. Mr Gaffney.

Capital Investment Program

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. Just looking at a question regarding - obviously with the recent storms that led to a lot of damage and record power outages, it seems odd that there's nothing in the 2024-25 Budget for SES vehicles replacement. How are the needs of staff and volunteers to be recorded and addressed in light of recent events to ensure that they have what they need?

It's interesting, in budget paper number 2 volume 1, there's a footnote that says, 'This project will be delivered by the State Fire Commission and return to chapter 26 of the Budget Paper'. Then you go to chapter 26 and it says, 'For more information refer to chapter 8 of the Budget Paper', so it sends you back to where you came from with no more information. I'm just wondering, it does highlight this \$3 million for 2025-26, 2027-28, but nothing for 2024-25. I'm just wondering what the reason is for that.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to help there, Mr Gaffney. It definitely isn't a bait and switch on that one. You'll actually see on page 116 in the State Fire Commission area - and that's an important part as well, just to recognise the fire and emergency services reforms brings fire and SES together. Sitting to my right is Commissioner Jeremy Smith, fire and emergency services.

So that's going to be a key part of building our capability there. The SES vehicles, we made a commitment for \$3 million additional at the last election, so that will include \$750,000 \$750,000 \$750,000 in the forward Estimates years, and it actually includes an additional \$750,000 in the out years. Now, the reason why we don't see it in 2024-25 is because we actually committed \$2 million for this year as part of - sorry, in the last Budget that will deliver that funding. So that's currently being used to build more fleet currently.

Now, one of the things that we need to avoid doing is building all of our vehicles all at once because then we have huge replacement issues in terms of the future. With complex fleet builds, we need to make sure that we're staging that over a few years so that we get the best bang for our buck but also that we're able to do this now as a rolling thing for us. Because if the state is going to take ownership of SES and the challenges that they seek to address in our community, then we need to be making those capital investments in an intelligent way and a strategic way that maybe when local governments were needing to make that on an individual basis that they didn't really have the capacity to do. I'll pass over to Mr Lowe again just to make sure I've got that all right.

Mr LOWE - Yes, that's correct, minister. So essentially what is being rolled out at the moment is a \$2 million investment that has come from the volunteer infrastructure investment fund. That is being rolled out at the moment. Already, there's been five rapid intervention vehicles that have been delivered right at this time regarding that. That's also going to roll out heavy rescue vehicles as well as four command vehicles that are being built over this financial

year, and that is followed by the additional input of the \$3 million that has been allocated in terms of that build that will take place over the next four years.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. Perhaps that would have been helpful to have had that footnote saying what was being spent this year on that so I wouldn't have had to ask that question.

CHAIR - Feedback.

Mr ELLIS - Always happy to help.

Mr GAFFNEY - But thank you.

CHAIR - My question is when am I able to cut the ribbon at the St Helens police station please? Because I'm sure it's going to have my name somewhere on it. I've been trying for a long time and I finally got a guernsey.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to have you there for the ribbon cutting, Ms Rattray. I might look to the team from Tasmania police to come back to the table.

CHAIR - Happy to take it on notice.

Mr ELLIS - But certainly it's a wonderful project. I was actually only out in St Helens with the mayor the other day inspecting the site, and I think we're finalising the process. Mr Bodnar.

Mr BODNAR - Just through the minister, Ms Rattray. I understand we're sort of in final negotiations with a tender at the moment, so hopefully we're not too far away from that stage and then we'll just have to -

CHAIR - Possibly not in 2025-26 then.

Mr BODNAR - I really can't give you any more information than what I've just said. And again, I'm not sure on the build time to be honest with you at this stage. But it will certainly be going ahead at this stage into the future.

CHAIR - Give me a bit more time to save up for that plaque. Thank you very much. We're going to now move to the State Fire Commission because it's really important that we have the opportunity to talk about the good work that they do as well.

DIVISION 26

(State Fire Commission)

State Fire Commission

Mr ELLIS - For the benefit of Hansard, I'll just introduce to the table Mr Allan Garcia, chair of the State Fire Commission.

CHAIR - Welcome, Allan. Nice to see you.

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Mr GARCIA - Thank you very much. Lovely to be here. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Thanks, Meg.

Mr ELLIS - And reintroduce for the benefit of the committee Mr Ross Hinkley, and I think Scott Wilson-Haffenden, you were down there at the end.

CHAIR - Yes, he was, and still waiting for his question, so let's hurry up and get it. Thanks, minister. Is there anything that you want to share with the committee or are we launching straight into questions?

Ms O'CONNOR - We've only got half an hour.

CHAIR - We do only have 32 minutes actually.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. No, conscious of the community's opportunity to ask questions.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Minister, I'm enjoying this conversation in a strange way we're having about climate. This goes again to a similar question of resourcing. We've always been fortunate as a state, or we've long been fortunate, we've been able to count on interstate firefighters if we've got intense particularly bushfires burning here.

Increasingly, however, we're seeing fires burning at the same time in various different parts of the country as the fire season grows longer and hotter. What do we do when the TWWHA for example catches fire and threatens the Derwent Valley and all the people who live there and our beautiful city and there's fires on the east coast of Australia or there's risk around the country? What do we do in terms of dealing with this from a resourcing point of view?

Mr ELLIS - You're right, Ms O'Connor. It's certainly an area that all jurisdictions are needing to address in terms of challenges. We have been fortunate, being a very large country, that there are seasonal variations, but those fire seasons are becoming longer. I think the Northern Territory, if I'm right in saying, had a 10-month fire season just recently, and that's pretty hard going across a very large jurisdiction. But we've got strong national arrangements in the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements has been really important for our country to increase our resilience. But I'll pass over to Mr Smith to discuss the way that we have that interoperability.

Mr SMITH - Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - How it might work when there's fires all over the place.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister. Through you, minister. We've got well embedded procedures and protocols with national fire agencies in regard to the national resource sharing centre. These are quite readily tested and, in fact, this year alone we've had resources both from this state and other parts of the country attend major events in North America and Canada, or Canada and the US. But these have been tested over a number of years, ever since 2013, the Dunalley fires where we had resources moved from across the county and also New Zealand.

We also have another forum called the Chief Officers and Commissioners Group that meets very regularly when we do need to move resources so we can be agile, and that's not only just firefighting resources in the human side of the resource network. It's also the requirements of aircraft equipment, specialist technologies, and so forth. We have well embedded procedures and protocols and resources to stand that capability up at a moment's notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, minister. From recollection, one of the recommendations of the royal commission related to what I understood to be a promise of the Albanese government, which was to sort of start investing and establishing a national fleet, if you like, of aircraft including VLATs, very large air tankers. Do we have ready access to VLATs at, you know, ready and immediate access to them, should we need them?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I'll pass over to Mr Smith around the aerial arrangements.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister. Yes, certainly, we have those arrangements in place, and in fact, it was only this week additional extra aircraft were made available into the country for this upcoming fire season.

Ms O'CONNOR - From North America or Canada?

Mr SMITH - Through a private company that will be engage through - NAFC, National Aerial Firefighting Centre, as far as the contractual arrangements I am not sure.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay.

Mr SMITH - They will be positioned as a national resource and again through those mechanisms through NAFC and or the chief officer's group. We can have the ability to access those for those critical incidents where those type of aircraft would be available and needed.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. We've had evidence in previous hearings, particularly discussing with Parks, the increased number of dry lightning strikes and fires that are created by dry lightning strikes. What's the role of the TFES in working with Parks to identify early where fires are starting and hit them hard so that we're not letting them run and placing people and the TWWHA and infrastructure at risk?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, the TFS has a lightning strike strategy in place and works closely with partner agencies to take a proactive approach to the detection of and response to fires caused by lightning strikes, and if ignition is detected, aircraft are dispatched to contain and control those fires as quickly as possible, particularly in those remote areas and specialist remote area crews might need to be required. Can I say as well, Tasmania has some excellent lightning mapping capability. I have to say, it absolutely blew me away when I saw it.

Ms O'CONNOR - I know.

Mr ELLIS - Our ability to track and get on top of the locations of the lightning strikes, particularly in the large electrical storms is quite impressive. I'll pass it over to Mr Smith.

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Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister. We also have a team called the state intel team that regularly evaluates the lightning bands that come across the state and prioritises where we should be spending either spotter flights or resources to actually combat those fires. It wouldn't be a fire season without having some lightning starts, and with the additional resources we've got, both within our remote area capability and the winch capable aircraft that Parks runs that gets resources into those fires very quickly to ensure that we keep them small, which is all part of our overall strategy for managing fire within the state.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's a local aircraft company. Isn't it? Do we use -

Mr SMITH - No, it's through a national - sorry, through -

Ms O'CONNOR - When we do the spotting, though, so when there's been dry lightning strikes and Parks alerts the TFES or however it works that there's a fire cooking, does the plane come from interstate or does it leave from Cambridge? What's the company that does that work?

Mr SMITH - Through you, minister. It's a combination, and what we'll determine is a flight path strategy to determine the best location for that flight.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay.

Mr SMITH - So it may go up east coast and we may use our resources that we currently have interstate, or if they're committed, we may look to the mainland to bring a specialist aircraft in to undertake that work. But certainly, it's coordinated with the three fire agencies and the aircraft companies to get the best aircraft in the location to determine where those starts are.

Ms O'CONNOR - We do use some local businesses, though. Don't we?

Mr SMITH - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you.

CHAIR - I've just got a follow-on question from that. I am aware that up in the north-east probably last summer, the fire service took some water out of a dam, and obviously the farmer was very irate that he hadn't been consulted, if you like. So what sort of arrangements do you have with land owners around sourcing, you know, water at a time of need? I think it was just that he didn't get a call, so is there some sort of arrangement, or should there be an arrangement?

Mr ELLIS - Protecting life is an absolute priority.

CHAIR - Yes, absolutely.

Mr ELLIS - But working closely with members of the community so that we can have those strong relationships is really important. But look, I'll pass over to Mr Smith.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister. The Fire Service Act allows us to take water whenever we want, but we obviously want to be a good corporate citizen, so we will go back to those farmers or individual land owners and work with them to

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see if they want their water replenished, if we can. But certainly, we will work with anyone that we take water from if they've got concerns.

CHAIR - That was just an oversight, then, that that landowner didn't receive a phone call to say, 'We need to take some water and we need to take it now.'

Mr SMITH - Potentially. And as the minister alluded to, you know, time is critical then and we may not be able to get hold of the landowner, but certainly -

CHAIR - Just ring me, I'll know who it is.

Mr ELLIS - Sometimes it can be complex as well if we're talking the agricultural environment because it may not be immediately clear whose it dam is - and all that sort of stuff, but yes. I absolutely hear you.

CHAIR - That's why I said ring me. That's in my patch. I'll know. I'll know. Especially up the northeast. Thank you, Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Chair. I think it follows on probably from the member for Hobart's questions. I'm interested to ask about fuel reduction burns. Is this an okay place to ask about that?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely.

Ms WEBB - Okay, great. I don't think we covered fuel reduction, member for Hobart. Good. I'm aware that there's reporting of the annual burns completed. I'm interested in the different numbers that are reported in the fire commission's annual report, and what gets reported in Budget papers also, because there's some metrics reported there and they don't line up, so that's probably a question for another time or session.

But it is a little confusing trying to understand that. It looks as though there was a reduction of fuel reduction burns, lesser across 21-22, and then into 22-23. I'm just wondering about the 23-24 final numbers. Do we have those numbers of fuel reduction burns carried out? Is the number going to be on public and private property, or can you break it out into the two categories?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. The government is continuing to invest very strongly in fuel reduction burning because it's effective. It's been able to reduce the bushfire risk in Tasmania by 25 per cent since we brought it in 2014, and it's regarded as nation leading because it's cross agency. Fuel reduction may not prevent bushfires, but their potential intensity is reduced, making them easier and safer for our firefighters' control.

Since the program began in 2014, more than 1,370 strategic bushfire risk reduction activities - that's both burning and mechanical - have been completed state-wide, encompassing a staggering 225,000 hectares as at 30 June. During the 23-24 season, 81 fuel reduction burns encompassing 27,680 hectares were concluded in 2022. 22-23, 156 fuel reduction burns were completed across nearly 20,000 hectares in strategic locations to protect Tasmanian communities.

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Ms Webb, the weather La Niña conditions from 2020 to 2023 limited the opportunity to undertake fuel reduction activities. In late 2023, the weather pattern shifted to warmer and dryer conditions. This allowed for an early start to fuel reduction burns in Spring 2023, but a later start for fuel reduction burning in Autumn 2024, but recognising the value of the program, the fuel reduction program strategic directions 23 were recently endorsed which will guide the program into the future. I will pass over to Commissioner Smith to add the -

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister.

Ms WEBB - Sorry, in one moment. Did you have the numbers for 2023-24 available then, or did you -

Mr ELLIS - So I provided it just before. Eighty-one fuel reduction burns, 27,680 hectares.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Please go ahead.

Mr SMITH - Through you, minister. We were just about to start the spring burn program, and in fact, I was just notified that we have two planned burns commencing tomorrow and the next day, so the burning program has commenced. It is also worth noting that we are very much reliant on the weather and the conditions to go and burn.

There are only roughly around 30 or 40 days a year where we can actually undertake burns safely. The priority really is the high-risk areas within the state, that is the focus, to reduce the risk. It is also worth noting that we are now investing in mechanical treatment so we can do treatments of the high-risk vegetation around the urban environment as another tool in our toolbox, as such. We are looking at, obviously, the way we burn, where we burn, and now looking at those mechanical treatments to treat fuels and reduce the fuel loads running into communities.

CHAIR - Does that include no smoke?

Mr SMITH - No. We are working very closely with the wine industry. So, through you, minister, to ensure that we are good corporate citizens and working closely with the landowners to lessen the backburning impact.

CHAIR - That is usually the complaint of the smoke and those people that have breathing difficulties, they really struggle with the smoke.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. One of the most important things to note in that space, though, is that fuel reduction burning helps to reduce the risk of bushfire.

CHAIR - I understand why.

Mr ELLIS - The reason why I raise that, Chair, is that it is actually out of control bushfires that are the big contributor when it comes to smoke. Fuel reduction burning is much less smoky than a large bushfire that -

Ms O'CONNOR - Tell that to people living down the Huon in autumn. I mean, for heaven's sake.

Mr ELLIS - I will say, Ms O'Connor, that -

Ms O'CONNOR - When Forestry Tasmania is torching bushfires.

Mr ELLIS - That bushfires are significantly greater impact when it comes to the smoke that is in the atmosphere at those times.

Ms O'CONNOR - Don't downplay forestry burns. They impact on people's health too.

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, we were going so well for a little while there.

Ms O'CONNOR - A bit of give and take here, minister.

Mr ELLIS - There are good reasons why regeneration burns happen.

Ms O'CONNOR - No there's not.

Mr ELLIS - Fuel reduction burning can help prevent a larger, out of control bushfire which have an even bigger impact.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb, I apologise for taking your question.

Ms WEBB - That's okay. That's fine, Chair, I don't mind at all. It just adds to the picture. Another question then on the fuel reduction burning, has the funding that is provided that is available for that stayed consistent across time? Has there been any movement in the amount of fuel reduction burning done that is funding-related rather than weather-related?

Mr ELLIS - It has been pretty consistent over time, and certainly we have been very keen to make that available. We also provide additional funding in terms of the Red-Hot Tips program which helps support private landowners with their capacity to, and confidence in, burning on their own lands. Ensuring funding is available is really important.

We also - sometimes you can't take the hectares burned as a full understanding of the fuel reduction burn program. Say, for example, a small burn on the outskirts of a town on the east coast might take a huge amount of preparation for a small amount of land, but that actually protects the community as opposed to a very large burn in an uninhabited area. I will pass back over to Commissioner Smith comment on fuel reduction burning and funding.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister, there is certainly, from a fuel reduction planning process - I chair the fuel reduction program with the other agencies, and we are endeavouring to become more agile with the opportunities to undertake works. We meet regularly and review the plans, and if the conditions allow we will burn in those particular areas. If that requires to move some moneys from one part of those agencies to the next to allow those burns to occur, we will provide additional resources from either TFS, STT or Parks as a combined effort to ensure that those burns go ahead. We are becoming more agile.

Ms WEBB - Right. You provide the funding regardless if the opportunity is there to do the planned burns that you have identified?

Mr SMITH - Yes, to reduce the risk.

Ms WEBB - And I know that we have just - in the context of this conversation, minister, you have made statements about the value and necessity of fuel reduction burns, which tends to be quite accepted as kind of fact. I also am aware that there has been recent work and research published through academics from other parts of the country which puts a counter argument to these burns - and here I am thinking particularly of Professor David Lindenmayer, who is a forestry and environmental management expert from ANU.

There are some questions raised in some of that recent research around the effectiveness of European traditional fire management strategies like the fuel reduction burns when it comes to potentially exacerbating rather than mitigating the risk of severe bushfires. I am not an expert in this space, so I am not a proponent of any point of view. I am interested in things like this when they come out like this. I am interested to hear from you about whether your department has evaluated this or any similar research, and is factoring in any information or thinking that is coming out in those research pieces?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, you are making it very hard for me and Ms O'Connor to agree at the moment, because we would have quite divergent views around Dr Lindenmayer's work when it comes to forestry.

Ms WEBB - Please don't bait anybody here. Can I make it clear to you, minister, and to Ms O'Connor, I am not asking about forestry.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I understand what you mean, Ms Webb. There are some - our landscape has been shaped over thousands of years by burning, by the first Tasmanians and First Australians.

Ms WEBB - Yes, but I am going to ask about that in a minute.

Mr ELLIS - Finding opportunities to continue to work with Aboriginal Tasmanians is really important for us and partnering together in this. Because you are right, there is a really strong support that comes from - comes to fuel reduction burning because of the cultural element of burning. Many of these landscapes have been managed through fire over thousands of years. We are always looking to continue to increase our engagement. I know Forestry is really big on that too. I will pass over to Mr Smith in terms of the -

Ms WEBB - I am quite interested to hear a bit more about, when you say 'increase your engagement', what does that actually look like, tangibly? I do have a question about that.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I will pass over to Mr Smith to provide that information.

Ms WEBB - I see. Thank you.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister, and TFS and STT and Parks participate in national forms to get practice and get best science behind the burning programs. We also participate in the National Prescribed Burning Centre, where again we get the latest scientific information or the best ways of going about our fuel reduction program. We continually learn from those bigger agencies and those centres to ensure that we are undertaking the burns in best practice and learning from the other states and territories in what they do.

Ms WEBB - Then in regard to engagement with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the minister has stated that it is his intention to continue some form of engagement there. I would like to hear more about that, specifically what does that look like and what is the intended outcome? Because the cultural burning done by the Aboriginal burning is cool burning, it is quite different to the fuel reduction burning we would do typically, as a European burning.

Mr ELLIS - Which is typically cooler burning still.

Ms WEBB - Sure. I am just interested to hear more specifically about engagement with the Aboriginal community.

Mr SMITH - Again, back to the fuel reduction programs, through you, minister, we are endeavouring to get a representative onto that group to provide that cultural background into how burning is undertaken within the state. We have written to the Aboriginal Centre for a nominee, and at the moment we are just working through who that may be.

Ms O'CONNOR - Good on you.

Ms WEBB - That is a good effort, and obviously both sides have to come together on that and make that happen. There hasn't been a formalised program of engaging prior to this reach out to try and establish that?

Mr SMITH - I am aware, through the minister, that Parks and Wildlife are undertaking specific recruitment.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Thank you for that.

CHAIR - All right, thank you. Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Minister, I want to go to the position of the new Fire and Emergency commissioner, in a statement that you made in January where you said, 'It's really important we put our operational leaders in charge of what they are doing. And because they, the Chief Fire Officer, will be the commissioner, they will have significant powers, significant control, autonomy of the service as well. So that is good thing around budget and finance, things around hiring and human resources so that they can set the direction we need to go in'.

I know my colleague, Ms Badger, asked you some questions in relation to this matter the other day. Are you able to tell the Committee which powers of employment have been delegated to the new commissioner?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I mentioned to Ms Badger the other day, there has been a change in terms of our approach to the legislation. So, you know, I am on record of strongly supporting a model where the commissioner would be in charge - the commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services, and then the state fire and emergency committee would then advise. That is the strong feedback we had strongly from among our stakeholders is that they really valued the commission model that effectively the commissioner then reports to.

We've taken that on board and that will mean we will maintain a commission arrangement in the legislation that we propose to parliament. That'll have some changes to our approach

and we'll be consulting broadly on that over coming weeks, and it will ensure that the views of our stakeholders, many of whom have representatives on the commission currently, are respected and that we work through that. I'll pass over to the team and also recognise the secretary of DPFEM Donna Adams as well at the table.

CHAIR - I don't think he's chuckled the ball at you necessarily, commissioner. He was just introducing you.

Ms ADAMS - Perhaps I'll be introduced as Donna Adams, the secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and if I -

Mr ELLIS - Is that what I said?

CHAIR - I think you did.

Ms ADAMS - I think you did.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms ADAMS - If I understood the question from Monday, it was around the employment functions of the TFES commissioner, and I previously stated that the head of the state service has employment functions for SES 3s and 4s, so that's actually removed from the department. SES 1 and 2 sits with me as secretary, and all other positions below that are delegated to the TFES commissioner.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, secretary. Minister, can I ask is this delegation in writing, the employment delegation that will sit with the commissioner, and if it's in writing can it be provided?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I mentioned that the legislation we're preparing for consultation. That will mean significant change -

Ms O'CONNOR - So no delegation yet?

Mr ELLIS - in regard to the delegations, I'll pass back to the DPFEM.

Ms ADAMS - This is a standard HR delegation where the HR matrix of all of our delegations and who has the authority. Absolutely, we can provide that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you very much. To confirm, the new commissioner will have delegation powers of employment, be able to recruit and manage. That's good.

Ms ADAMS - For a point of clarification, that has always been the case as well with the previous chief officer. So there actually hasn't been any change in that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, secretary. Does this delegation include and will it include in the new legislation employment powers in the state emergency service?

Mr ELLIS - Working on the legislation currently, but I'll pass back over to the team around the arrangements currently with the SES.

Ms ADAMS - I suspect that at the moment, it currently does, because SES are state service employees. I would think the practical arrangement would be that Mick Lowe would obviously talk to the chief officer because that's the reporting guidelines to determine whether there needs to be recruitment of positions or not. Whether it needs to be described in statute through the reform, we're certainly going on a fairly extensive consultation process to make sure we get governance right and the intent of the new reform to create the entity.

It's about giving a formal authority to the entity of TFES and obviously describing what the commissioner's powers are. There are some pieces of legislation, as an example, the State Service Act, that we'll obviously have to work our way through to ensure that we've got things in place. But I think the secretary's responsibilities are fairly well enshrined. It's about ensuring the delegations are in place.

Mr ELLIS - Some of the complexities in the current arrangement is we're talking State Fire Commission, but under the current arrangements, that's only fire rather than SES in terms of the way that it's structured. These are just all the things we're having to work through to ensure there's some strong consistency there.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Minister, do you have a semi-regular engagement with the United Firefighters Union or have you met with them?

Mr ELLIS - I spoke with Leigh, gosh, I'm going to say earlier -

CHAIR - Be careful. Get the date right.

Mr ELLIS - I reckon on Friday last week. It would be around Friday.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Thank you, minister. They would have raised with you over the journey a number of workplace health and safety concerns that they have had, interactions with WorkSafe Tasmania, some real worries about the safety of equipment that needs upgrading. What's your response to those OH&S issues which have been put forward by the union representing -

Mr ELLIS - Yes, it's important. Both the union and also our volunteer associations as well because they're all firefighters, all exposed to similar hazards. And it's certainly an area that we needed to improve, and under Commissioner Smith's leadership as the new commissioner or acting commissioner, we've seen strong improvement in that space. I might pass to Commissioner Smith in terms of the provisional improvement notices and some of the processes we've gone through to improve.

CHAIR - We've still got a couple of questions, so as brief as you possibly can, thank you.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, and through you, minister. The TFS has got a really well established work health and safety committee structure where issues can be raised and managed and worked through. I'm not aware of any outstanding equipment that needs upgrading immediately. Certainly, we've got a program of works for both our PPC equipment, fire appliances, et cetera in place. But more than happy to identify if we need to work through some issues with them.

Mr GARCIA - Through you, minister. The commission has a responsibility for the work health and safety of the organisation.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Mr GARCIA - So we take that seriously, and we've got in place a governance structure. The union is on the commission. They are aware of the activities that have taken place. In terms of the PINs, they have reduced substantially. There's been substantial work put into the governance and ensuring that those PINs are being addressed, the HSRs, you know, that are effectively being conversed with. I think our systems now are much stronger than they previously were. We -

Ms O'CONNOR - What timeframe - sorry, Mr Garcia.

Mr GARCIA - In terms of how long that's been? In the last -

Ms O'CONNOR - How long has this shift been -

Mr GARCIA - I'd say in the last six to eight months.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay.

Mr GARCIA - Yes. Significantly so.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Minister, you talked about the Red Tips program, but I'm just interested -

Mr ELLIS - Red Hot Tips.

CHAIR - Yes. I'm interested in if I can have a list of the community fire safety programs, and happy to take that on notice because you did mention Red Hot Tips, so I'm -

Mr ELLIS - So community fire safety is actually sort of slightly different. This would be things like educating our children in schools about safe fire behaviour and things like that. I'll pass over to Mr Smith.

CHAIR - Is there a list of programs? It says there's a list.

Mr SMITH - Through the minister. Yes, certainly we can provide a list of all community engagement activities and what community fire safety does.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Just a couple of questions around arson rates. Is this the part to talk about arson?

Mr ELLIS - The police. Yes.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - Are you able to provide the latest statewide data on the number of confirmed or suspected arson caused fires around the state across the last two years?

Mr ELLIS - I might introduce Mr Bodnar to the table again.

CHAIR - Welcome back.

Mr ELLIS - Although I think I have the data. It's 603 for 2023-24. Is that about right?

Mr BODNAR - You may have some detail in there, minister. I'm not sure if you'll have everything to answer Ms Webb's question.

Ms WEBB - The other thing is - I'm mindful of time. I was just going to ask for the data of the last two years and the breakdown, if you could, in terms of rural and urban and regional areas in that data. I'm interested in the estimated annual cost of suspected and/or confirmed arson rates across the last couple of years as well. Is that something that I can put on notice to you, or do you have it?

CHAIR - Happy to take that on notice?

Mr BODNAR - Take it on notice, if that's okay, through you, minister.

CHAIR - We'll put that on our list which is quite extensive. Minister, given that the time is 1 p.m. and we very much appreciate the people that you've had here this morning and your willingness to share a lot of information with us, there will be a number of questions so we will send them through as soon as we go back over them later in the day. But we will suspend for a lunch break and see you back here with a new lot of support people at 2 p.m.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you. Enjoy your lunch.

The Committee suspended from 1.00 p.m to 2.00 p.m.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, and welcome back, minister. We obviously have some new support at the table for you in your responsibility as the Minister for Housing and Planning. If you would introduce those at the table for Hansard and for members, obviously, and also if you have a brief overview then we're happy to have that as well. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. To my right, teams from Homes Tasmania, Ms Eleri Morgan-Thomas, chief executive officer, Ms Jessemy Stone, director, housing policy and programs, and Mr Richard Gilmour, director, community infrastructure. To my left is Dr Anthony Reid, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

In regard to an opening statement, Chair, our Government recognises that every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head, which is precisely why our 20-year Tasmanian housing strategy and housing action plan 2023 to 2027 sets out our plan for safe, appropriate and affordable housing in our state. Importantly, we've set a clear and ambitious housing supply target of an increase of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 30 June 2032. We've made substantial gains on the delivery of the 10,000 social and affordable homes goal with an

increase of 3,696 social and affordable homes as at the end of July 2024. We're well on track to deliver on our significant commitments. We're at a third of the target in a third of the time.

However, our Government recognises that more needs to be done. As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future we've stamped out stamp duty with a 100 per cent discount for houses up to \$750,000 for first home buyers. We've also cut stamp duty in half for Tasmanians who buy a new apartment off the plan or under construction up to the value of \$750,000 for two years.

I mentioned our delivering on our commitment of 10,000 more social and affordable homes, which is all about delivering housing supply, but also achieves support for and activates the Tasmanian economy with the critical, valuable and rewarding jobs in our construction sector, and we're moving immediately to unlock more rentals by boosting our private rental incentive scheme with an additional 200 homes. We need more houses, apartments and units for Tasmanians to live in or to rent, and every single one of these measures will help turn plans into reality sooner. This also requires a planning framework that supports sensible and sustainable development through a consistent set of rules and without local government politics blocking developments that our state needs. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, and appreciate that. Any questions on the overview that the minister has provided?

Ms WEBB - Perhaps only if I could repeat my RTI kind of area. Are there any stats on RTIs addressed by Homes Tasmania most recent up-to-date stats for the previous year, and that would include numbers but also then a breakdown of ones delivered in full or partially or refused and external or internal review numbers, et cetera?

Mr ELLIS - Over to the team from Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I don't have those to hand, but I can certainly take that on notice.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you very much. Appreciate that.

Ms WEBB - I'll just write that down.

Ms WEBB - I think in light of that, then, Ms Webb, it's just the opening of the line itself.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I'll just kick things off. I know people will have a lot in this line item. In fact, my computer has just turned itself off.

CHAIR - Has it? Would you like somebody else to -

Ms WEBB - No, that's okay. I'll start off. Let's just start with a straightforward one. I'm just wanting to be really clear about net gain in social housing for each year over the past five years. I'm particularly interested in is the net gain broken down into government-owned and community sector-owned properties in terms of that net gain, so not just the raw numbers themselves, but the net gain numbers, thank you. Because I know from the dashboard we can see raw numbers, but I'm not sure I can get that detail off the dashboard, although I was just trying to open it up on my computer.

Mr ELLIS - It's okay. I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We can get the net numbers for you. The community housing ones we would only have the data from the report on government services, so we're expecting that out for the financial year that just finished. That comes out, I think, in January.

Ms STONE - It does. It gets updated midyear for community housing.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. But the social housing data that's in the dashboard shows the number of social housing dwellings over the past eight years.

Ms WEBB - So in net gain terms?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. Yes.

Ms WEBB - Broken down into government-owned and community-owned?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Because those data come out of the report on government services.

Ms WEBB - So what's the most recent way you could break that down for me, then?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We would go back to the report on government services. The majority of it will be in public housing, because we still own the vast majority of the assets.

Ms WEBB - Yes. I understand that.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. We can take that on notice.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - But it's in the published report on government services data for -

Ms WEBB - 2023-24.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - 2023-24.

Ms WEBB - Just to clarify, the last couple of years of net gain is what I am after. I know we count things quite readily in terms of what we're delivering in new - across the different categories of new investments, but I'm always interested to see the net gain, because I know we lose some every year as well in different ways. What's our net gain over the last couple of years?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So the net gain -

Ms WEBB - In social housing in total.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In social housing between -

Ms WEBB - Yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - 30 June 2022 and 30 June 2023 was 535.

Ms WEBB - And the year before that?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The year before that it was four.

CHAIR - As in four only?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. Sorry, six. I can't do maths in my head.

CHAIR - Can't be good at everything.

Ms WEBB - What are you projecting it to be for 2023-24?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We don't know that until we get the report on government services because of the way they collate it, and some of that information goes straight to them from the community housing providers.

Ms WEBB - Right.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's definitely an increase, and because -

Ms WEBB - Okay. What about just in government-owned, then? You would have a line of sight on that.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, we do, but it won't - it's not directly comparable.

Ms WEBB - I know that won't be the total, but -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. I can take that on notice. I can't tell you off the top of my head.

Ms WEBB - Okay. That's fine. One of the things that I'm always interested to ask about is the rapid rehousing that we have. Are we still providing that? And I note that there's extra investment in that from this Budget, and that's good to see. In times past, we had that across three categories. We had rapid rehousing in the most visible way for women and children escaping domestic violence, which is great.

We had rapid rehousing for prisoners exiting prison and we had some rapid rehousing, I think, back in the day - I'm not sure if it's still continuing; that's what I'd like to know - and I think it was focused in the mental health area or something like that. Are we still having rapid rehousing programs across those three categories, and if so, what has changed over, say, the last three years in each of those categories?

Ms STONE - So we still have the portfolios of properties, but they're named differently. We've got family violence rapid rehousing, which you're aware of. The prisoner rapid rehousing is still continued. It's part of the Beyond the Wire program.

Ms WEBB - Okay. And has that changed at all or has that remained constant across recent years? Can you give me -

Ms STONE - It has remained constant, yes. No change.

Ms WEBB - How many properties is that?

Ms STONE - Prisoners have the portfolio of 12 with Department of Justice.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Thank you.

Ms STONE - And Beyond the Wire are provided by Salvation Army. Then the mental health portfolio, there's five properties for that, and that was when the HASI, the Housing Accommodation Support Initiative, with Colony 47 - that has merged into that program.

Ms WEBB - Right. The rapid rehousing properties have become HASI properties, then, essentially.

Ms STONE - It is essentially the same portfolio. It's just a renaming.

Ms WEBB - How many? Okay. So how many?

Ms STONE - And there's five.

Ms WEBB - All right. The ones that are part of the Beyond the Wire program for prisoners exiting prison, are they still owned by Homes Tasmania or are they - right.

Ms STONE - Yes. Both the Beyond the Wire program and the HASI program are properties owned by Homes Tasmania.

Ms WEBB - Right. But then the -

Ms STONE - Whereas family violence rapid rehousing is looking at the private market.

CHAIR - Looking at the - sorry, what was that? Looking -

Ms STONE - So the family violence rapid rehousing program is a head lease program which looks at the private market.

CHAIR - Yes. Yes.

Ms STONE - So that's the distinction between the two.

CHAIR - That's right. Okay.

Ms STONE - Yes.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - You might perhaps be only able to focus in on the family violence rapid rehousing in this - when we exit people from the program and what tenure of housing we exit people from that program into. Are you able to give me details on that for the past three years?

Ms STONE - I don't have those details, but we can find those out.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. The reason I'm asking is that of course any form of short-term, secure but short-term, housing that we help people with there's always then a question of are we exiting them into something that's securer and longer-term or not. I'll put that through on notice. That would be great. I'm happy to share around, Chair, and come back.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Edmunds?

Mr EDMUNDS - I think Ms O'Connor has a question.

CHAIR - Okay. Ms O'Connor first then.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Chair. Minister, I just go back to evidence that was given by Mr Fazakali at the legislative council short enquiry process hearings some months ago and from the Hansard to that conversation that we had. Mr Fazakali said the Estimates which were inherent in the Budget papers, which were the Budget papers, which you can see, show that there's a cumulative debt commencement with a \$230 million in 2026-27.

That relates to a cumulative debt at that point of \$457 million, so nearly half a billion dollars in cumulative debt for Homes Tasmania in 2026-27. But the Budget papers talk about interest bearing liabilities that are expected to increase from \$230 million to \$728 million in 2028. Are you able to explain how over the course of four years an extra half a billion dollars is added to the interest-bearing liability of Homes Tasmania, and how it's jumped so apparently significantly since we had that conversation.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. It's ultimately about delivering more homes. So that's across a range of different areas. The good debt that we take on to build our housing portfolio and put roofs over the heads of more Tasmanians, I think will be well understood by everyday Tasmanians who borrow to build their house or buy a house, because a property like that, you know, is typically good debt to hold and in a government sense as well it's intergenerational infrastructure that helps provide housing for people across a range of different areas and across the spectrum. For example it's things like building more social homes for Tasmanians, but it's also things like our MyHome Program that has a shared equity component that is provided by Homes Tas, and so -

Ms O'CONNOR - I don't think that's got a lot though to do with the MyHomes program – doesn't have much to do with the debt that's carried by Homes Tas.

Mr ELLIS - Well, look I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tas to talk through some of the borrowings and maybe as well a little bit more detail around the previous evidence that was provided.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thanks, minister. When Homes Tasmania was set up my understanding is that the forward Estimates were put there as placeholders without really knowing what the capital program was likely to be. Since then we've worked with treasury and

the minister and DPAC on what our forward projects are likely to be knowing what our locally built is in order to meet the target of 10,000 social and affordable housing. We were looking at what the debt requirements were going to be. That's a more accurate forecast of what we're likely to need than the previous year. Which then reflects the work that we've been doing as we work on our program.

With respect to MyHome the government's share of MyHome when Homes Tasmania enters into a purchase agreement as a co-owner – our proportion of that is funded through the Tascorp debt. If we purchase a MyHome property and we spend \$300,000 on that, we draw down on the debt facility to fund that, knowing that at some time in the future that will be repaid.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, and back to the question. So that's a nearly \$300 million lift in debt from the last time that we spoke. What will the debt project in the year – do we have numbers for 2029-30? Are we going to be nudging a billion dollars?

Mr ELLIS - Look, so I mean obviously the budget goes out to 30 June 2028, and we expect over the period borrowings of up to \$454 million. We're looking to continue to grow that. You know, we've obviously got quite an ambitious build program, and we want to be delivering more homes for Tasmanians. Ultimately that means that we're going to continue to utilise that opportunity that's available under the new model to invest in, you know, good assets so that we can continue to provide those services. It's kind of a key part of why we set up Homes Tasmania in the structure that it has in that we're actually able to borrow to build things like homes, which Tasmanians would understand to be good assets to be investing in.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well I'm not sure if you recall but the Commonwealth state housing debt, which was an albatross around the neck of Housing Tasmania for more than a generation; I think when the agreement was struck with the Commonwealth to eradicate the debt it was sitting at about \$150 or \$160 million which was costing the state \$20 million a year. We had a debt of maybe \$150 million and interest-free payments of maybe 17 million a year, or payments to the Commonwealth. Within a few years we'll have a debt of nearly a billion dollars and an annual borrowing cost of, according to the budget papers close to \$40 million. Do you really think that's a sustainable model?

Mr ELLIS - Well, I mean every home that we purchase – that's not an expanse. That's an asset. As we borrow, we have an asset on the other side of the ledger. I mean, obviously the Green's policy is to borrow a billion dollars -

CHAIR - Minister, we talked about this earlier today. We're not going to get into the politics.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. But I will note that there are other policies out there to borrow a billion dollars over the forward Estimates rather than the \$450 million and -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, you're borrowing more than that.

Mr ELLIS - Well the forward Estimate's \$450 million in terms of borrowing in those four years. There're other proposals to borrow a billion dollars in those four years. I think it's both coming from a similar place which is that we need to build more homes and that under a new model – which is why it's important, I think, the Commonwealth debt that you talked about

quite rightly you mentioned it was for Housing Tasmania. Quite a different model being in the department. Homes Tasmania has the ability to leverage its balance sheet to drive a return to government as well on the different areas that they operate in.

We've mentioned MyHome before. If someone buys out of a MyHome contract and they've had equity growth like most Tasmanians would've seen on their homes over the last few years, that return then comes back to government if we develop more land and say different housing loan supply orders that we have around our state and sell those to people looking to build an affordable home, then that helps us to deliver an income for Tasmania.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I confirm that Homes Tasmania will need equity injections from the general government sector in order to meet its interest repayments?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. The model was set up so that the budget, effectively, funds the interest costs. Noting that, you know, we don't want to push Homes Tasmania to be a fully commercial operation because obviously -

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank goodness, because that's not what parliament wanted either.

Mr ELLIS - And that's right. There're obviously really important services that Homes Tasmania provide to the community that are not going to drive a commercial return. That's social housing and things like that. But where we can take action across the whole housing spectrum and usefully drive an income out of part of that, then that's a good opportunity. It's one that we should take and by funding the interest servicing cost that's a way that we can help Homes Tasmania to continue their amazing work with Tasmanians who are doing it tough as well as leveraging their capacity to borrow. But look I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tas if there's anything further to add.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No, nothing that is, to add on that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just ask a question about the Homes Faster partnership, medium high density development grant, which is in the Budget Paper, State Growth chapter, page 314. It talks about the initiative delivering a new density incentive grant program for developers. Paying private developers \$10,000 a unit to build brand new infill medium or high-density developments. Minister, have you made any suggestions or requests to Homes Tasmania that that development grant should be fairly broadly applied and potentially to subdivision developments?

Mr ELLIS - Look, I'll double-check in terms of any requests in the sense that -

Ms O'CONNOR - No. I'm asking if the request came from you.

Mr ELLIS - That's what I'm saying. I'm just double-checking whether I made a specific request around that.

Ms O'CONNOR - I would've thought that was something you'd remember.

Mr ELLIS - That's okay. We'll take it on notice in terms of any specific instruments that have been.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, I don't think it's

Mr ELLIS - This can be a little bit of confusion in the housing space. Some of the grants are actually administered by state growth. They're matters that we can follow up for you in terms of getting an answer -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, thank you, but I -

Mr ELLIS - See whether a minister has provided that direction, if that's helpful.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. That would be helpful. Are you confirming it wasn't you who'd asked that these developer grants for medium density and high density developments might go to subdivision developers?

Mr ELLIS - We'll follow up with the responsible minister's office on that. Certainly nothing that I've signed, but I -

Ms O'CONNOR - Or said?

Mr ELLIS - I don't want to -

Ms O'CONNOR - Have you said anything?

Mr ELLIS - As I say, Ms O'Connor, I'll take it on notice. We'll follow up with you and we'll provide the answer.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just -

Mr ELLIS - There are, say for example, a range of different payments that are provided through state growth and treasury that don't actually line up with the housing portfolio. They might be in relation to payments for particular assets, but they may not line up with us.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, this is a specific program, and I have an understanding that you may have involved yourself as Housing Minister to try to see if some of those funds could be allocated towards subdivision developers who, let's face it, aren't building medium or high density.

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, I'll take you on notice and follow up.

Ms O'CONNOR - It sounds a bit like you might have.

Ms WEBB - Should be able to answer the question, surely.

Ms O'CONNOR - Hasn't answered the question, can't remember that conversation.

Ms WEBB - You should be able to say yes or no to that.

Mr ELLIS - Well, as I said, I'm taking it on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - You'll take it on notice.

Ms WEBB - For no answer.

Ms O'CONNOR - What, have you got to go and check your hard drive or?

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, as I said, I'm going to take it on notice and we'll follow up.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just ask as a matter of principle, do you think that public funds which are allocated to lift the number of medium and high density properties should be allocated towards subdivisions which are the antithesis of that objective?

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, I said I'd follow it up in terms of giving you a sense of the answer to your question. I'm happy to do that and we'll get back to you.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think you're being a bit evasive.

Ms WEBB - What information will you seek to come back with an answer?

Mr ELLIS - Around any directions. And I might just look to Matt. Is there anything further to provide an update here?

Mr HEALEY - No. As the minister said, this is a program administered by the Department of State Growth, so unfortunately we just don't have the details and the briefings for the background to that program here.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Mr Healey. I think the minister has had a memory fail, which is a bit surprising given how direct the question was, but anyway. You've had no involvement with the Minister for State Growth in relation to the Homes Faster Partnership medium/high density development grant?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm happy to follow it up, Ms O'Connor. I just want to double check, are we on the same page - are you thinking maybe the residential land rebate program?

Ms O'CONNOR - No, no, no. I'm looking at the page 314, Homes Faster Partnership, new density incentive grant program. I just think taxpayers would be really concerned if they were funding and uplifting medium and high density housing and a minister was trying to get private developers funded to build more subdivisions which is really the last thing we need.

Mr ELLIS - Ms O'Connor, just to double check because there are a few different programs in the Homes Faster Partnership. So there's the medium to high density developer grant. There's also the -

Ms O'CONNOR - That's the one.

Mr ELLIS - There's also the Homes Faster Partnership residential land rebate.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, and the headworks charges one.

Mr ELLIS - And the no interest charges for headworks.

PUBLIC

Ms O'CONNOR - No, I'm not talking about either of them.

Mr ELLIS - So some of those relate to subdivisions and some relate to medium density.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, that's right.

Mr ELLIS - So I don't know whether there's maybe some -

Ms O'CONNOR - I've been very specific.

Mr ELLIS - Maybe some confusion about the subdivision element as part of the program.

Ms O'CONNOR - I don't think there is any confusion in the information I had. But anyway, I'll put it on notice and you can get back to us.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Happy to follow up.

CHAIR - Mr Edmunds, your turn.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. That was interesting. It's all interesting. I need to seek an update, as we did last time we were in this room I think, about the fast track homes. Last update was six built and 16 more under development. I wonder if there's an update to those numbers from the last time we had our inquiry.

Mr ELLIS - So noting a pipeline of 800, yes. Yes. I'll just pass to the team from Homes Tasmania in terms of our housing land supply order, noting that another housing land supply order passed parliament just recently for 108 homes at Techno Park, Kings Meadows.

Mr EDMUNDS - Does that make the total number 908 or is that in the 800?

Mr ELLIS - I'll double check the total pipeline for housing land supply orders as well.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - But I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thanks, minister. We've got 13 housing land supply orders that have been successfully completed, with two draft orders having completed their consultation process and are ready for tabling in parliament this year. The Techno Park order was progressed through parliament, so now that's moving into the planning around consultation phases. In the northwest there is an infill housing land supply order site proposed at the former Penguin Recreation Ground in Ironcliff Road and we're in the middle of community consultations there.

Mr EDMUNDS - So in terms of the number is it still six and 16?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I think an important part of the housing land supply orders, they are parcels of land that are part of our broader land bank. We are building on a whole lot of other properties as well -

Mr EDMUNDS - They were branded -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're building on them when they -

Mr EDMUNDS - Fast track so that's what I'm interested in, how fast the track is.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, and I think one of the key - it's about bringing those things to market and where we're up to with residential developments. But we're happy to provide information about - you know, I can go through where each of those is up to if that's useful, all 13 of them.

Mr EDMUNDS - Well, the question I asked was whether there was an update to the number of six built - in terms of houses, six houses built and 16 more under development and whether that was still the same number.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Are you able to speak to that?

Mr GILMOUR - Yes. Through you, minister. We have the Burtonia Street subdivision, which was one of our first sites. There're 10 residences under construction there at the moment. I think the first lot of those are due to complete in late October, early November. I think you've mentioned the 15 that we have planning approval for -

CHAIR - Excuse me, Richard. You're quite soft and your microphone's not working. That's it.

Mr GILMOUR - Sorry. That's because my laptop's moved in the way.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr GILMOUR - My bad. So obviously you've mentioned the Ashbourne Grove, West Moonah site where we've got a DA in place of 15 lots - sorry, for 15 units. North Fenton Street subdivision, that's an 11-lot subdivision that's completed. We're well progressed in development applications for 38 units on those sites and recently had a presentation meeting with the Devonport City Council. We've got obviously various stages of development under the housing land supply orders.

Mr EDMUNDS - So that is an increase then from the last update?

Mr GILMOUR - Well, it will be when the 10 that are under construction at Burtonia are completed. And I'm pretty sure we're very close to the first lot of those being completed, but they are well progressed.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay. So the numbers are still six and 16 but 10 of the 16 will move into the six quite soon.

Mr GILMOUR - No, the number was six before I think is what you said.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Mr GILMOUR - Yes. So -

Mr EDMUNDS - Six built and 16 under development?

Mr GILMOUR - No, sorry. It was always six delivered, 15 with a DA in place, and we've also got 10 that are under development right now, and they will be completed very shortly.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - If I can add to that, there's an important bit about the development pathway, as you know, the Housing Land Supply Act delivers land to Homes Tasmania's ownership and a rezone. Once we have that agreement, then we have to go through a whole process to do a subdivision. And in most development pathways, subdivisions require a level of consultation before you get approval to do it, then you've got to go and do the civil works, and then you have to get a development application in place to actually build something on it. It's a long pipe way to do that -

Mr EDMUNDS - It's a long pipe way on a fast track, yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, but the fast track is about bringing that to Homes Tasmania's ownership.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, I understand.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Because it doesn't matter where we get the land from, once you own the land and you've got it in an appropriate zoning, it takes time.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I think one of the sites we had where we would have progressed a lot faster, we did have a dispute with a builder that was in their program and for contractual reasons that I don't want to talk about here, we terminated that contract. So that put that program back, but that's a very typical bit about building, and that would have happened regardless of how the land had been delivered to us.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I have to say, the housing land supply order is a really important thing for us in delivering land to us in order to be able to get the rezoning through in an effective way.

Mr ELLIS - There are some elements of the Act that you look at; for example, you can't actually put a housing land supply order up under a positive motion in parliament that, you know, would sort of fast-track it rather than it sitting on the notice paper for a certain number of days to be negatively disallowed. There are some interesting things in the Act that we think could help speed up the process as well.

Ms WEBB - You can do an allowance motion.

Mr ELLIS - Anything.

Ms WEBB - You can do an allowance motion, can't you?

Mr ELLIS - Interestingly, not under this process. It's quite unusual in that sense, because we have sought some advice around that. But, yes, it can -

Ms WEBB - But you have less votes you have to get that past. Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Say again.

CHAIR - Is it just an order?

Ms WEBB - It doesn't matter. It's okay. It's easier to get an allowance than to fight a disallowance.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. And, funnily enough, the disallowance is the only way it can sort of get through.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. I mean, because we're all interested in what we can do to help. I mean, the numbers are the numbers, and you have to ask for updates on that, and it's part of our job. But we also have a job to assist this stuff to get out of the ground. I'm really interested in hearing about what solutions you might be working on to do that, because clearly there are a lot of challenges in the way. The Tasmanian community wants to see this stuff done, and when they hear phrases like 'fast-track' they kind of expect that there might be something built some time soon.

Mr ELLIS - No, and that's the thing we -

CHAIR - And they hear those significant numbers that have been promised.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. And that's the thing. I mentioned before in my opening statement around delivering in the housing space, but also it's important to deliver in the planning space for us to unlock some of these opportunities. Some of the work that we've got around development assessment panel legislations can be really important, too, taking some of the politics out of planning so that we can actually help who we get on and do what they need to do, which is build more homes.

Mr EDMUNDS - I had a question. Is the potential to talk about DAPs - does that come under 4.2 or 6.2?

Mr ELLIS - It's probably more a question for your House in terms of the way that you shape things. We've got the State Planning Office here as well.

CHAIR - That's 4.2.

Mr EDMUNDS - 4.2.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to -

CHAIR - That's the next one. Can I ask a question?

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Mr ELLIS - I might just - no, that's okay. I'll follow up shortly. Yes.

CHAIR - Will you? Okay.

Mr EDMUNDS - No worries.

CHAIR - I'm interested in the funding that's allocated over two years to provide key development coaches for each Safe Space site across Tasmania. Can you give me some detail around that?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. No, absolutely. Yes. Yes.

CHAIR - And what's the actual funding allocation for that?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. This is a really an important area. One of the things that we've identified for people who are doing it really tough and in need of crisis and emergency accommodation is to help them build their capacity to respond to some of the challenging circumstances that they might find; some mentoring, some support, and working intensively with those people who are facing the most significant risk of homelessness about how we can help them to get things back on track and find some more secure and stable - find themselves in a more secure and stable situation. So the development coaches are important supports there. But I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tasmania to maybe talk through what that looks like.

Ms STONE - So through you, minister, that's correct. It's to provide intensive support at the three Safe Spaces in Hobart, Burnie and Launceston. They're provided by Hobart City Mission, Salvation Army and Launceston City Mission. And they're providing psychosocial support to rough sleepers.

CHAIR - Right.

Ms WEBB - Can I ask you something there?

CHAIR - So the quantum of funding that's allocated to that over the two years?

Mr ELLIS - We've got \$450,000 in this year and \$450,000 in forward Estimate 2025-26. Is that right? Yes.

CHAIR - So how many of those Safe Space coaches or key development coaches does that money fund?

Mr ELLIS - So in terms of staff .

Ms STONE - It would be one key development coach for each Safe Space. I'm not sure of the exact FTE count.

CHAIR - So that is one in each region.

Ms WEBB - One for each Safe Space. Yes.

CHAIR - So that's somewhere in the order of about \$115,000 for each. Is that correct?

Ms WEBB - 150.

CHAIR - What did I say? \$100,000 - yes. Yes. Out of 450, yes. \$115,000.

Ms WEBB - \$150,000 each.

CHAIR - Thereabouts.

Ms WEBB - Can I ask a follow-up question on that, Chair?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms WEBB - What are the qualifications of the people who are going to be in this role? Because it sounds like something a social worker should do or a person - potentially community service worker, a skilled community service worker. What's the expectation of the role?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Well, for a role at that level where you're wanting people who are dealing in crisis I would expect that they would be - because the Safe Space's organisations that deliver that are responsible for their own, but I'd expect a psychologist or a social worker or somebody like that.

Ms WEBB - Was this role developed by Homes Tasmania as a concept or did it come to you from the Safe Spaces as a specified program?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's part of the codesign, and there's also key development coaches in Housing Connect, so they're part of that. And it's a move away from just going, 'Case manager, solve your problem, you're the problem to be solved,' towards a client-centred approach which is strengths-based. It's working with, you know, the strengths of those people to help them sort out their own. That's why they're called a 'key development coach' as opposed to a 'case manager'.

Ms WEBB - Did that specifically come forward from a lived experience consultation? I know you probably say there was a codesign with lived experience, but I want to know specifically did this concept and this naming, the title that's been given, come from people with lived experience in the space?

Ms STONE - It was through the codesign with the organisation to the Housing Connect reform plus the organisations providing the Safe Spaces.

Ms WEBB - I'm mindful that that was a supplementary. Thank you for your leeway. I'll come back to it later, Chair, if that's okay, and others can pick up. Or can I keep going?

Mr ELLIS - And, Chair, just while in -

Ms WEBB - Happy to keep going.

Mr ELLIS - We've got the RTI numbers available as well.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So we had 18 applications. The number of applications assessed for disclosure and decided is 16. Six of them were information provided in full, 10 of them were information provided in part. And the reasons why we didn't fully provide information: some of it was personal information with internal briefing information of a minister; legal professional privilege; information communicated by other jurisdictions; internal deliberative information; information relating to the business affairs of a third party; information relating to the business affairs of a public authority; and information obtained in confidence.

Some of those overlap because there were multiple reasons in some of them. The number that were accepted and decided between one and 10 days was four, the number accepted and decided after 20 working days was 12 and the number of applications decided after 20 working days that involved an extension negotiated with the applicant was six.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. And any internal or external reviews sought?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Can you help me understand what you mean by an internal review?

Ms WEBB - If you were to send me back an RTI assessment that didn't give me things I was asking for, I might write to you within a certain statutory timeframe -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - And ask for a review.

Ms WEBB - And ask for an internal review, and then if I wasn't satisfied with that I might put in a formal request for an external review with the ombudsman.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I'm not aware of any, but I will come back to you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Appreciate that. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I just want to go back to the Homes Faster! Partnership medium high-density development grant, and I've had a look at the front of the chapter. Which minister administers that grant?

Mr ELLIS - So just working through it, I have a short update, though not the full one. We've committed as part of the next 100-day plan - the Tasmanian Government has committed to releasing the program guidelines prior to 30 October 2024 and then commencement of the program shortly after. Guidelines for the medium-density development grant have not yet been finalised. And the Department of State Growth has recently finalised a minute to me that sets out some options for consideration in relation to the program. Has not yet reached me, but of course, as I mentioned, there are Homes Faster! Partnership grants for this area, and there is also Homes Faster! Partnership programs for subdivisions.

Ms O'CONNOR - I understand that.

Mr ELLIS - So I am just hopeful that we haven't - we are not getting caught in a sort of confusion around that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Can you confirm then, you are the minister. So, minister, you forgot that you were the minister responsible for this grant?

Mr ELLIS - Well, I actually haven't received any advice with regard to this program yet at all. I received some in terms of the subdivision side of things, but the medium-density payments are not yet developed. So yes, once - as I say, we have committed to that by the end of October, and I will have a brief coming to me very shortly. That will be the first information that I will have had from the Department of State Growth around this.

Ms O'CONNOR - The first? The only and first briefing that you will have had from the department on an item which is in the budget papers? I think you'd have had a minute before the budget where you were given some information on the program.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sorry. I am more talking in terms of guidelines, and those sort of things. You know, any matters with regards -

Ms O'CONNOR - You said it was the first information you had received, though.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, in terms of guidelines, and the sort of specific things that you are asking about, in terms of whether there might be a change to it being a subdivision program rather than a medium-density program, and that is probably where some of the confusion has come in. But hopefully that is -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I'm not confused. You sound a bit more confused than me.

Mr ELLIS - That's okay. Would you like us to maybe bring some state growth officials down so we can -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I am in the committee's hands here with that sort of thing.

Mr ELLIS - Because most of the housing and planning side of things has up until now been Department of Premier and Cabinet. Although some of these payments, we work with the team at State Growth. I am happy to bring them in for some clarity.

Ms O'CONNOR - So in terms of the program guidelines, have you had discussions with Homes Tasmania or state servants from the Department of State Growth at your regular weekly meetings about the criteria for applying this grant? You can't remember?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Look, we discuss a range of things but not specifically this one as far as I can recall. But look, I might just - if we could bring State Growth in?

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, what I am trying to establish here -

Mr ELLIS - I am happy to look into it, Ms O'Connor, but -

Ms O'CONNOR - If the committee is happy to have State Growth up here, I'm happy to have State Growth up here.

CHAIR - If we had enough time we could probably -

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right. I am not going to force -

CHAIR - At this point in time we want to get through -

Mr ELLIS - I don't imagine it will be particularly long in terms of the evidence provided, just to clarify. Because, as I say, this is, you know, not a program that exists yet, and a fair bit of design work to be done on other programs. But this one, the guidelines are not due to be finalised until the end of next month, and it is a brief that has only just come to my office and not yet to me. So -

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. But just in terms of - so there's two things here. The budget papers say developers will be given grants of \$10,000 a unit, up to a maximum of 50 units. Taxpayers are subsidising developers up to a half a million dollars for a project for brand new in-fill medium- or high-density developments. Will you rule out today that that funding will be allocated towards - in this program, will be allocated towards anything other than brand new medium- and high-density housing?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Look, I might pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas if there is something particular to update.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, but you sign off on the guidelines, just so we are all clear here.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and I will just pass over to -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - This is the only bit of Homes Faster! Partnership that is sitting with Homes Tasmania. That has been out for procurement, and we are in the middle of a procurement which we have done under the Treasurer's instructions. We are in the middle of assessing that at the moment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Well, thank you for that information, Ms Thomas, but is the procurement process seeking expressions of interest or tenders or applications from developers who want to build medium- and high-density housing? Is that what you are looking for through that program?

Mr ELLIS - Well, are you talking about the apartments development program?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I am talking about the apartment development program.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, the medium- high-density development grant.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - With a minimum of 25 units?

Mr ELLIS - No. We are talking about a different program.

Ms O'CONNOR - A maximum, a maximum of 50 units.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Sorry. No, sorry, that is not ours.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. No, that's fine. That is another one again.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. My apologies, I have -

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay.

Mr ELLIS - So there is a little bit going on in the medium-density space, Ms O'Connor, so forgive us there, but -

Ms O'CONNOR - I am just trying to establish - and I am happy to move on.

Mr ELLIS - No, no. That's fine, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - I just don't like letting things go until we get an answer.

Mr ELLIS - No, no, that's fine. We will bring State Growth down and we can clear it all up, and everyone will be on the same page. Obviously I mentioned before I am not - I haven't yet received advice and we are looking to release guidelines in a bit over a month, so we will provide a further update on that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Have you managed to recall whether or not you had any discussions about more loosely applying this grant so that it was eligible to subdivision developers?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Look, we will bring in the team from the Department of State Growth, and -

Ms O'CONNOR - But they won't be able to get into your head to access your memories.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. And as I mentioned, Ms O'Connor, I am happy to take the question on notice, as well, just so that we can be sure that the committee has got accurate information here. There is obviously a bit of confusion around the information that is being asked for, so we want to make sure that we have got clarity and the committee is fully informed.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Well, I will move on, but I will be back.

CHAIR - It almost appears like we have got too many programs happening. It might be a good idea to finish one before you start another one. But anyway, I'm not in charge, only of this process. Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Just a detail one. I just wondered out of which funding pool Homes Tasmania purchased the Fountainside Hotel?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I will pass to the team from Homes Tas.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So that was funded through the debt facility that is available to - the debt that we have with TASCORP.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. It's not a specific fund for housing type X or Y?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No, that's not the -

Mr EDMUNDS - It's just an opportunity and you?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. It was an opportunity, and it has been - it will be leased to Health on commercial terms.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, and certainly we have had a lot of excitement and support from the community in terms of the acquisition, similar with the key worker accommodation for the Launceston General Hospital in Punchbowl. These kind of investments are important, because they enable us to provide key worker accommodation, obviously, but that also takes pressure off the private rental market, because where we can take action to acquire previously short-term accommodation like motels, Fountainside, others, that ensures that, say, the Health Department, in this case, doesn't need to then be trying to find housing stock in the private rental market. Yes.

So just quickly, and one more. I am just interested, does that mean that you sort of keep an eye out for other sort of buildings like that, as you just sort of said, like motels and, I don't know, aged care facilities? Or I don't imagine those really come onto the market very often.

Mr ELLIS - Probably let's just say motels. Motels are -

Mr EDMUNDS - Because they are in such high demand as it is. But that is part of the remit, is sort of scanning the market for when ready-made -

Mr ELLIS - Always looking for opportunities as they present.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - And whether that is in terms of, you know, social housing, crisis accommodation, key worker accommodation. We have got an acquisitions team that looks out for those opportunities, and I will pass back to the team from Homes Tas if there is -

Mr EDMUNDS - I'm happy with that answer.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Can I follow up on that?

CHAIR - Ms Webb, so a supplementary.

Ms WEBB - Yes, a couple of things to follow up on, actually. In terms of that then, because you have specific programs to help develop key worker accommodation in regional areas, and when Homes Tas has been created through the parliament, one of the things that was spoken about was developing key worker accommodation in regional areas.

The focus was definitely regional areas, when we talked about it in parliament: not the middle of Hobart or the middle of Launceston. That never came up. We talked about having accommodation developed for key workers where they were needed, where it was hard to get accommodation in regions. So now you have actually added to the debt here for Homes

Tasmania to purchase key worker accommodation smack bang in the middle of Hobart and also approximate to Launceston.

Mr ELLIS - So you wouldn't have purchased Fountainside for the Health Department?

Ms WEBB - No, I would have purchased it for social housing and lower-income housing, actually. Because well-located in an urban -

Mr ELLIS - Yes. But that would still have been debt.

Ms WEBB - So we would be adding to the debt in order to house vulnerable low-income Tasmanians rather than key workers is what, personally, I would have preferred to see prioritised. My question that I am getting to is how is it determined the proportion of your portfolio, your debt profile, your planning going forward, how is it determined what slices of that will be put towards key worker, will be put towards public and social housing, will be put towards the other sorts of categories? Like how will -

Mr ELLIS - Yes. So key worker accommodation is a huge opportunity for us, and we are all Tasmanians. People in regional areas go to the Launceston General Hospital, they go to the Royal Hobart Hospital. They need to travel, and those healthcare workers need to be accommodated. So if you look at the Fountainside it is almost the perfect building when it comes to key worker accommodation for the Royal.

Ms WEBB - Sorry, I'm not asking about Fountainside and its merits -

Mr ELLIS - Well you spent a lot of time talking about Fountainside, Ms Webb, and on the same way -

Ms WEBB - I'm asking about how it's determined. So I'm getting to my question which is how is it determined what proportion of your debt profile, what proportion of your portfolio of properties, what proportion of your planning going forward is key worker in urban areas?

Mr ELLIS - So it'll depend on the opportunities that present themselves. A key part of the strategy is to look at key worker accommodation and if we can play more of a role. Obviously, there's different capacity to borrow when we're talking about a commercial arrangement that they have. So being able to deliver on those kinds of arrangements actually then unlocks and further supports other borrowing for other parts of the organisation that are not commercial. Like for example social housing, homelessness services, things like that.

So where we can utilise the skills and technical capability of Homes Tas in terms of asset management and providing housing, then that's a good thing and that helps us to support other parts of our portfolio. So look I'll pass over to the team in terms of more specifics around this work.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you, minister. When we are looking at what to buy some of it is opportunistic because you've got to rely on what comes onto the market. By my board – we've been doing a lot of work on what the future profile looks like and where we should be allocating our resources. When there is a commercial arrangement where the income that can be derived is effectively paying the cost of capital those are some of the things that we can do as a statutory authority. Now we're able to operate more commercially. So things like

that we are looking through the lens of how do you make that stack up commercially, and then are there other ways to manage the debt in that instance.

Also when we're looking at purchasing a property like that, we don't just buy it and then go, well there's a lease on it for five years and then what. We have an exit strategy or a thing for when that lease ends so that we have an idea of what we want to do with the property. Fountainside at the moment is configured as a hotel. So it doesn't actually have cooking facilities or any of those things in each of the apartments and having gone through it it's frankly a little tired, so it needs a bit of a refresh. It's probably unlikely to ever be a hotel again. But it's in a really great location and is ripe for redevelopment down the track. So what we are doing with health we view as a meanwhile use while we await for the availability to be able to redevelop that site.

It's a different story in Punchbowl because that's a motel that's been converted into two-bedroom apartments so that is a lot more you're able to bring in other tenures and things in that place.

Ms WEBB - Sure. But can I pick up then on the Fountainside. We purchased it for how much?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - \$16.25 million.

Ms WEBB - And how much are we expecting to have to spend on the refurbishment in order to then rent it out for the key worker accommodation?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's already being used for health things, so it would be -

Ms WEBB - But you've just talked about a refurbishment. What are we expecting to spend on the refurbishment.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The refurbishment we would do now would be just to bring it up to standard in some areas where it needs more. So that's maybe a million or two. I'm not sure. We haven't got inside the building yet. We have some preliminary advice about that but the work we would do at the end when health no longer needed it would be to probably reconfigure the building into apartments. That's down the track.

Ms WEBB - For on selling?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - For either on selling or leasing as -

Ms WEBB - Social housing?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Could be social housing. Could be affordable rental. Could still be key worker housing under a different guise. But as an apartment -

Ms WEBB - Or a mixed tenure which would be best.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Mixed tenure. Yes, I can't imagine a scenario where we would make the whole thing social housing because I think that would be problematic.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - No. That wouldn't be a sensible idea unless you were going to do it as a facility for use with support around them without -

CHAIR - We have a supplementary on that one. Thank you. Ms O'Connor?

Ms O'CONNOR - I might be revealing some of my neoliberal roots here, but I actually think the purchase of Fountainside was strategically a good idea and I don't think it's mutually exclusive that you invest more in social housing while you take the opportunity to buy a property like Fountainside, but anyway.

Mr ELLIS - We're agreeing on way too much today, Ms O'Connor. You're making me nervous.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. Minister, there are other sites in and around the city and there's two I'm thinking of particularly. The KND site which is owned by the University of Tasmania which would make a fantastic inner city medium density housing, and there's the site behind Vinnies in Argyle Street which was going to be accommodation for women. That was knocked back by council. For a block like the KND site is that something that Homes Tasmania could look at investing in? Because I'm not sure UTAS will, and how might that work? Is it being looked at? Does Homes Tas recognise what a prime site it is and what an opportunity it is? Or would you leave that to the private market.

Mr ELLIS - So firstly on Argyle Street, there's an appeal process that's happening in that space. So that's probably some further updates there. I'll also note that we do have State Growth in the room, so I'll invite them to the table to add to an answer very shortly, and I'll pass over to the team around – we're always looking for strategic acquisitions but particularly around that site.

CHAIR - We just need a response to the two that the honourable member has asked about because otherwise we're going to be here a lot later than we expected.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, no I mentioned the KND site in particular.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We are all over all sites that are available but there are commercial realities to a lot of sites and sometimes people want too much money for then, in which we say thanks but no thanks. The KND site, I don't know particularly. I'm aware that UTAS has some sites in the city that some other developers have been sniffing around. So I don't have enough information about that.

CHAIR - Let's get this issue out of the way with the State Growth and we then we need to move on.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. So Denise McIntyre, deputy-secretary Resources Strategy and Policy from State Growth. Denise, thank you for your time.

Ms McINTYRE - Thank you, now what was the question.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is a fair question.

Mr ELLIS - So this is in particular – well I'll let you ask Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - The query was, and it's partially been answered here, I think. What is the role for Homes Tasmania in identifying key inner-city sites -

Mr ELLIS - Okay. So we were talking about -

Ms O'CONNOR - The women's?

Mr ELLIS - No the medium density grant program.

Ms O'CONNOR - The medium density grant. Well goodness me. My goodness. Okay.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, it's state growth. So here to clear this up for us.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, trying to understand what the criteria would be for, or the program guidelines would be for the medium high density development grant and whether it would rule out suburban development subdivisions.

Ms McINTYRE - We are currently working on the guidelines for the grant program. So we've undertaken some consultation with some key stakeholders and we're just collating that feedback now to determine what that program – what the guidelines will look like.

Ms O'CONNOR - But the guidelines would require, with respect, wouldn't they, Ms McIntyre, that it be for medium and high-density developments?

Ms McINTYRE - That's correct. For medium density development. Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Medium. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Denise and we've definitely got everything we needed of that one.

CHAIR - It took a fair while to get to that. Now, I think, Ms Webb -

Ms WEBB - Can we note those.

CHAIR - Okay. Yes. Two more questions and then I'm going to Ms Armitage.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I just wanted to come back to clarify about the key development coaches and the safe space facilities. Are they replacing the current staffing arrangement, or are they additional to the current staffing arrangement? Is it additional funding into those facilities for staffing?

Mr ELLIS - Back to the team from Homes Tas.

Ms STONE - They have been funded in the past so that's continuing those roles.

Ms WEBB - Continuing the same level of staffing they've had to date?

Ms STONE - There was a break of funding. It was continuing previous roles. Whether or not those staff have left is information I don't have at hand.

Ms WEBB - Okay. So even though it's an election commitment it's actually just carrying forward staffing funding that had been provided previously under a different title now, essentially.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can answer. The previous program was short-term and time limited. The sector demonstrated the value of those, and I believe made representations to government and then they were re-funded.

Ms WEBB - Announced as an election commitment but only funded for two years in the budget. So again it looks like short-term, and time limited to me has been the continuing flavour here, minister.

Mr ELLIS - So obviously future budget decisions will be discussions that we'll have at a government level as we always do in terms of working through future budgets.

Ms WEBB - You know that the organisations delivering this service will face the exact the same situation they've faced the last few years where they'll have people employed in these roles across the two years funded. They won't hear until the May of the last year whether they've got refunding or not, and by that time, their staff will have to leave to go to other jobs, and this client group will be disrupted by staffing that gets interrupted. Will you commit to giving them some security about their funding before the death knell of this two-year period?

Mr ELLIS - We will work through it in terms of future Budgets around that. It's the way that we usually do things, so no doubt we'll be able to provide an update then.

Ms WEBB - We shall see. I've got plenty of routes that we can go around.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you, Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. While we're talking about purchasing buildings, and this one I have mentioned - I'm not sure if I mentioned it to you, minister, but I have mentioned it to housing in the past, and this is the nurses home, the old nursing home in Howick Street. I've been asking questions of the health department about this for some time, and their last answer was that the Launceston General Hospital old nursing home was endorsed for disposal by the Department of Health's infrastructure oversight committee in July 2023, and the property is now being prepared for disposal. I mean, this is a nursing home. It's quite large, the bathrooms - it obviously needs some work.

But it has housing, and my understanding was housing had looked at it. Has housing looked at this? Are they proposing to take it over, or will the government actually sell the nurse's home, and someone will knock it down and build some wonderful big house or something sitting up there? But can you advise whether it is on the radar of housing? Particularly seeing that the government has endorsed it for disposal. Planning work is already underway, which I expect will be complete within the 12-18 months, and they were saying that was just getting - you know, cutting it off, rezoning, all they needed to do with the site that it's up there. Because you know the building. Do you?

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Mr ELLIS - No, not personally, but I'm happy to pass it on to the team from Homes Tas and it hasn't been a nursing home for some time. I am happy to pass to the team from Homes Tas about that specific property.

Ms ARMITAGE - I thought the minister may have been up to have seen it. Yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I haven't looked at it, but we certainly understand that it needs quite a lot of work and it's probably condemned, so its not reusable. That is my understanding, but I don't know what health's current plans are.

Ms ARMITAGE - I do have another question.

CHAIR - Yes, you do.

Ms ARMITAGE - I do. This question, minister, is one that I really ask quite often, particularly of the Premier. But to me, it's such an important one about our boards. No disrespect to the board members. I'm sure they are skill-based, absolutely magnificent people doing a great job. But the concern I really have is that five of them are based interstate and two are in the south. Now, before you tell me that one used to be in the south, I realised that, one of the interstate ones.

Mr ELLIS - No, no. I'll happily say we need to increase our Tasmanian contingent on the board.

Ms ARMITAGE - Absolutely, I am looking at north and north-west representation. This is Homes Tasmania, and I find it really hard to believe that we cannot find representation on a board, you know, B-U-Y Tasmanian, that we actually cannot get people who live in Tasmania, particularly in other areas apart from the south to go on our board.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I would say, Ms Armitage, on that one, we've got a unity ticket. We can and we will find people from northern Tasmania to be part of that, and -

Ms ARMITAGE - I think the north-west is important as well.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sorry, the norther part of the state. Obviously, I am from the north-west, so I am very gladly parochial.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, absolutely.

Mr ELLIS - But absolutely. In terms of just the general comment, getting that balance right with more Tasmanians in general is a priority when we're thinking about the future makeup of the board. As you say, we've got some outstanding members on the board currently, but in future, I think it's important that we have a good balance.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, when you look, five, two, it doesn't look good. A mainland recruitment company, I would assume, or not.

Mr ELLIS - As far as in the past or in the future?

Ms ARMITAGE - Recruiting board members. Well, who recruited the board members?

Mr ELLIS - Look, I'm going to say it was Watermark or DPAC not sure.

Mr HEALEY - We did engage a mainland recruitment company to run the recruitment in the first instance.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm just wondering whether mainland recruitment companies are more likely to choose mainland people.

Mr HEALEY - I'm not sure. They certainly do search internationally. I'm not sure they have a bias for choosing people interstate.

Ms ARMITAGE - They might not mean to have a bias. I mean, we can have a bias without actually really meaning to.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms WEBB - I think the balance was slightly better before. One moved from Tas to the mainland, I believe.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. But I think, as well, it's no excuse for us.

Ms ARMITAGE - There was still three in the south.

Mr ELLIS - Because we need to make sure. I mean, this is a service that's providing vital services for Tasmanians, and even just having the value of those local relationships is really important. I know the board themselves have identified this is an area that they would like to see more of because if we've got people that understand the lay of the land in terms of stakeholders, partners, the construction industry, things like that, that's - yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - Absolutely, but even meetings. With meetings, are they normally by something like Webex or do the mainland members come down to the state? Because I know in the past, pre-COVID, and I've been asking these questions probably for the last 11 years or maybe even longer, 13 years. When they have meetings, do they now have them by Webex to save money, or do they come down? Which, obviously, if you had five interstate board members, you've got accommodation, you've got airfares, you've got meal allowances.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that's right. Let me just double-check.

Ms ARMITAGE - I think there was one this morning.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that's right, in terms of a board meeting. So yes. We're looking in the future to have a better balance in terms of online and in-person meetings. They've largely been in-person, and now including every second meeting, I think I'm right in saying, will be online.

Ms ARMITAGE - Could I take on notice the actual cost of the accommodation and the - all the costs associated with interstate board members for the last financial year? I'm just trying to think when the board came into being. I think it was probably -

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas -

Ms ARMITAGE - I mean, I don't expect to take lots of time trying to work all those figures out.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No, no, I've got it here.

Mr ELLIS - I do have some - and this is since inception. It says 31 August 2024. I assume that's -

Ms ARMITAGE - Now, I do support this Homes Tasmania legislation.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Travel was \$75,992 including accommodation and meals.

Ms ARMITAGE - And that's for how many meetings?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - From December to 31 August, in the first couple of months, they were meeting quite frequently. But that was by telephone as well as in person. They are now moving into a cadence where they meet - every second meeting is online, and even in the meeting today, one of the Board members was online. So not everybody comes down for every meeting.

Ms ARMITAGE - How long was their tenure? Was it three years? Five years?

Mr ELLIS - It's a staggered approach as we've established it so we don't have a case where it's all out or all needing renewal all at the same time.

Ms ARMITAGE - I think councils could learn from that again.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. It's a more effective approach, we think. Then you can build that kind of long-term corporate knowledge.

Ms ARMITAGE - But can you give me the range? Is it two to five? No. One to four?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Three years is the longest.

Ms ARMITAGE - Right.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - They will all be three years, but in the first bit, some are one, some are two, and some are three.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - And then after that, every new appointment will be a three-year appointment.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, I look forward to asking next year and seeing how we're going. I'm not sure, have we got any -

Mr ELLIS - And as we say, we've got great people on the board and all that sort of stuff. But yes, there's always -

Ms ARMITAGE - No criticism of the people that are on there, but I just believe that -

Mr ELLIS - Yes. But there's always opportunities for -

Ms ARMITAGE - Five, two. It looks pretty bad.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. There is always opportunity for finding the right ones.

CHAIR - Supplementary, Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - To that same point, I'd be interested in the profile, and again, in terms of as we conceive that there's some of the board members from the mainland with the sort of tenure coming up, what sort of efforts are made to scout out the local market months in advance of when it might open up. Because I agree with the sentiment that you're all talking about. I've got some amazing developments in the north and north-west of the state that have a much different mindset than people in Hobart have particularly.

Ms ARMITAGE - And mainland.

Mr EDMUNDS - And in the mainland, yes. I think if we can target - not necessarily target individuals, but certainly know when certain members are rolling out of the board that we should turn our mind to, because obviously you've got to have the broad skills base as well, so yes. I would be interested in the profile.

CHAIR - So is that the question?

Mr EDMUNDS - I don't know if you're able to share that, but certainly -

Mr ELLIS - The profile in terms of -

Mr EDMUNDS - In terms of if you know that next year, you've got one Tasmania, one mainlander. Not picking on individuals because there might be one that you want to hold onto. But you want to start -

CHAIR - We want to have a merit-based appointment process, too, though. Don't we?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, we want the best people for the job being -

Mr ELLIS - Of course.

Mr EDMUNDS - but I think sometimes Tasmanians don't even turn their minds to these sorts of things because they -

Mr ELLIS - One of the things about being the best person for the job, though, is sometimes local networks and relationships and track record of success here.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. Yes, absolutely.

Mr ELLIS - So as I said, it's a staggered approach.

Mr EDMUNDS - It's probably not a question. I was just interested.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we're always keen to -

Ms WEBB - When I was on the board, and this is interesting, because it is coming at it from another angle which is around some of the challenges that are thrown up by locals. I just want to talk through and get an understanding about how this was managed internally with the board. We know that one of the early - these early tasks in these early years was the redesign to 2.0 of Housing Connect, going from the model that had been in place to a newly-designed model. Two of the board members, of course, are the previous CEO of CatholicCare and the previous second in charge of Anglicare.

What we've ended up with through that limited tender process for 2.0 for Housing Connect is a pretty huge predominance of those two organisations in winning the limited tender to deliver that service. I'm just wondering, without any allegation whatsoever, there could be a perception there that those two organisations definitely had friendly ears in the room for the discussions by the board. So how was that managed? What approach was taken at a board level to deal with that really clear connection with two significant organisations who were going for very core, big tenders to deliver Housing Connect?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I might just - as far as some general comments for background on this I'll pass to Ms Morgan-Thomas if there's some information that we can make available here, noting that the board chair is not here. The new Housing Connect service was procured through a closed request for grant proposal process in August 2023, and the five existing Housing Connect service providers which are Anglicare, CatholicCare, Colony 47, Hobart City Mission and the Salvation Army were invited to tender for a statewide front door and regionalised personal support service. Wintringham continues to provide support to older people in the south and also commenced supporting older people in the north and north-west.

Anglicare was successful in their submission to provide a statewide front-door service. The contracts for personalised support were awarded to CatholicCare for young people statewide, single adults north and north-west and couples and families statewide. Hobart City Mission also for single adults. Salvation Army was not successful in their submission and no longer provide Housing Connect services, and neither do Colony 47. Windara continues to provide Housing Connect services to people in the Circular Head area. With that I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas.

Ms WEBB - Before you do, thank you for that summary, minister, because it did lay out the situation. We went from five organisations that spread the load quite evenly across the state to front doors and spread load - now we have Anglicare delivering the front door everywhere and we have CatholicCare delivering the huge preponderance of the personalised services across those different cohorts. It highlights the point of the question I was asking about how is this managed.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Both are great organisations. But, look, I don't need to tell you as well.

Ms WEBB - I mean, you know I'm not criticising the organisations.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Let's be really clear here. I worked for Anglicare before I was in this place.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. No, absolutely. Yes. I understand. So, look, I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas if there's information that we can provide around that.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. No, we can. So just in terms of the board's process, there's a register of interests, and at every meeting the chair of the board prompts directors to register their interests of their former employment and all of those sorts of things, including real property interests, all sorts of things, where they may - or relationships they may have with people. All of those things are declared in there, like, as a - it's to the extent of over-declaring rather than under-declaring.

CHAIR - That's healthy. That is very healthy.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. Thank you. That's prompted at the beginning of every meeting. With the procurement of Housing Connect there was actually two parts to the procurement, and they were done separately. It was about the procurement for the front door but also the support services, so they were a bit separate. The procurement process that Homes Tasmania used was to work through - because this was all done under the treasurer's instructions.

The whole package went through the procurement review committee before it went to the board, and the paper that went to the board had a clear recommendation from management. We weren't actually asking the board to make a decision about who got it or make a decision between several providers; they were presented with the recommendation of management, which is what was the outcome.

Ms WEBB - What resulted.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Management's outcome was based on the procurement committee, which the - sorry, our procurement process, which, you know, had a range of experience and complied with the treasurer's instructions. The whole chain of it wasn't going to the board and saying, 'Who do you think we should pick? Should it be organisation A or organisation B?' They were just presented with the thing. And they were presented with enough information that they could, you know, be comfortable that they were making the right decision. But it was the - it had to go to the board because only the board had the delegation to - because it was above my delegation.

Ms WEBB - To be the decision-maker, yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So it was a big decision, so it required their sign-off. But they didn't interfere in the process. They were checking that the process had been done properly and that they were confident in the recommendation that was made to them.

Ms WEBB - And in that case were -

Mr ELLIS - More obviously, just quickly to add as well, Ms Webb, that the minister of the day also under schedule 1 of the Homes Tas Act can remove a board member who fails to

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disclose personal interests that are required under section 17 of the Act. There's also in the design some oversight around that.

Ms WEBB - Sure. At the meeting where the decision was made to award those tenders, was interest declared because of past employment by those two board members?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - My understanding is that both of them left quite some time ago. But, yes, it's on their standard declaration of interests, and I'd have to go back and check the minutes if there was a specific declaration about that. But there's no doubt that everybody on the board knows that both of those individuals were involved in those organisations.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - Couple of questions around the social housing register, if I might. As of July 2024 I understand there's currently 4,745 households on the housing register, but the dashboard doesn't give me any indication of how many families with one child, two children, three children or four or more. Is that information available?

Mr ELLIS - I think we provided that on Monday.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It is.

Ms WEBB - Did you provide that the other day? Yes, think you did.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - But happy to provide again, Chair.

CHAIR - Who to?

Mr ELLIS - To the committee on Monday.

Ms WEBB - To the other committee. I think just fish it out and send it back through to us.

Mr ELLIS - But we're happy to -

Ms O'CONNOR - The people downstairs.

CHAIR - To the people downstairs. Okay. Well, do you know if they asked all the other questions that went with that?

Mr ELLIS - They wouldn't have been anywhere near as good as yours, Chair, of course.

CHAIR - Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr ELLIS - But I'll just double-check with Ms Morgan-Thomas.

Ms O'CONNOR - You're that kid at school, are you?

CHAIR - If that's okay. If that's already been asked I don't expect it to be provided the second time. But I will just check.

Mr ELLIS - It'll only take one second, Chair, and then we've got a good idea for you for discussion.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Of the 4,745 applicants at 31 July 3,380 had no children, 634 had one child, 426 had two children, 192 had three - sorry, yes. 192 had three children and 113 had four children or more.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you. Were the questions asked about the dashboard as well, the old and the new?

Mr ELLIS - Had some, but happy to discuss further.

CHAIR - It says as part of the Tasmanian housing strategy action plan a commitment was made to deliver a new housing dashboard to support analysis, and we talked about this in our committee from the legislative council. Support analysis and transparency of data by 30 June. The new dashboard became publicly available in September 24. When we compare the old dashboard to the new dashboard the new dashboard does not provide the same level of transparency that was previously available when it came to reporting on the average wait time for priority applicants on the housing register to be housed. We used to have a monthly figure as well as a rolling 12-month average. We now have a rolling 12-month average for one month.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. So, Chair, there's actually much more data and a higher degree of granularity as well as breadth in terms of the data provided. We had a discussion on Monday about this, and it's -

CHAIR - I thought you didn't get out of overview.

Mr ELLIS - They did ask a few interesting questions. We provided a 12-month rolling average because we thought that that presentationally [sic] might be a better way to kind of understand the trends in that space. But if there's interest, and clearly there was in that committee and from you -

CHAIR - There is interest.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to provide that on a monthly basis as well. My strong preference is provide more data so that people can have an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that we have in this space, whether they're people that are seeking help, whether they're people providing help or they're, say, even businesses looking to invest.

CHAIR - I'll try one more and then I'll move on. It talks about the fact that a commitment was made to establishing a lived experience advisory group to inform the Tasmanian government's development on housing policy by June 2024. Has that lived experience advisory group been formed, how many members are part of this group, how many times has the group met, and what are the terms of reference for that group? And I mean, if you cannot answer all of that - but if it is a 'no' then I won't have any other data, will I?

Mr ELLIS - No, that's all right. Look, I will pass that over to the team from Homes Tasmania about the work that we are doing in that space.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So we have done a lot of work on it. We came to the conclusion that a single group of lived advisory people with lived experience wasn't going to work. If we are asking older public housing tenants what's needed, you know, you have got a group that represents all sorts of people with lived experience and you are asking that whole group what should we do for single women escaping domestic violence, that is actually not a reasonable question for them. We are better off thinking about how do we get the voices of lived experience into policy areas that are more suited and specific? We are actually going back to the redesign, because it wasn't - it is not that we are not committed to it. And what we didn't say -

CHAIR - That was a thought bubble, then, by somebody?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Well, no, no. It's actually a really important thing, but the idea of a single group, when you go to actually plan that out, and go 'actually, hang on, that isn't going to work'. We also know that a lot of the people who write to either me or to ministers about their circumstances actually tell us a lot of information, and the people on the housing register have disclosed a lot of information about themselves, that we are able to pull out some of those things.

We don't want to go and ask people on the housing register 'what's your most pressing need' when they go 'But I told you in that other process'. We just need to work out through some of the nuances of that. It has prompted us to actually do a better job than a single group.

Mr ELLIS - It's kind of an exercise in better listening to the things were told.

CHAIR - So what about the new model? Or the new approach? Do we have a timeline on that new approach?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - What I am in favour of, and we are having an internal discussion about how we do this, is when we are doing a specific piece of work that we then invite a number of people to talk about that specific piece of work. It won't be a time when we go setup this massive structure of lived experience advisory committees for every niche in our, you know, the portfolio, but let's - how do we think about bringing that together. Yes, I think we will -

CHAIR - I think that is going to be an interesting process, but anyway.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I think it is better than having a committee where you go 'tick, we have got a lived experience committee', but it is so big that it is actually not helpful and will be hard for people to engage.

Ms O'CONNOR - Or too small so that it's not representative.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - That's right.

CHAIR - But then how do you choose who are the right people for this particular program and that particular program and get them all in and then - you know. That is going to be cumbersome in itself.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Exactly, and that is some of the things which we are working through at the moment: how do you find groups? For instance, if we were going to do something in safe spaces, there is a way to do a safe space lived experience work that doesn't involve setting up a committee and locking people in for a year. But we could go and work with those people in that space, with the providers of safe spaces at that time.

CHAIR - Particularly when there is a lot of very tight timeframes to meet in this space. Just a couple of more questions, if you might, Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Yes, and I would like to ask a bit more about the -

Ms O'CONNOR - I have a couple more as well.

Ms WEBB - A bit more about the Housing Connect 2.0 model, which has just recently come onboard. Is the online portal functional yet, and if not when are we expecting it to be?

Mr ELLIS - It is not yet, and this is an important part of the development for Housing Connect 2.0. It is going to be a huge uplift in terms of the way that we support people that are seeking support, because they will be able to do a lot of their work, if they choose to, through an online portal and that will make information flow a lot easier and also enable us to direct resources into more of a structured, supportive coaching kind of methodology. But look, I will pass onto the team from Homes Tas to provide an update.

Ms O'CONNOR - That sounds like gobbledygook for less people helping people who want houses.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, if I didn't make that sort of clear, so some people are able to do almost kind of self-service, if they are able to use online platforms. Other people - but then what that means, then, is that you can then direct your resources to supporting those who really need it, rather than kind of having to do service for people that don't really need it and can do a lot of that stuff themselves. Think, kind of, the MyGov portal as an example versus the Centrelink office. But I will pass over to the team from Homes Tas to provide an update.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thanks, minister. I mean, an example of where people can self-service is, at the moment, if you want to change your area preference. You have to ring up or go into a thing. People will be able to do that online. Some people won't want to do that online, but for many people that is actually convenient for them. They can do it at the time they want. Where we're up to with that development of that is the - we have staged it, so that we have done the - so the roll out of the service and the organisations has happened from 1 July.

Housing Connect providers historically have used a system called SHIP, which stands for something, and we don't own that system. That is owned by Infoxchange, and it is used around the country for homelessness service providers. That had a connection to our housing management system. Now, in order to build the portal and the next iteration of Housing

Connect, we needed to do a data transfer. And in IT projects one of the biggest problems is how you do a data transfer, data migration.

That has proved to be a ginormous problem, and because we do not control the original system we are reliant on working with the provider of SHIP in order to bring that data in in a way we are able to translate it. The first iterations of those that happen when the data migrated, a lot of the records had no data in them at all, or they had thousands and thousands of things of records with, like, a one over there, and we go 'what does that one mean, we don't know'. We persevered with the process. We then went back and escalated it through, you know, CEO-level discussions.

Ms WEBB - That's okay. I probably don't need this level of detail.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No? Okay.

Ms WEBB - But you are having troubles with data transfer, yes?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Anyway, we are nearly there in that.

Ms WEBB - Yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - That allows us to finish the build.

Ms WEBB - Right.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So we are looking at the timing of the build in a way that doesn't release at a time that doesn't disrupt service delivery at peak times.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Would the new model operating now, without the portal so far, but coming down the track, is there a new assessment then? Because I believe it is based on a level system, 1, 2 and 3. Is there an assessment tool that is in place that is being used for those level assessments?

Ms STONE - There is through forms that are being created. So not in a system, not in an IT system. The level 1, 2 and 3 assessment is taking place but through business processes that are being set up.

Ms WEBB - Right. Is there something that is available to describe what categorises people into each of those levels?

Ms STONE - The practice framework for Housing Connect 2.0 is publicly available. I can find the website, but the actual practice framework is a very comprehensive volume of information and goes into the details of those assessments.

Ms WEBB - Where is that publicly available?

Ms STONE - I will find it for you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Is it the expectation that, after the first year, once the portal is online, for example, that half the level 1s, as they are categorised, I believe, will be using the portal? Because I think that was part of the modelling, was it?

Ms STONE - So for the first year, the modelling is based on 10 per cent of those - the level 1 using the portal, increasing up to 50 per cent of the level 1 in the second year, moving forward.

Ms WEBB - Right. Then, in terms of, then the face to face support that is being provided to the other levels, what is the case load going to be? Particular for level 3? What is the case load going to be for workers in the system on the modelling that has been done?

Ms STONE - Yes. There is not a capped case load, so it will be as needed that the support providers there will assess people's need. There is no capping of those caseloads.

Ms WEBB - But, minister, clearly modelling has been done: there is an expected approximation of the number of participants who will be coming for support, there is a funding envelope that allows for a certain level of staffing. So, based on those modelled numbers, what does that indicate about a caseload?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Look, happy to follow up with further information if you like, Ms Webb. And just to update you as well, the housing connect practice framework is publicly available on the Homes Tasmania website, so -

Ms WEBB - So not the Housing Connect website?

Mr ELLIS - No. On the Homes Tasmania one. So that's publicly disclosed and available there for you.

CHAIR - Do you think I might be able to ask a question, Ms Webb? Or Ms Armitage, if you want to -

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, I was just wanting to if Ms Webb -

Ms WEBB - Sorry, it was just on the same topic. I've just been on this one topic about the Housing Connect. Yes, for quite a while. But yes, that's fine. We've only got half an hour left. I'm just saying others might have questions.

CHAIR - Have you finished or not?

Ms WEBB - Well, I'm just waiting for the answer on that last one, which is about case load based on the modelling. Sorry, I think there were -

Mr ELLIS - I did mention we're happy to follow up and provide further information on that if it's available.

Ms WEBB - So a question on notice.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Okay.

CHAIR - Are you all right, Meg?

Ms WEBB - Yes, I think that information is available, but you don't want to put it here now so you'd have to answer more questions about it. Because I suspect it's a pretty shocking case load, actually.

Mr ELLIS - I don't have it.

Ms WEBB - Your staff here would be able to answer these questions, minister.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I don't have it in my notes, and I'd be hazarding a guess.

Ms WEBB - This has been a well-modelled new arrangement.

Mr ELLIS - I mean, Ms Webb, if you will -

Ms WEBB - It was put out to tender.

Mr ELLIS - You could have provided this question on notice, and we would have happily provided it to you as well.

Ms WEBB - I'm sorry, this Estimates process works when we look at the Budget, and then you come here, and we ask questions about it.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, we are happy to provide the information. I think your insinuation is not called for, and I think we have been pretty open with you.

Ms WEBB - Not at all.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I'm just trying to get to the bottom of the money again. When this committee sat and had a conversation with you, and Mr Fazakali said \$457 million would be the cumulative debt in 26-27. Two and a half months later, it's not at \$728 million in 2028. Where did that extra \$271 million come from? Am I looking at two sets of numbers that are foreign to each other?

Mr ELLIS - So I think we have - and Mr Fazakali noted this, and we mentioned it just before as well. So those early Budgets effectively was a placeholder because we're talking about a new model that really was growing into that space. So as we've continued the quite assertive bild program that we're working through, that of course means further borrowings. But you know, as I mentioned, I think, you know by virtue of your party's policy, our party's policy, that we want to be seeing more borrowings that deliver more homes for Tasmanians, so as we continue that work, on the other side of that ledger is more homes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass over the team just to double-check the accuracy of that and anything further.

Ms O'CONNOR - It might be germane to this question, we had a question about Commonwealth funding that Homes Tasmania was relying on and hadn't heard yet about the Commonwealth funding. Is that an element of this? I mean, it's a big difference in two months and I'm trying to -

Mr ELLIS - No, so we do have an update in terms of the Housing Australia future fund, but that's only happened in the last couple of weeks. So that didn't relate to the Budget at all, but yes. Look, I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tas.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So when we appeared last time, that was before the State Budget. While we may have had an inkling of what was going to happen, it wasn't until the Budget came out that the forecast appeared. Mr Fazakali was telling you about what was actually already in the public domain.

Ms O'CONNOR - That had been, as I understand it, was there from the commencement of Homes Tasmania, that set of numbers potentially.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. That explains that.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Then we were asking questions about - and then there's the HAFF monies, but wasn't there a Commonwealth process before that -

Mr ELLIS - You're thinking social housing accelerator, maybe. Is that right?

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right. So just an update on where those funds are, whether they've arrived, been approved. Is the Commonwealth lifting its weight?

Mr ELLIS - So social housing -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - We'll go social housing accelerator first, maybe, and then the HAFF.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The accelerator funds was a very rapid process from the Commonwealth. They arrived in Tasmania. I think they announced it the first week of June, and they arrived before or by the end of June or something.

Ms O'CONNOR - True to their name, then.

PUBLIC

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. It was very accelerated. Those funds in the nature of Commonwealth state relations go to finance or for treasury, and then treasury makes progress payments to us as we are delivering. All of those projects have commenced or had some progress. One of them, the Argyle Street property you spoke about earlier is one of those accelerator programs.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. What was the quantum of funds that arrived in the social housing accelerator program at the end of June, and what are we expecting through the HAFF?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The accelerator was \$50 million. That was what the Commonwealth promised, and then our job was to go back to them and say this is what we're going to spend it on.

Ms O'CONNOR - And what are we going to spend it on?

Mr ELLIS - Block of 15 units in the Chigwell, where we were at with the -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, a lot of -

Ms O'CONNOR - Medium densities?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes. It's not in here. Do you have it with you?

Mr GILMOUR - Yes, I do.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you.

Mr GILMOUR - So we've got seven projects funded in total. Sixty-seven units. We've got six units in New Street, Latrobe. Twenty-three units in Taree Street, Chigwell. Thirteen units in Boa Vista Road, New Town. This is sort of accelerated.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So 108 -

Ms O'CONNOR - Are they new or are they purchases?

Mr GILMOUR - Okay.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - They're all builds. We have co-funded some of them, so the split between the Commonwealth and us, it's majority Commonwealth but a bit of ours as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Mr GILMOUR - Ten units in Barr Street, James Street, and Munro Place in Whitemark. Fifteen units at Teering Road, Berriedale. Thirty-eight units in Argyle Street. So that's the St Vincent de Paul project. Twenty-three units in Percival Street, Latrobe. They're the only ones I've got in this report.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, that's really helpful just to give me an indication of the kind of properties that are being funded. Minister, I'm -

Mr ELLIS - In terms of HAFF, so Tasmania was successful, and we've exceeded our population share in terms of the homes that were granted to Tasmania. Now, Homes Tasmania was not as successful as part of that, and there are some nondisclosure agreements, so I think we're still having to work through the Commonwealth around successful elements of what we've done, but Homes Tasmania was not successful in any projects that we are the sole deliverer of. So that's -

Ms O'CONNOR - Annoying.

Mr ELLIS - It is, but also, you know, we need to take ownership of that fact. We need to work with the Commonwealth around what exactly that they were prioritising as part of their process. We think that there has been a strong focus on things that are shovel ready or already under construction, so that timeframe and things like that might be - even partnerships with community housing providers seems to be an area that they have valued. For us, we have made submissions to round 1, and we will obviously work with the Commonwealth around round 2.

We will also need to have those kinds of frank and honest discussions with ourselves about how we want, what we can do better, because HAFF is important. That's a large amount of money, and it will help deliver homes for Tasmanians. That is absolutely right. But in terms of our ability to unlock some of that funding, it's been disappointing for us, and we need to work through how we can do better next time.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you for that. Minister, a lot of people in and around Hobart, and I feel like you would share this frustration of just deeply frustrated and disappointed at the council's decision to knockback the Vinnie's development in Argyle Street.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely.

Ms O'CONNOR - How do we get around that, and how do we make sure that we're able to build these places? And this is not a Dorothy Dixer.

Mr ELLIS - No, no, that's all right. Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - It's a challenge at times for Homes Tas to get the medium density housing up, or to support its development. What sort of plans do you have to get around that?

Mr ELLIS - So this is a St Vincent de Paul project, and you're right, deeply disappointed. I think a lot of people scratched their heads because not only was it knocked back, you know, units for over 55 women at risk of homelessness. You know, some of the most vulnerable people in our society. But it was also actually recommended for approval by the council's own expert planning staff. This really had me scratching my head. There's a process that they're going through now and the team might be able to provide an update of where the actual appeal is if there's some of that information available at the table.

To be honest, I know that there's different views around this in this place, but, genuinely, taking some of the politics out of local planning is, in our view, the way that we do that. So development assessment panels - it's going to be a difficult thing to work through with some of, say for example, the Greens' traditional supporters but -

Ms O'CONNOR - I don't think you can box our traditional supporters like that -

Ms WEBB - Most of them value democracy though, so there probably will be opposed to it.

Ms O'CONNOR - A very diverse group.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Basically, what we're hoping to do through the development assessment panel process is set up a process whereby people looking to do things like this will be able to have their proposal judged on its merits as it stands with the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, and have an expert review so that there's a bit more certainty, a bit more of a clear framework for those kind of proposals.

Ms O'CONNOR - We can get into that in Planning, though -

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and we'll work through that -

Ms O'CONNOR - because there's other questions at the table, I'm sure.

Mr ELLIS - but to be honest that is one of the ways forward. This was approved by expert planners and knocked backed by local councillors. I'll pass to the team if there's any update in terms of Argyle Street that we have happen to have to hand.

Mr GILMOUR - It's been green-lighted. So they were able to negotiate an outcome. Yes. So it occurred last month. I don't think there has been a significant amount of media but there certainly been some stories on it.

Ms O'CONNOR - I certainly didn't see it.

Ms WEBB - The process played out. Democracy worked.

Mr ELLIS - But it does get delayed and that's part of the frustration with some of these processed where they then have to go to court. Then they have to spend more money and all that sort of stuff.

Ms WEBB - Sometimes communities get to have a say, which is a good thing in building their communities, and things can often be negotiated. That's often what happens when things go to appeal, actually, and things end up being built and everyone's happier in the end. We didn't cause division.

DEPUTY CHAIR - And your question, because we only have 20 minutes left.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I'm going to zero in on an area I'm particularly interested in and want to understand in terms of funding profile in this budget. Youth crisis accommodation: I particularly want to go down to the granularity of the worker model for places like Colville Place, which is crisis and transition accommodation for highly vulnerable young people. It has always been a single-worker model which is highly inappropriate for the worker and for the kids in those places. Are we funding them under this budget to be at minimum a two-worker model.

Mr ELLIS - We provide significant funding for youth homelessness services. There is a range of different services that are -

Ms WEBB - Yes. I didn't as about all of the rest of them. I'm interested in the worker model, knowing we've got a limited time.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. As I say, there's a range of different services that are provided including three youth [inaudible] processes as well. In terms of specific with staffing, I'll pass to the team from Homes Tas.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're currently working to understand some of the outcomes of the budget, but there was no clear funding for that in the budget provided.

Ms WEBB - So we're not funding anything greater than a single-worker model in an ongoing way under this budget?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - What I don't understand is how each of the youth homelessness providers are funded at the moment and how they arrange their staffing. I want to look at that.

Mr ELLIS - I understand as well, Ms Webb, and this is the advice that I've received, that they're self-funded to date in relation to the services in regard to the two-to-one model.

Ms WEBB - Yes, they've had to dip into their own funding that they've got through either philanthropy or fundraising as a short-term fix to make sure their workers and the kids in the service are safe, minister, because the state's not funding them enough. I don't understand - just to get back to the comment from Ms Morgan-Thomas - why is there a lack of clarity about the funding of these services? It's funded through Homes Tas via Housing Connect; I presume. Is that correct, or is it funded separately to -

Mr ELLIS - On the first matter, philanthropic donations to support people in our community are a well-understood way of providing support to our community.

Ms WEBB - It's a great way to put a cherry on top. It shouldn't be core.

Mr ELLIS - That significant funding - we have a range of different organisations in our state and that's how they were set up, that's how they want to operate, and that's how they deliver their services.

Ms WEBB - It's not by choice, minister, that Colony had to fund it that way.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to Homes Tas if there's anything further to update.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Just to clarify, they're not funded through Housing Connect. There is a separate line.

Ms WEBB - But from Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - They may get funding from other sources. I'm not sure.

Ms WEBB - Sorry for this. For Colville Place though, primary funding is from Homes Tasmania?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Although it does say it's self-funded on their website. So they must have funding from other sources. Not all the youth homelessness services operate on exactly the same model because we haven't delivered a cookie-cutter funding approach. When I say I want to look at that, I am unclear what we specifically fund them for and whether any of them are already delivering a two-worker model. I'm not sure. I want to look at that.

Ms WEBB - Under the funding from Homes Tasmania. I put it to you that none of them are funded to be a two-worker model under Homes Tasmania and that is irresponsible of the state to continue that arrangement under this budget. I don't think you can open up a fish and chip shop with less than two workers for safety reasons. I don't see why you should be in charge of up to eight or nine highly vulnerable early teens with one worker in place at all times. It's utterly irresponsible.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, I think we've provided the information that that staffing is available. It was provided as part of -

Ms WEBB - No. Colony has had to backfill that with their own funding simply to make their workers safe, minister, because you've underfunded them.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, it's important to note, because we're talking about vulnerable people, that it is a two-to-one model. Some of the funding for that comes from the organisation that provides the funding. In terms of what's provided, the advice that we have is that it's a two-one model.

Ms WEBB - Yes. Because they're only funded for one worker, which isn't safe. They've had to do that because they're underfunded.

Mr ELLIS - It's a philanthropic organisation. Like a lot of philanthropic organisations they also receive -

Ms WEBB - Colony 47 has been open about talking about this, minister. Have you spoken with Diane Underwood about this and the need for funding?

Mr ELLIS - I'm aware of the matter. I've spoken with Diane Underwood and our government continues to work through it. I know the Minister for Children and Young People has also had conversations in this area as well. It's an area that we take really seriously and we're always keen to continue to work with our partners around. Yes, it is important that we're accurate in terms of the arrangements.

Ms WEBB - Minister, you didn't attend, I don't think, the event that Colony hosted here in Parliament House, this building, just across the way, during Homelessness Week during August, where they spoke about youth homelessness and spoke about the urgency of addressing this two-worker model issue in places like Colville Place that they run, and the need for government funding to do that. They were literally here in our building telling us that that's what they needed. You weren't there, I don't think.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - No, I wasn't. I had another appointment.

Ms WEBB - No. But surely, you've heard that directly from them already, have you not?

Mr ELLIS - And I've just said before, Ms Webb, so I think the kind of verballing politics stuff is not really necessary here.

Ms WEBB - It's nothing about that. I feel like you're verballing me, minister and verballing them, because they have always been clear that they need this funding.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As I said, Ms Webb, we're continuing to work with our partners in this space. We've got a really strong commitment through the commission of inquiry to doing even more to ensure that children in Tasmania are safe. We'll continue to work through delivering the recommendation of the commission of inquiry, but also a range of other areas so we can make sure that all organisations in Tasmania are child safe.

CHAIR - Thank you, Ms Webb.

Ms ARMITAGE - Perhaps a supplementary on a single area.

CHAIR - Very supplementary because we've got to get out of here and into 4.2.

Ms ARMITAGE - Okay, a similar area. Do you have involvement with Malana in Launceston?

Mr ELLIS - Malana House? Yes, I'll pass to the team from - sorry, a question specifically?

Ms ARMITAGE - Pretty much along the same lines. I am wondering about their funding and how many staff they have, or how much you fund them for.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I'll look to the -

Ms ARMITAGE - I think it was more youth but obviously the member for Nelson has prompted me to ask you a question about Malana.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I will go to the team at Homes Tas in regard to the particular arrangements. We may not have visibility of their staff numbers and things like that.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, but I'm wondering what you actually fund them for.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I'll have to take that on notice. Sorry, I know Malana and I know where it is, I just don't know whether we are fully providing -

Ms ARMITAGE - You care for the building? You do the maintenance and things on the building?

Ms STONE - I can help there.

Ms ARMITAGE - It probably needs a little bit more, I might add. I live three doors along, and it could do with a bit more work.

Ms STONE - Malana House is the northern version operated by YFCC for under-16's youth at risk centres.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, it is.

Ms STONE - We spoke about Colony 47's Colville in the south. We do fund them. I am looking at the grant funding, but I don't have that at hand.

Ms ARMITAGE - Okay. I will put it on notice.

CHAIR - Thank you. We will now move to 4.2, which is the Tasmanian Planning Commission. Is there any change required?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Just a brief suspension of the broadcast while we just change anyone that needs to at the table, thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Okay, much appreciated.

The Committee suspended from 3.50 p.m. to 3.53 p.m.

**DIVISION 5
(Department of Justice)**

Minister for Housing and Planning

**Output group 4
Regulatory and other services**

4.2 Tasmanian Planning Commission

CHAIR - Thank you. We are back on air, minister. In regards to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, obviously a large body of work ahead of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. Can you give us any indication of whether that budget is adequate?

Mr ELLIS - Actually, I will introduce the people at the table.

CHAIR - Do that first. Thank you, I am trying to save time.

Mr ELLIS - Claire Hynes, acting commissioner, Tasmanian Planning Commission; and Ross Smith, deputy secretary, Department of Justice.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. I am interested in an efficiency dividend and also a body of work ahead of the planning commission.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - I will pass to Mr Smith shortly with regards to the efficiency dividend. We will note that, like all government departments, Planning will be working through the efficiency dividend. It applies broadly across the board, but the Tasmanian Planning Commission has completed a significant body of work in terms of the broad roll-out of a range of different policies for the government and will continue to support them in that process. I will turn to Mr Smith in terms of the efficiencies.

Mr SMITH - In terms of the efficiency dividend we have two components for the commission. One represents \$100 000, because we have found over the last few years that the commission's revenue that it is entitled to be able to claim, through things like major projects, is more than adequate to be able to offset and we are able to find an efficiency of \$100 000 a year. Then there is a general efficiency for 2024-25 of \$38 566, which we believe again should be able to be achieved within the commission with no impact on its statutory responsibilities.

CHAIR - Right. And with a 4000-page proposal on the desk of the TPC, how do you arrive at how much it is to actually lodge that assessment? How has that worked out?

Mr ELLIS - Are we talking funds, or pages of complexity, that sort of thing?

CHAIR - Well, to actually lodge it, because it is fee for service, obviously -

Mr ELLIS - Sure, okay.

CHAIR - So how is that determined?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass to Ms Hynes to give an understanding of that.

Ms HYNES - Certainly. You are referring to the major project - sorry, project of state significance -

CHAIR - Yes. That's the only one I know that's 4000 pages.

Ms HYNES - There are others with lots of pages too. There are certainly -

CHAIR - Probably not 4000.

Ms HYNES - Yes. You're correct, in this project of state significance, as similar to the legislation for major projects, the fees are payable - the assessment fees, staff time taken by the proponent. Is your question more like how is that funded?

CHAIR - How do you determine how much that you ask for?

Ms HYNES - We issue rolling invoices as time goes on. So I mean -

CHAIR - So it is not an upfront payment?

Ms HYNES - No, no. We couldn't foreshadow what that would be at the start.

CHAIR - Hence my question.

Ms HYNES - Yes, I understand.

CHAIR - How do you actually assess how much is likely to be paid.

Ms HYNES - Yes.

CHAIR - So the proponent doesn't have any idea, really, how much it is going to cost?

Ms HYNES - No.

CHAIR - Okay, all right.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. That reminds me of a story that Walker Corporation still owes the State of Tasmania nearly three quarters of a million dollars for the Ralphs Bay POSS assessment. Hopefully we are not left with the same over the stadium's POSS assessment - oh, that's right, the state is the proponent.

Minister, I want to talk to you about the excellent work that was undertaken by the Tasmanian Planning Commission, and that is the state of the environment report. It is great to have the acting head of the commission here and, on behalf of the Greens, express our gratitude that this report is done. It would be good to understand the level of work that went into this, the process of engaging with government departments, if there is any difficulty in getting any information out of agencies and where to from here?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms O'Connor. Yes, I was pleased to table the state of the environment report in parliament. It has been a long time coming, and -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. Two statutory deadlines missed - you knew I was going to say that, but it's true.

Mr ELLIS - Well, yes. A couple of months just to make sure that it was as good a document as it could be with some data consolidation and things like that. But yes, I acknowledge that it has been 2009 since the last one was done.

I appreciate the work of the commission. I also acknowledge the important role of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment contributing data and reviewing reports for 17 of the indicators, as well as providing input through the preparation of case studies and other feedback where appropriate. It is an important means of documenting baseline environmental data, trends and risks across Tasmania. It is a significant body of work. With that I will pass to Ms Hynes to give a bit of a sense of that work.

Ms HYNES - Thank you. When the commission receives a direction from the minister to prepare it, and by 30 June this year - and I will come to why we had that two month extension in a moment - we got to work straight away. We initiated a steering committee that was formed by three commissioners that form part of the commission membership. We employed a director, a state of the environment report, and we had other internal staff that assisted with that.

We worked very hard to establish a project plan to work with all government agencies that were relevant - it wasn't just government agencies, of course. We went broad and wide,

and all relevant organisations, including the university. A key part of the process was we contracted a team of six - or six teams, rather, of expert authors. All that information is in volume 2 of the state of the environment report. They were from private consulting firms and the University of Tasmania. They were the ones that investigated those appropriate environmental indicators under those six themes that are identified in the report.

Essentially, we went through a quality assurance process. The expert authors were chosen for their experience and their independence, and the work they have achieved in their professional lives to have that credibility. Part of that work was we leaned on them heavily to review the data and determine what was reliable, what wasn't and why it wasn't, and yes, to come up with - yes. I hope I have answered your question, or do you -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, you have, thank you. So, minister, on 16 of the 29 indicators in the report, there is evidence of environmental decline and some it is very significant. I understand this is not your sole area of responsibility, but we had a reasonably good exchange this morning over the threat of global heating. You would have read this report by now, minister. What do you think should happen to it from here?

Mr ELLIS - You are right, there are some climate change matters, there are some localised environmental matters as well, and it is important that we work through it. It is a significant document: over 600 pages. We are working through it at a whole-of-government level around the response. The Premier and his team in DPAC, as well as strongly supported by the secretary of NRE, to deliver the response to the report and its recommendations.

As you mentioned, there are a couple of matters that relate to me directly in terms of planning and fire management. More broadly, we are working through at a whole-of-government level so that we can adequately respond to it and provide the response to the recommendations for the community.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, minister. So over the past decade what the report tells us is that decline has been fairly constant across a range of indicators. You are in Cabinet. Do you understand that business as usual would just continue that environmental decline, and five years from now there will be another state of the environment report that tells us a worse story if we don't take it seriously now?

Mr ELLIS - There are some matters in the state of the environment report that are strongly within our control as a community in Tasmania to take action on. There are other matters that are broader and relating to global climate change, as you mentioned, as our warming -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I 100 per cent get that, but it is about we can control.

Mr ELLIS - No, absolutely. The Premier has had a strong involvement, for example, with NRM and our natural resource management bodies in Tasmania, and looking for those really practical ways that we can address some of the challenges that we've got in managing our natural environment while also getting the balance right when it comes to jobs and the economy, which are important.

Ms O'CONNOR - We clearly haven't got the balance right, though, have we? If you look at the indicators we just haven't got the balance right, because the environment is in decline.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned, we're working through the recommendations. We'll have more of an update to provide to parliament and the community as we go through that. It is a whole-of-government piece of work, but -

Ms O'CONNOR - Back to the question, do you accept, as the report makes clear, that business as usual is not an option?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through and we need to get the -

Ms O'CONNOR - You think business as usual is an option?

Mr ELLIS - We need to get the balance right when it comes to jobs and the economy -

Ms O'CONNOR - But we haven't.

Mr ELLIS - and when it comes to our natural environment. Certainly, if you look at, say, some of the ways - some of the improving practices that we're seeing in Tasmania in a whole range of different areas, there has been -

Ms O'CONNOR - Not many.

Mr ELLIS - some considerable success, which is encouraging. We also need to be investing in things like renewable energy generation, which I know is an area that we don't necessarily see eye-to-eye on with some of the projects.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm sure we'd agree on a lot more than we would disagree, except that putting 100 turbines on an internationally significant bird habitat is really destructive and there are plenty of better places to put turbines. I am disappointed not to hear you say that you accept business as usual is not an option, because it is so clear. If we can't have government and ministers understanding that basic fact, we're going to be looking at another state of the environment report in five or 10 years' time and be totally depressed. We've got a short time in this job, Mr Ellis, all of us, and surely you would agree we need to do whatever we can to make the place better while we have the positions that we do.

Mr ELLIS - I appreciate the advice, Ms O'Connor, and -

Ms O'CONNOR - And you'll ignore it.

Mr ELLIS - Well, no. I'll just reiterate what I said before: this is an important body of work. It's considerable analysis and as a government we -

Ms O'CONNOR - Tedious repetition.

Mr ELLIS - Well, you ask the same question, you'll get the same answer.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, I didn't get an answer.

Mr ELLIS - As a government we're - well, we're considering it, and it's important that we get it right.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, you're not, clearly.

Ms WEBB - I'm really interested in the 'getting in right' bit when it comes to the state of environment reports. Following on from the discussion, obviously it's good to have one finally. It's confronting, it's very overdue. My line of questioning on it is around, are you aware, minister, of the October 2020 independent review of the commission conducted by Professor Roberta Ryan and Mr Alex Lawrie, who found the commission is not the appropriate body to undertake the state of the environment reporting? That was a matter of discussion for quite some time. The TPC didn't get funded to do it and there was a lot of agreement from different sides that they weren't necessarily the right body. Were you aware of that independent review?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I was aware of the review. I would say quite clearly that this is a really strong report, and I think -

Ms WEBB - I'm not criticising this report. I think it's great that it's being done.

Mr ELLIS - Well, this was the body that did the report.

Ms WEBB - No, so if I could continue with my question. I wanted to check if you were aware of that review that -

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I think we discussed it on Monday as part of our hearings, yes.

Ms WEBB - Yes. I agree, it was good to actually progress this iteration of the state environment report promptly. Given that it was a statutory requirement of the TPC, it fitted best to do it quickly within that context still. I have no criticism of this report at this time on that level.

My questions are looking forward. What I'm interested to hear from you, minister, is, given that when I look at the footnote in the budget paper for item 4.2, which is on page 168 - footnote 14 appears later at page 170 - it states that the decrease in allocation for the commission is due to the conclusion of the 2024 state of the environment report. I'm interested to see, is it a correct assumption, then, that funding has not been allocated in this Budget and across the forward Estimates towards the commencement and the production of the next state of the environment report, knowing we're on a five-year cycle for them under the current statute and last time they didn't get funded?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, it's a little bit like saying on Boxing Day that we have 364 days until Christmas.

Ms WEBB - Sure.

Mr ELLIS - We literally only just handed it down and five years is beyond the forward Estimates. Of course, now that we've worked through this process, it's important that we deliver it every five years. I have been asked even in this parliament by people, 'What are you doing handing down the state of the environment report?' It is probably a strange bit of our

legislation that the Planning minister is the one to receive it, because that's sort of basically my only role as far as the process. It's something that is worth having a discussion on.

We had a really good discussion, too, in the other place about some of the opportunities that modern technology might mean in terms of the future of these kind of snapshot reports. I have some experience in handing down the state of the forest report in a previous role as well. We've had some big discussions around rather than doing a point in time report that's actually outdated even from the day that you hand it down, just the nature of data, that perhaps you would be better off finding a way to do more contemporaneous data provision so that that information is available for everyone to see all the time. It wouldn't be real-time, but certainly keeping it updated.

I provided some advice to Mr Bayley about federal-state partnerships that we're working through on that ongoing data provision. It is better for all of us in being able to do the right thing in getting the balance right with jobs and the economy and the environment that we understand what's going on. You can't manage what you can't measure. The more information we're able to bring to bear in a timely manner, the better we're going to be able to do our jobs.

Ms O'CONNOR - Are you going to advocate for that funding?

Ms WEBB - I agree. I agree with that, minister.

Mr ELLIS - We're continuing to work through it.

Ms WEBB - If you could just stay with my line of questioning, if we don't mind, so I get through it. I agree with that, and my line of questioning here is a constructive one looking ahead, because I think it's a really important time for us to look ahead. I'm glad you confirmed that we do definitely want to see the next one in five years. It is great that there's agreement on that. My question is around whether you -

Mr ELLIS - And whether it's a future planning minister I don't know, but that's - yes.

Ms WEBB - Well, here's my question to you. My question to you, minister, is whether you and your government, if you take it forward to them, would consider and maybe consult on, well in advance, amending the relevant sections of the *State Policies and Projects Act*, which currently requires it to be with the TPC, and look to set up a potentially more appropriate arrangement to be determined through consultation to transfer responsibility of the state of environment report to an entity that might - other states, for example, some have it with the EPA, some have it with a purpose-created state of environment unit within one of their agencies. There are various options. But it sits with someone that would be seen to be the appropriate entity by many and we wouldn't have a question about, 'Well, why is the Planning minister delivering a state of environment?' Will you commit to taking that forward as a proactive conversation to have so that we can plan into the next five-year iteration?

Mr ELLIS - It is definitely a worthwhile conversation for us to have. Certainly, in the lead-up to the future state of the environment, it's absolutely a discussion worth having. I have to say one of the strengths of the TPC delivering this work is that they are independent and -

Ms WEBB - Yes, it does need to be independent, which is why I think the other states - Victoria and the ACT use an autonomous state of environment unit that they set up, so with

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independent, and Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Commonwealth use their EPA model, which again in each instance is independent.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, it's not. It's not independent here, Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - I agree that we would look ahead to thinking about how to place it independently. Knowing that legislative change is required for this to occur potentially, I'd be really happy to hear your commitment to begin and participate in those conversations at an early stage.

Mr ELLIS - I definitely have an open mind if it helps to deliver a better product. Ultimately, that's if we make - if we make any change, will it deliver a better product? Those are the questions that we'll all need to ask ourselves as part of it. I've got an open mind. I really thank the TPC for the work that they've done and provided to government.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Don't tempt them to contract it out to the private sector, Ms Webb.

Ms WEBB - I'm certainly not.

Ms O'CONNOR - Especially on the quality of what we've got here from the TPC.

Ms WEBB - My question has absolutely not suggested that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. But it would be a temptation.

Ms WEBB - And it's been quite clear that I'm asking for a consultation process to look ahead to help form up what might be a more appropriate entity.

CHAIR - The minister has given us an indication that he has an open mind.

Mr GAFFNEY - I'd like to follow that up, because it's important. The recommendations from that report in 2020 are very good and really clear. It's definitely not anything adverse towards the TPC with all they do. I think that report needs to be revisited, and I support the member for Nelson, because the recommendations are clearly saying, 'This is good. What the TPC is doing is really good, but this is what we could do better'. It is not suggesting a way of operating. It is suggesting a way of readdressing that. I am sure the TPC has had discussions about that report and about a way forward. I take the suggestion from Ms Webb in that light, certainly not suggesting that the TPC hasn't done a good job, but is there a better way of this happening?

CHAIR - That's the question: is there a better way?

Ms WEBB - Thank you for that exchange.

CHAIR - I am mindful that we are going to break at 20 past 4 for 10 minutes. Are there any questions, Ms Webb, in State Planning Office, thank you.

DIVISION 9

(Department of Premier and Cabinet)

Minister for Housing and Planning

Output group 6

Local government

6.2 State Planning Office

Ms WEBB - Let me have a look. I have a State Planning Office.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - I will switch - they have to change teams?

CHAIR - Thank you. Thursday afternoons are - you need to get in in the morning. See if you can organise it for next year.

Mr ELLIS - You can see my confusion on one of your previous questions, Ms O'Connor. I have actually got three departments that I juggle in terms of housing and planning.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I can.

CHAIR - Okay. So state planning. Thank you, Ms Webb.

Mr ELLIS - Again, we have Mr Matt Healey, deputy secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet; and Mr Sean McPhail, acting director of the State Planning Office.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Minister, the budget papers detail a significant drop, it looks like, in funding for the State Planning Office from \$3.6 million in 2023-24 to just \$2.4 million in 2024-25. This is at a time of when investment in strategic land use planning for housing, appropriate transport corridors and other issues has never been greater, really, for our state. The question I have is, are you aware that stakeholders - including LGAT, for example - have requested via their budget submissions that the significance of the government's role in administering the planning framework is recognised by increasing funding to the state government planning functions? Are you aware of that?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We've had a good discussion on this. The 2024-25 budget provides \$2.388 million for the State Planning Office. It is a reduction of \$1.223 million from the prior financial year.

Ms WEBB - It's a big cut.

Mr ELLIS - The decrease is attributed to the completion of the 2021-22 budget initiative, regional annual strategies, which had \$1.5 million allocated in 2023-24, and a decrease of \$200 000 for funding allocated to the planning system reforms, which provided \$385 000 in 2024-25. There is, in this budget, new funding of \$300 000 for supporting critical major projects and strategic regional development and a rollover of \$180 000 for the State Planning

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Office subdivision review. A key part of the change, as well, Ms Webb, is the statewide planning scheme work effectively winding up over the -

Ms WEBB - I was going to ask if those things are finished. Like the regional energy strategy and the state planning policy stuff?

Mr ELLIS - The statewide planning system is coming to its completion. We have 24 councils on board with five to go, and all those are - yes, strongly in the pipeline, I would say. We are moving from the big work to establish that statewide planning scheme to the more ongoing persistent maintenance work. With that, I will pass to Mr McPhail to add to my remarks.

CHAIR - I do have a couple of other questions waiting, thank you.

Mr McPHAIL - Thank you, minister. The budget really does reflect the change and transition of roles of the State Planning Office, from building the system to the maintenance and the implementation phase. From the previous budgets there has been a considerable amount of money committed into the regional land use strategy review work. A lot of that is all of the work going into the background studies and things like residential demand and supply studies, local strategic planning work, even money committed into the Great Hobart Plan work as well over various years. So there has been a significant amount of money committed into that to basically provide that evidence base and baseline data to do those reviews.

Ms WEBB - The \$300 000 that is there to support major projects, can you describe what that is focused on?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We will be continuing to do some work in the policy space around this. We have certainly had some big interest for our major projects pathway. That is obviously Bridgewater bridge initially, but now we are seeing more proponents keen to utilise that pathway. I will pass to Mr McPhail to give a sense of some of that.

Mr McPHAIL - Thank you, minister. It is part of the policy work in that space, but also the work that we undertake in terms of the eligibility phase of the process, too. The State Planning Office supports the minister in providing advice on whether it is appropriate to declare a major project. Obviously we are receiving an increasing number of those proposals coming through there, so that helps us support that work as well.

Ms WEBB - Perhaps you could detail the number of proposals that are coming through that pipeline that require that work so we understand what the allocation - because I was trying to drill in to see what's that allocation going to be actually working on?

Mr McPHAIL - Obviously we are receiving a number of renewable energy projects. Declarations that have been made so far relate to North East Wind, the Bridgewater bridge being the first one, through to Whaleback Ridge, and the most recent one is the Bell Bay proposal. So there is - obviously one that we are looking at at the moment in terms of the renewal of the Kangaroo Bay Hotel proposal. There are also additional renewable projects that have been discussing coming into this process, but haven't actually submitted the proposals to us. I think everyone is probably aware about the SunCable proposal as well, that has an interest in that, but we are yet to receive a proposal for that. We undertake a lot of work, sort of preparatory, even before those proposals are lodged with the minister.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. I was going to ask about urban growth boundary and where that's at. Perhaps an update would be the best way to start.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, this is part of the Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy. We are continuing to work with our partner councils in the south around that process. Certainly, our government has had a really strong forward-leaning posture around ensuring that the urban growth boundary is fit for purpose. Well, you would know, in your former municipality -

Mr EDMUNDS - Well, the last minister to tick it off was Bryan Green. That's a long time ago.

Mr ELLIS - Well, a big change in terms of Droughty Point and a range of those other anomalies that are unlocked, a little over a dozen different major and minor parcels of land around the south here. Ensuring that we have our growth along established infrastructure corridors and pipelines is really important. I will pass to Mr McPhail to provide an update on the Southern Regional Land Use Strategy link.

Mr McPHAIL - Sure. There has been a fair bit of work gone into the preparation of this and there have been amendments made to the urban growth boundary over the years to the Southern Regional Land Use Strategy. A lot of the work around the demand and supply study, as well as the Greater Hobart plan work provides that evidence-base around identifying the appropriate location for that urban growth boundary. There is a fair bit of work being established. There is a state of play report that has recently been made available for the southern region, which is available on their website that they have set up. Also, we are working quite closely with the coordinator that we have funded to coordinate that work as well as the 12 councils in the region to examine what changes need to be made.

Obviously, we need to be looking at creating a balance between in-fill and greenfield development. That was a key focus of the Greater Hobart Plan, which represents a portion of Greater Hobart. It is working with a range of other councils like Brighton and Sorell, and also the other councils that feed into that Greater Hobart Area.

Mr ELLIS - I might as well mention - and did you have more to add, there, Sean?

Mr McPHAIL - I was going to mention as part of that work there was a settlement strategy that is being worked up, and that was a key commitment out of the Greater Hobart Plan. That is really the evidence base to bring forward any changes that are made to the urban growth boundary so that we can plan for the future.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. And to put on record as well, any changes to the Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy Urban Growth Boundary which are required to give effect to the settlement plan will be implemented as part of the comprehensive review. This includes parcels currently under consideration and/or identified as possible growth areas outside the boundary, such as land at Margate and Lauderdale/Sandford.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thanks for that answer, by the way. You took about three more I had, so I appreciate that.

CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, one very sharp question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Minister, did the State Planning Office provide you with advice that the State Coastal Policy Validation Bill was necessary in order to support or facilitate the North East Wind project, which is also an ACEN project.

Mr ELLIS - North East Wind? Probably the first point to start is the state coastal policy is actually administered by the Premier -

Ms O'CONNOR - I understand that.

Mr ELLIS - and then the minister for Environment is the lead on it. So it is not really an area that I administer, but while the State Planning Office is -

Ms O'CONNOR - But you'd have been briefed on it.

Mr ELLIS - But while the State Planning Office is here, I am happy to see if there is any information that we can provide to you on that one.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's fine. I actually don't think we should trouble Sean with it. This is a question to you. Were you provided with advice by your state planning advisers that the State Coastal Policy Validation Bill was necessary in order to facilitate wharf development for the North East Wind project?

Mr ELLIS - No.

CHAIR - Okay. Thanks, Sean, apologies for not giving you a longer time to shine. You did a really good job in the time you had.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm sure you're not sorry.

CHAIR - We shall break for a very brief eight minutes. Back before 25 to 5 for the last part of today's session. Thank you.

The committee suspended from 4.24 p.m. to 4.34 p.m.

**Division 10
(Department of State Growth)**

Minister for Skills and Training

**Output Group 3
Skills, Training and Workforce**

3.1 Skills and Workforce Growth

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Welcome back, minister, and we'll launch straight into your area of Minister for Skills and Training, which also covers off TasTAFE. Do you have anything to provide to the community in the way of a brief overview?

Mr ELLIS - I certainly do.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - I'll just introduce the people at the table.

CHAIR - That's always a given.

Mr ELLIS - To my right, Jenna Cairney, acting deputy secretary, business and jobs, Department of State Growth; Alexandra Paterson, general manager, skills and workforce; and Stuart Hollingsworth, director, Jobs Tasmania.

CHAIR - Welcome.

Mr ELLIS - To my left, Dr Anthony Reid, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

CHAIR - Yes, who's not taking any questions. This is called the graveyard shift.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

CHAIR - We try and make it as painless as possible. Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. Not to reflect on the importance of the skills and training portfolio because it's been another busy period in this portfolio and we've been focused on making sure Tasmanians can access the training that they need to get a job. The Budget delivers support for TasTAFE, which trains more than 20,000 people every year, and continues our strong, contestable training program that's delivering great outcomes. TasTAFE has had new facilities come online in recent times: The Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence, the Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Freer Farm, and a cyber security training facility. There's more to come with learning hubs and accommodation.

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

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

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister. Just an overview question if I might. Just in regard to - you said accommodation in some initiatives to come.

Mr ELLIS - That's right.

CHAIR - You didn't mention that wonderful skill of tiling. I still can't find a tiler for love nor money. When are we going to start looking at all aspects of building? I know we've done some, but that's one that's very much needed.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely. So quickly on accommodation, it's things like the Burnie accommodation for TasTAFE. As people travel to receive training they often stay, and particularly when we're talking centres of excellence it's important that we establish good ones and that they are attractive places to be.

CHAIR - Right. For an agriculture apprenticeship type of arrangement or traineeship?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that's right, or other things as well. So, for example, down here in the south we've got accommodation at Clarence. If you want to go and study at the water and energy trade centre of excellence perhaps you might stay onsite there. There's a range of different opportunities. In allied building trades, I couldn't agree more. It's part of the reason why we've continued to expand the High-Vis Army so that we can bring in more parts of the construction industry.

Some of those building trades are difficult to find. You mentioned tilers, bricklayers as well is an area that needs significant workforce renewal, because it can be quite a physically-demanding job. We must continue to invest in training opportunities for those trades people, is really important. When we get TasTAFE to the table we'll talk more about some of the important work we've got going on there.

CHAIR - So industry. You're working with industry. Are these the ones that industry is saying, 'This is what we need'?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. So that's been a really core focus of ours when it comes to the skills and training space, is we want to have skills for jobs. That means we need to work with the people who are providing those jobs so that we can figure out the skills needed. That's why we think the High-Vis Army has been so successful as a concept where basically we work with industry associations to help facilitate them to take ownership of key parts of the skills and training and workforce growth challenges that they've got.

Because often those industry bodies have the best networks, they have - they're able to leverage great capability and they're also able to identify some of the best people in industry that might be keen to take the next step in their career and train up the next generation. So that's an example from the construction space. A good example from, say, for example, agriculture is the work that we've done to deliver the Freer Farm upgrades where we've worked really closely with local industry, particularly in the north-west, and thanks to Mike Badcock and his team.

Mike is a local farmer from Forth and has been very engaged in agriculture workforce for many, many years. That steering committee has really helped the agricultural centre of excellence to become what it is. Without industry we're flying blind and with industry we're able to really leverage some great partnerships. I pass over to the team from Skills Tas if there's anything further to update on or provide on that.

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Ms PATERSON - Yes. Through you, minister. I'd just probably add that the Commonwealth government has also recently invested in an extension of a fee-free TAFE related training specifically to construction. We haven't finalised the details of that implementation plan yet, but we'd be looking to include allied trades as part of that fee-free TAFE offering for next year.

CHAIR - I noticed as I was driving in on the highway - I come from the north of the state and there's a big sign up saying 'free TAFE', so - but we actually don't know what's free as yet, or there's some skills but we don't know what they all are going to be. Is that right?

Mr ELLIS - It's a new round. It's a new round.

CHAIR - It's a new round.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. There's an additional new round in addition to the 12-month skills agreement from last year which provided fee-free places for this year, and we'll do so again for next year. There's a specific targeted construction on top of that.

CHAIR - Okay. You've got a very soft voice. If you could move that little microphone over. Thank you. Mr Edmunds, you had a follow-up question.

Mr EDMUNDS - No, it wasn't a follow-up.

CHAIR - You go as well.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay. I think I'm in the right - well, there's no other outputs left. I just wanted to ask - sorry.

CHAIR - Was your over -

Mr EDMUNDS - No, no, it wasn't. Sorry.

CHAIR - Sorry. Mine was an overview question.

Mr EDMUNDS - Just on the list at least, yes. Sorry.

CHAIR - So Ms Armitage, and then I'll come back to you, Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, no dramas.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. I might have an overview and then mine, if that's all right.

CHAIR - Of course. Thursday.

Ms ARMITAGE - Final day. Thank you. Just talking about courses, I had a business owner of an upholstery business calling recently just going past. You know, 'You've got the name on the door.' Saw me, came in and very upset. 'You've got your name on half the corner.' 'Yes.' Well, I haven't quite finished yet.

Mr ELLIS - The Rosemary Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes. That's it. But anyway, as I was saying, he stopped trying to find an upholsterer for his business. He said TAFE had not had upholstery courses for - I had an idea. He said 10 years or something like that. Might've even been longer. But, you know, with obviously upholstery it is not something that's going away. I mean, look, we don't want to buy everything from China and we can't afford necessarily to buy from the tradesmen that make the beautiful furniture and, you know, might be \$400 or \$500 a chair.

So how are we going with things like upholstery TAFE? As the member for McIntyre says, we need tilers. I have a son who's a builder that does tiling, but takes a huge toll on your back, and particularly being bent over and heavy tiles, so I can understand why they don't do that. But upholstery, the fact that we're not - I'm assuming that he was telling me a fact. He was desperately trying to find an upholsterer and said they were very hard to find.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - But there were no courses.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass over to the team from Skills Tas about what we do with small thin markets in terms of training, because there are a range of different trades and courses that have only small numbers of people, and we still want to make sure that people get great training when they do that. So often that means supporting people to find training courses that suit them. I'll pass over very shortly. We're going through a large skills and labour shortage as a country.

Ms ARMITAGE - We can't have everyone going to university. I know it sounds great, but how many university people are driving cabs and Ubers particularly?

Mr ELLIS - It's not necessarily the right outcome for those people, you know. I think the country is waking up to the fact that you don't need to go to university to have great opportunities in life.

Ms ARMITAGE - You make more money as a tradie.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - I never finished uni. Sorry. Too busy having fun.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, we won't go there.

Mr ELLIS - When you think about some of the essential work in our economy and society building homes, providing food, caring for our loved ones, a lot of those things are done by people that have a vocational education rather than a university education. I will pass over to maybe Ms Paterson to talk about

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, that would be great, because his frustration was real. Now he has a business that he sells office chairs and all sorts of things, and he cannot get an upholsterer.

Ms PATERSON - Yes, thank you. Through you, minister, I am not aware of the upholstery issue in particular, but I can explain the process that we go through. We purchase training across the market, normally in response to demand. RTOs come to us through out training programs and apply for funding subsidies.

Typically, they have got a relationship with an employer in place as part of that application, and on occasion where there are gaps in the market, or a lack of providers, we do seek to provide to search for mainland providers who can then become endorsed in Tasmania and then provide training here. We also offer sort of travel and accommodation support for people who go interstate to do courses where they are not offered on island. I would certainly, yes, just encourage anybody who has noticed a gap in the training market to reach out to our team. Sorry, excuse me for one moment.

CHAIR - One of your team is reaching out to you.

Ms PATERSON - So I am aware - I have just been advised that we do have some current contracts in place for that qualification through Holmesglen, Victoria.

Ms ARMITAGE - So that's outside of TAFE, that is with other -

Ms PATERSON - Yes. That's through Holmesglen TAFE in Victoria.

Ms ARMITAGE - In Victoria?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - So we haven't got anyone in Tasmania doing it?

Mr ELLIS - And often -

Ms ARMITAGE - People often don't want to - you know, if they're a young person, don't want to go to Victoria.

Mr ELLIS - Well, that is part of providing that support. With small markets, you still want to have great teachers and often great teachers don't want to be teaching one or two people a year. They want to be utilising their skills. In some of those courses it is much better for the learner if we can support them to travel. You know, another great example, as niche as it sounds, is dental prosthetists. Prosthetists are the people that create prostheses.

Ms ARMITAGE - Prosthetists, yes, okay.

Mr ELLIS - That is a very important qualification, but there is only ever a handful of Tasmanians a year which go through that program. Our job is making sure that they are able to access great teachers and have the support that they need to do that is often the better way than establishing a course that only a couple of people use, because -

Ms ARMITAGE - Just imagine, though, minister, you are a parent of an 18-year-old, boy or girl, would you be sending them to Victoria on their own at 18 to go and do a course?

Mr ELLIS - I am very hopeful that -

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Ms ARMITAGE - You might support them in some ways, but I bet you don't look after them in other ways.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I am very hopeful that my boys will join the Police Academy and the Fire Service, so we'll be happy to keep them here.

Ms ARMITAGE - I tried that, but none of mine wanted to.

Mr ELLIS - And maybe they will become a plumber, I don't know. But yes.

CHAIR - Okay, follow-up question?

Ms ARMITAGE - On my actual line item?

CHAIR - On your actual line item.

Mr GAFFNEY - Tanya? I have a follow-up on that one.

CHAIR - On that one again? Thank you, Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - Seeing you open the door. I suppose my question is that, for example, Cert III in Community Service on the northwest coast is actually full up now until July 2025. Taking that as an example, how does TAFE see a need for a course, and how can they say, 'Okay, this is full. We need a lot of these Cert III community workers trained, but we are actually not facilitating that because the course is full'. Some of our students have to travel, I think, two days to Burnie and two days to Devonport, so there is quite a bit of a commitment.

They are committed to, but I am hearing on the grapevine that some people cannot get into that course now. It is an area that, on the northwest coast, we need more people trained in that for the future. So how does TAFE balance that to say - 'okay look' - yes. So that's the question.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I suppose it's for TAFE, but it is important in these discussions as well to recognise the broader sector, too. Because say, for example, in particular areas around the care economy, for example, one of our - a lot of students are actually receiving training from industry-led RTOs or other private RTOs that deliver services in that space.

That is what Skills Tas does, is that they purchase training to support the learners wherever they are choosing to go. We have a \$3.1 million TASCOS-led community services support package as well as part of the work that we have done, again partnering with industry. That is not always people in hardhats, that is often people - our biggest workforce challenge is in the care economy. But look, I will pass over to the team from State Growth to supply an update on the specifics.

Ms PATERSON - So I was just going to mention that, in relation to the care sector, there is obviously a number of initiatives the government has committed to in relation to that sector. We recently signed an industry skills compact, including with the early childhood education and care and also aged care. So those compacts exist to really promote and grow the

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partnerships between industry, RTOs and government, recognising that it takes all participants in the system to really provide a quality training experience for a learner in a location.

In relation to TasTAFE and the way that it delivers its courses, as the purchaser through TasTAFE we obviously - it is an important part of their role as the public provider to provide training in regional areas. That is partly why we have TAFE, to provide training to students in those areas. But in terms of the operational decisions around actual provision, I suggest that that is probably a question for the TasTAFE session.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay, okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - Okay. We will keep that one on hold. Thank you, Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. Minister, the budget papers show a significant decrease in funding and resources for skills and workforce growth over the Forward Estimates. Footnote 6 on page 357 says the decrease reflects the cessation of the National Skills and Workforce Development Pacific Payment which was replaced by the National Skills Agreement which commenced at the beginning of 2024. What is this going to mean for the future of skills and workforce growth over the coming years and decades?

Mr ELLIS - So this is actually quite a complicated administrative area, but it is largely reflective of a change in the way that the Commonwealth accounting works, that we would be able to provide an update on. We just recently signed a -

Ms ARMITAGE - Better or worse off for us?

Mr ELLIS - So we have recently signed a national skills agreement, a five-year partnership, and in our view it is a good deal for Tasmania. With the change in the way that the Commonwealth legislates the National Skills Agreement versus the specific -

Ms ARMITAGE - So you are going to explain to me what's different and how it is going to effect vocational education and training in Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and that's right. I will pass to Ms Paterson, perhaps, to talk through that. I will also flag as well, though, that there are ongoing opportunities to partner with the Commonwealth when it comes to funding. For example, if we work through with the Commonwealth around, say, Centre of Excellence funding, that gives us the opportunity to unlock further funding that is not budgeted for.

Another area is fee free TAFE which the Commonwealth is stepping further and further into, which is really good to see. Those payments are obviously things that we cannot budget for, but we continue to work with the Commonwealth on them. I will pass to Ms Paterson to explain this administrative novelty.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes. So how it is going to be different, and how it affects vocational and educational training.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. Through you, minister, this is a complicated arrangement through the National Skills Agreement. There are a few different types of funding included in that agreement, and as the minister mentioned we have shifted with signing onto the new skills

agreement from a long-term legislative arrangement to a short-term five-year agreement with the Commonwealth, and that has necessitated an adjustment to the way that it is treated in the budget papers.

But if you look at table 5.4, you can see we were coming off the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development, known as NASWAD. You can see that we are jumping up from 2023-24, which was \$36.8 million, you know, into future years to be \$47.5-\$48.3 million. There is actually an overall increase in skills and workforce funding as a part of that National Skills Agreement, but you do need to look at budget paper 1 to see that reflected there.

Ms ARMITAGE - To tie that with those?

Ms PATERSON - Yes.

CHAIR - It would be good if you could put them together.

Ms ARMITAGE - It would be lovely, wouldn't it?

CHAIR - It would be really helpful.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes. Under the National Skills Agreement, is access to the federal funding for skills and workforce, is that contingent on implementing, though, any certain policies or meeting any performance indicators?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms PATERSON - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, you go.

Ms PATERSON - The National Skills Agreement?

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

Ms PATERSON - It does require state levels of investment to remain at projected levels at the moment. The funding levels which are reflected in the budget papers there at table 5.4 reflect current expected Forward Estimates expenditure in the portfolio, so that is what we expect we will attract.

It is a bit of a complicated formula but it does scale relative to investment. Then in addition to that, which is sort of the base funding element of the agreement there is also, as the minister mentioned, an opportunity to attract additional funding for specific policy initiatives under the agreement. They will be the subject of future budget considerations.

CHAIR - Like the Centre of Excellence type of arrangements.

Mr ELLIS - The Commonwealth has some priorities which actually line up frankly really well with Tasmania. The agreement looks for emerging skills needs through a shared set of national priorities – gender equality, closing the gap, supporting net zero transformation, developing Australia's sovereign capability including advanced manufacturing skills,

sustaining essential care services, ensuring Australia's digital and technical capability, and housing.

So it's been a really productive process working through this and I think as a country we still have a long way to go in addressing the skills shortages but certainly the partnership between all the states in Australia and the Commonwealth are going to be important to address that.

Ms ARMITAGE - My last question on this area here. Have you had any feedback from Tasmanian businesses and industries with regard to Tasmania signing onto the national skills agreement?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Probably a reasonable example for us to refer to is the renewal energy centre that we have committed to in the north west. We're going through a similar process that we did with Freer Farm in terms of an industry-led steering committee that we can help leverage their expertise and understanding so that we can deliver that process. We've committed \$4 million to that build but there are some other really strong opportunities as part of that to unlock federal funding. I've had some good discussions so far with Minister Giles, who is actually originally a west coast Tasmanian and so really gets the importance of this.

Ms ARMITAGE - Down your end of the island anyway.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. The very best part of the world. But we're all lucky to be Tasmanian. But he certainly gets the importance of our state, our region and the renewable energy push that we're looking to unlock further.

Ms ARMITAGE - So good feedback from businesses and industries?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We have had good feedback. I'll pass to the team from state growth to add to that.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister. I also touch on our industry skills complex as well. We have 11 of those signed with various industries operating in the state and that's to help us build stronger connections with industry in terms of what their skills and workforce needs are for the future. What Skills Tasmania will do is to look at those compacts to help inform Tasmanian investment under the National Skills Agreement as well. So that's where we'd really try and keep those connection points and keep our finger on the pulse with what industry needs.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Just a quick follow-up to that. Those 11, are we able to understand which industry or which sectors they come from?

Ms CAIRNEY - Yes. Absolutely. They're all listed on our website.

Mr EDMUNDS - Okay.

Ms CAIRNEY - I can read them, or I won't waste your time.

Mr EDMUNDS - That's okay. Which website?

Ms CAIRNEY - They're on the Skills Tasmania website. They're all listed there, and they're all published on there as well.

Mr EDMUNDS - Fantastic. Thank you. So I do have a question – I was just reading a media release from the Premier and the education minister from 21 July regarding the Early Years Workforce Development Plan. I just wanted to ask a couple of quick questions about that if I could. Has that program commenced yet?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass over to the team from the department to provide the latest update on that one.

Ms PATERSON - Yes, thank you. Through you, minister. We have had an initial conversation with industry representatives around the approach to implementing the fund and we'll work through the details with early education and care in the coming weeks now that the budget has been confirmed.

Mr EDMUNDS - So what sort of ballpark time do you think that would be?

Ms PATERSON - I would expect that we would have grant deeds drafted sort of within this year.

Mr EDMUNDS - In 2024?

Ms PATERSON - Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. My other follow-up question to that if that's okay, was any other targeted workforce development funds intended on being established, for example will there be an aging years' workforce development plan?

Mr ELLIS - So we're obviously keen to partner with industry on a range of different areas. We mentioned the community services area before. Obviously the high-vis army itself is an industry-based workforce development plan and as we work through with our skills compacts, we've certainly had strong interest from a range of different areas and a range of different parts of our economy and society that see some opportunities in terms of that. Whether it's pathway planning, whether it's additional targeted investment skills. I pass over to the team in terms of some of those prospective areas.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister. We do have an aged services industry skills compact and that's looking at provision to implement locally focussed and led workforce planning and initiatives. It also includes partnerships with training organisations and stakeholders to build capability and support training in that space as well. I wonder, Alex, whether it's relevant to talk to the local people and to local jobs initiative in that regard or is there other background do you think in terms of the aged services area?

Ms PATERSON - One of the things I was going to mention, through you, minister, is that the most significant qualification in community services and the health sector is the

Certificate III in Individual Support. There was 1,586 learners in that in 2023 and that tends to be one of the highest funded qualifications through our annual contestable funding programs.

Mr EDMUNDS - So is it fair to say perhaps because there's such demand it doesn't necessarily need the funds as has been identified for -

Ms PATERSON - It tends to be fairly well serviced through our annual funding rounds. I think the early education and care one is a slightly different workforce attraction campaign. So it's slightly different to the training activity campaigns. As Jenna mentioned, the government in previous budgets has committed to that local people and local jobs initiatives which had some of those workforce initiatives in it for the care sector as well and in terms of aged care.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. Appreciate the answer.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms O'Connor, it's your turn to shine.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. I don't know about shining. I'm just trying to find out a little bit about workforce shortages in the care sector. In about 2017, I think it was, there was an analysis of the shortage over the next decade, and it was projected to be a shortage as I understood it or recall it, of about 10,000 workers. What kind of mapping has been undertaken to understand the extent of projected need and how does that fit. I heard before about the Cert III in Individual Support and the thousand going through it in the last year, which is great. But how does that fit with Skills Tas' focus because it's a huge area of need.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. It's the biggest for us. You know, as I mentioned before vocational education course about hard hats and high-vis but it's actually in the care sector that the biggest work needs to be done. We have an aging population. We also have for example different family structures. More women in work so that means more early childhood education and we have, you know, finally as a country recognised the importance of truly providing dignified services to people with disability.

So that's actually the fastest growing workforce component in the country is to support people with disability. We mentioned before about our industry skills compacts and that's an important way for us to continue to work together. The federal jobs and skills councils are also a – they're almost a national kind of version of that and we've developed ours largely in parallel. They do a lot of work in terms of the data provision nationally for these different workforce challenges which we have. The care sector's certainly huge in that. I'll pass to the team in terms of the workforce mapping and the work that we're doing with the industry.

Ms O'CONNOR - And what we're likely to see in projected need over the next decade.

Ms CAIRNEY - Thank you. Through you, minister. I recognise the comments previously made about the projected growth in that area. I'll touch first on the workforce development tools and resources that Skills Tasmania is looking at. So Skills Tasmania is investing in tools to support evidence-informed workforce planning. That includes an interactive labour force dashboard providing current and predicted workforce needs by region. We're working on that tool now to provide some informed data to help inform decision-making.

Another body of work that Skills Tasmania has been involved in is the development of a community of practice within the department and across agencies. That's to recognising how multi-faceted these workforce challenges are, be it from a housing perspective, a training perspective, socio-economic perspective. We're looking at common workforce issues and looking for opportunities to collaborate and innovate across different agencies. That community of practice has met twice in 2024. I might, Alex, are you able to expand on the interactive dashboard?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, briefly. I was actually trying to understand what the projection of need would be. It's good to know there's work happening.

Ms PATERSON - Thank you. Through you, minister. I don't have a number, but we certainly are doing this work through Victoria University to project relative areas of demand in terms of workforce and we are increasingly relying on the jobs and skills council. As the minister mentioned they're doing a huge amount of really deep work and analysis and doing a lot of consultation. They've recently released the Early Childhood Education Care Capacity study which has sort of a national lens, so we'll be increasingly looking at that work to inform our investment as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, and the related area is how we adapt to AI and robots taking people's jobs. Robots now working in primary production, manufacturing. Robots can write stories but really badly.

Mr ELLIS - Better than some though.

Ms O'CONNOR - But there's a whole area here of risks as well, isn't there? Because we don't want to be training people up for jobs that may become redundant in a decade. We don't want to do that to our kids or to our people. What kind of understanding and planning is there for making sure that we're channelling people into the jobs for the future that can't be taken by robots?

Mr ELLIS - It is an interesting one. Like often, you can talk about robots taking people's jobs but often technology augments people's capacity and capability.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think it's a 'yes, and'.

Mr ELLIS - It's a really interesting space because, for example, there are a whole range of nurses out there that are able to do more hands-on work because some of the paperwork is now being able to be delivered through some AI augmented capability. You know that sort of thing where we help make people a bit more efficient so that they can focus on the things that humans really need to be doing. If you look at our unemployment rate at the moment, we've had massive increases in terms of our population and our technology since, you know, 1800. There're more people employed now as technology has continued to roll through our economy.

It's a threat and an opportunity but certainly some of the big areas that we've been looking at is how can we ensure that vocational education and training is delivering digital technology skills. We mentioned before the partnership with the Commonwealth. That's a key area and TasTAFE has actually, with us, delivered a new cyber-security centre because that's certainly an emerging area of need that we all need some capability in. I'll pass to the team from state growth if there's anything further to -

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Ms O'CONNOR - And if there's any specific body of planning work that's being done here.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. Through you, minister. Probably one of the things that's really significant in this space is the national skills minister's commitment to qualifications reform. As we all know at the moment training packages can be a little bit slow to be updated and we really need training to be relevant not just for now but also increasingly into the future, to bring those technologies on board. I think that that national work around qualifications reform to ensure that those qualifications can be more agile will be really critical to ensuring that learners have a good experience going forward.

Mr ELLIS - And bringing some of that technology into our training equipment, even. So say for example yesterday I was at the Alanvale campus where they train a lot of boilermaker welders, and we just invested with TAFE in -

CHAIR - I think it's called metal fabrication now.

Mr ELLIS - Depends what they're doing, but – maybe I'm showing my age. I don't know, Chair.

Ms O'CONNOR - Hang on, I'll check. You keep going.

Mr ELLIS - Some of the investments that we're making there, not just in new welding sets but new welding simulators so that our young people are actually able to learn using welding simulated technology. They can take risks. They can get immediate feedback. They can do peer comparisons, and they don't have to waste a lot of, say for example metal, gas and all that sort of stuff to -

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just interrupt you for a second there. Sorry, minister, I think you veered of a little bit. It doesn't really sound to me like there's quite enough understanding of how rapidly AI is displacing people from their jobs. Ill just park that with you as a member of the ministerial council. But I have a particular constituent question to ask you.

I'm aware of a highly qualified theatre nurse at the Royal Hobart Hospital who is here on a 482 skills visa which expires at the end of next year. She can't have that visa renewed because she's over the age of 45. It's devastating to her because she wants to stay here. She's extremely qualified and exactly the sort of person, wouldn't you agree (audio malfunction).

Mr ELLIS - I'll just bring Renee Woodhouse to the table, if you like. She just needs a couple of minutes and then she'll come back with the answer. If we can we just give her a couple of minutes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. I'm very happy to do that and then that leads to my last question on this line of questioning, minister, which I often ask for, and that is the information on how many skilled visas have gone through state growth? The numbers by country of origin. Thank you.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister. WE have that and can table that once I find it in my folder.

Ms O'CONNOR - Great. Can I ask, is there any kind of flexibility here or can State Growth intervene? Because we have tried to help this person and it's very difficult.

Mr ELLIS - So this is skill visas and country of origin.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you very much. What can State Growth do to make sure that we're not losing someone of that capacity who we clearly need here just because they happen to be over 45?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, just give us a couple of minutes and we'll bring Rene to the table, but, yes, we'll come back.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm happy to go other questions and then Rene can come back when she's ready.

CHAIR - Point of clarification. If you were a boilermaker welder, you would receive a Certificate III in Engineering Fabrication Trade.

Mr ELLIS - Outstanding.

CHAIR - I was right.

Mr ELLIS - We have very high completion rates in Tasmania, which is good.

CHAIR - Yes, Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - I just have a couple of questions about the Renewable Energy Training Centre that was committed to. I'd just like to ask where it might be built, when we might expect it to be completed, who will run it? Will it be run by TasTAFE and whether TMEC would play a role in that. That's four questions, but I'm happy however if you want to answer it.

Mr ELLIS - No, that's cool. It was something we committed to at the election and as part of this budget fund as part of the 2030 Strong Plan. As I mentioned before it's \$4 million. It's developing a state-of-the-art industry training facility on the north west coast. We'd expect that to be in Burnie and it'll be in partnership with industry including TMEC, and it'll have a dedicated focus on renewable energy skills.

It'll be delivered by industry, and it'll be in partnership with government, support students in our region to participate in our renewable energy future and as I mentioned before as well, we're looking to leverage additional Australian government funding for the project. We've certainly been working really closely with TMEC and as part of that process. Our High Vis Army partners are also really key. National Electrical Communications Association, NECA, and our other High Vis Army partners too. I will pass over to maybe Ms Paterson for an update of where we are at.

Ms PATERSON - Yes, thank you, minister, through you. As the minister mentioned, this is an opportunity to attract some of that funding under the National Skills Agreement under the specific policy initiatives of TAFES/Centres of Excellence. With that in mind, obviously TAFE will also have a role provided that that Commonwealth funding is secured. We

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anticipate that that would be a really collaborative effort between industry and TasTAFE to look both at what training is required now and obviously those future industry requirements down the track to - yes, to deliver on the Centre of Excellence.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. Can I ask in terms of the Australian government request or comment what sort of dollars are we looking for from Canberra for this?

CHAIR - A lot.

Mr ELLIS - It will depend on what we are able to leverage, but certainly we are working closely with them. I suppose those negotiations, for want of a better word, are underway. Or certainly conversations. They are good discussions. The more we can leverage the better. Ultimately if we are able to build some really fit for purpose facilities there then that is going to be a great thing and without verballing the Commonwealth. Because, as I say, they have been really good partners with us, and so we will continue to work around that.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, no worries. And I just ask - so yesterday we were talking about the cable, and it was \$11 million from the state and about \$50 million from the feds. Are we looking at that sort of balance or are we looking more 50/50?

Mr ELLIS - When you say - which cable? The marinus link?

CHAIR - No, the subsea.

Mr ELLIS - Subsea cable?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Mr EDMUNDS - Are we look at, like, 50/50 or are we looking more like -

Mr ELLIS - That kind of infrastructure is in more of a, say, Commonwealth responsibility. You know, we are talking things like telecommunications.

Mr EDMUNDS - Sorry, I shouldn't have - I more just wondered what sort of the split of the pie might look like.

Mr ELLIS - So they're typically pretty good partners.

CHAIR - 80/20?

Mr ELLIS - Well, if we get 80/20 that would be fantastic, Chair.

CHAIR - There is an election coming up. Start lobbying.

Mr ELLIS - But let's not overpromise for our poor friends in the Commonwealth.

CHAIR - Okay. Right.

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Mr ELLIS - I can't believe I'm saying that. But if we could get 80/20 that would be fantastic, Mr Edmunds. Maybe an advocacy job for you?

Mr EDMUNDS - Well, I'm happy to assist and it's very important.

Mr ELLIS - I will look to State Growth, if there is anything else that they want to share, knowing that we have got these kinds of discussions underway.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. The National Skills Agreement is a matched arrangement, but there are other opportunities beyond the National Skills Agreement, like the turbocharging initiative that came through in the Commonwealth whitepaper which we will also look to. There a couple of different funding sources in the Commonwealth but matched under the NSA.

CHAIR - But do they need to be shovel-ready, that's the question? Because if there is an election coming, you know, they usually like to have things that have got the gold shovel ready to go. That's my experience.

Mr EDMUNDS - It works for state as well.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Look, this is probably one that - if we need a gold shovel in the next couple of months, that is -

CHAIR - It's probably not going to happen?

Mr ELLIS - It's not necessarily realistic.

CHAIR - No.

Mr ELLIS - But it is more of a long-term build anyway, to be honest. We can certainly work - we're still keen and committed to working with the Commonwealth around that. And because we have - it is actually part of a National Skills Agreement architecture. It is something that we can work through during and also beyond elections too.

CHAIR - Could you repurpose a building? You know, does it have to be a new-build type of arrangement?

Mr ELLIS - We are looking at a range of different options.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - There is a range of different options there in Burnie. But it will depend. Ultimately the learner needs to be the focus and providing them with facilities which they need to learn really well. So that is what we are working through.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thanks, Chair. Yesterday, Minister Ogilvie pointed to a letter which outlined a lot of the priorities of the government that had been sent to - well certainly to the government, but I assume it would also get sent to the -

Mr ELLIS - The federal government, you mean?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, yes. Is this a project that was in that letter as well or?

Mr ELLIS - Look, I haven't seen the particular letter that you are referring to, but I know that for us we are working really productively. We have, I suppose, an architecture that we are working within.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes. Cool, thank you.

Mr ELLIS - We have spoken with the Commonwealth around it.

CHAIR - Is it too unrealistic to ask how many numbers we have of people undertaking the various skills in those areas? Is that something that you hold?

Mr ELLIS - So we actually make a lot of data in this area public.

CHAIR - What, are you going to tell me to go to the website?

Mr ELLIS - Well, it is actually a really interesting tool. I would highly recommend it to you, Chair, it's -

Mr EDMUNDS - What, the internet?

Mr ELLIS - The skills-mapping tool that we built through Skills Tas, I would recommend checking it out, because it breaks down service provision, course need or course location of the learner by different LGAs, that sort of thing. I will see what information that we happen to have on hand, but -

CHAIR - That's all right. I just thought you might have been able to throw a piece of paper across the table at me.

Mr ELLIS - I can throw you my laptop, Chair. We can throw our folders over there.

CHAIR - Go on, then. I will never have to search for another question again if I could have that folder. It appears that the Honourable - okay, we have answer to the honourable member of Hobart's question, if you want to invite the appropriate person to the table?

Mr ELLIS - So we have got Renee Woodhouse, Director Migration Tasmania.

CHAIR - Chairs here everywhere. Thanks, Renee. Welcome.

Ms WOODHOUSE - Thank you so much. The advice I can provide in relation to this, within the Department of State Growth we have a business unit that outwardly is known as Migration Tasmania, and we work with two skilled migration products, one a permanent and one a provisional with a pathway to permanency. Certainly, nurses are an absolute priority under the program, but the issue that we have here is obviously the age limitation of 45, which is a -

CHAIR - You're not saying 45 is someone of a senior vintage, are you? I don't think you'd put that on Hansard.

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Ms WOODHOUSE - Absolutely not. 45 is an age limit applied by the Australian government to visa products. We do not determine the conditions of visas in Tasmania.

CHAIR - That's discrimination.

Ms O'CONNOR - It sure is.

Ms WOODHOUSE - It's quite -

CHAIR - Anyway, you go on.

Ms WOODHOUSE - Absolutely. Through you, minister, in this instance what we would recommend is trying to connect her with our Department of Home Affairs colleagues in the Business and Industry Outreach Service to see if there are any other options that might be available in this case. We really would be very happy to facilitate that through Migration Tasmania and State Growth.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Ms Woodhouse. I am really thankful for your response, and we will send through the information through the minister's office to you and I hope that my constituent, who obviously cannot vote for any of us, will benefit from that connection.

CHAIR - Yes. And, minister, do you have an understanding of how helpful the Home Affairs office is? My experience is that getting through to a federal department is fairly challenging. Is that something that you are aware of? Has your office tried to make some contact, or because of your position they get back to you fairly quickly?

Mr ELLIS - Look, so I know that the team at Home Affairs nationally, they have got some big responsibilities. Obviously we work closely through the department with them. As a local member I have made representations on behalf of people as well to Home Affairs but, yeah, it is probably one more for the federal government.

CHAIR - Yes. I am aware that, you know, in the area that I represent, we have a lot of people come to the area backpacking. You know, work on potato harvesters and various industries.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

CHAIR - Often fall in love and decide that they want to be here forever.

Mr ELLIS - They're only human.

CHAIR - And trying to support them through that federal system is very, very challenging.

Ms ARMITAGE - The federal member is very helpful, and I will have a chat with you later.

CHAIR - There you go. I don't need your help, minister, I have got some here.

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Mr ELLIS - Now, Chair, we were asked around the breakdown of skills. We are happy to table this. Excuse the bit with 'draft' on top. There may be some minor changes and amendments, but that breaks it down by sector.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - And the reporting tool which I really love, and no one else seems to care about, is the Regional Vocational Education Training Enrolments Data Explorer. It's on the Skills Tas website and I highly recommend having a look if you're interested in the skills and training picture around our state.

CHAIR - All right then. Thank you very much. There are no further questions in that and thank you very much. It was very helpful.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Renee.

CHAIR - We would like to move now to 90.2, which is rapid response skills initiative. There's a decrease in the forward Estimates, quite significantly. I'm just interested, I mean, it's a COVID 19 response and recovery, and I know that there's still some COVID 19 kicking around.

Ms O'CONNOR - Plenty of it.

CHAIR - Plenty of it. Quite often I think people weren't here at work last week because of COVID.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right.

CHAIR - The government has discontinued the small business sustainability and recovery assistance package, but this one is still alive and well for some time. Can I just have some indication of what that will support?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Thanks, Chair. It was established during COVID, it was more around the economic impacts of COVID, and so Jobs Tasmania supports redundant workers through our jobs hubs, career connector service and the rapid response skills initiative. These programs have been integral in supporting workers recently made redundant, for example, at Avebury Mine and Betta Milk.

The rapid response skills initiative supports people who have been made redundant in the last 12 months due to retrenchment or business closure with reskilling to help them secure new employment. Eligible jobseekers can access up to \$3,000 towards the cost of training or licenses to help them re-enter the workforce. Now, it's a demand driven program and will depend on what happens with a range of different areas in terms of retrenchment and business closures. I'll pass to Mr Hollingworth to -

CHAIR - Do we have any numbers connected to it? We do. Wonderful.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, maybe provide some further information about the program.

CHAIR - Numbers?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Absolutely. Thanks, minister. We can grab some numbers in a minute. Just also as a point of clarity on the COVID increase in that. At that point in time as well there was an increased investment to support people transitioning particularly to the care sector. It was funding places available to help transition in that. We have had a lot of people transitioning to that part of the economy, obviously, in very peaky times. But as the minister mentioned, we have an ongoing role in supporting redundant workers. We also have a career connector program that provides career advice and support to help them. In terms of the numbers -

CHAIR - How do they find this area?

Mr ELLIS - Jobs Tasmania?

CHAIR - Is that where it is? Is that where you Google, Jobs Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Stu's team. They're also very proactive as well. When we become aware of these closures, we'll reach out proactively to those businesses. Stu might want to provide some further information on that too.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Yes, minister. Through you. We work, again, through jobs hubs and have intel about what is happening in the community about people that are facing or looking at becoming in those circumstances, so we try to be proactive and activate our support to wrap around them. In those larger cases the minister referred to, we often go in early and we coordinate with other providers and federal providers as well to make sure that those affected employees can access supports, mental health counselling, all those other things that they need in that time of crisis, and then to access our programs to help them going.

We quite often find it's the conversations with people that know where other opportunities are, that they don't actually dip into the training because they're already skilled, they're job ready, in our labour market they can transition quite quickly into jobs in their community. It's quite a community whole wraparound approach, and the rapid response is just there in recognition of prior learning training or other tickets that might help them into their next role.

CHAIR - Like update their forklift license or their first aid certificate or something like that?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Absolutely. And a lot of people may have been in that job for a long period of time. They have a whole suite of skills, but they're not necessarily recognised on paper. So that process to recognise and build confidence that they have those capabilities, we find that the program's been really successful in getting them into future work.

CHAIR - And those numbers?

Mr ELLIS - I've got them here for you, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Noting that it refers to primary applicant. So there also are other people that are not fully covered by that too.

Mr EDMUNDS - Let's say wherever I work shuts down and I find a job in the interim, I note the website says 12 months, but does getting a job make you ineligible for this or do you remain eligible for that 12 months no matter where you've ended up?

Mr ELLIS - Getting a job's certainly a great outcome, but I'll pass to -

Ms O'CONNOR - Depends on the job.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Through you, minister. They are able and it does depend on the job, but they are still eligible to get that ticket to help that job stick quite often. If they've done it within that 12-month period, they can still access support to get them up and going in that role.

Mr EDMUNDS - So even if it was an employer who hired them saying, 'Look, clearly you're going to be able to get this qualification', this assistance would still help them to then lock on to that job?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Absolutely.

Mr EDMUNDS - Great. Thank you.

CHAIR - Just for anyone who might be watching, it might be the former member for Hobart, there were 84 participants on that list. Thank you very much for providing that. Some LGAs were not represented at all, so that's interesting, given that I know quite a few of those LGAs.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Through the minister. So again, they may have accessed support and counselling and they may have not necessarily needed to access the program, so that wouldn't be captured in that data. But there are pockets of the state that are experiencing a little bit more transition.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. It is now time to turn our mind to the wonderful institute of TasTAFE. We shall have a brief suspension of the broadcast while we change anyone from the table. Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 5.30 p.m. to 5.32 p.m.

DIVISION 27

(TasTAFE)

TasTAFE

CHAIR - Minister, we thank you again for this opportunity to talk about the advances which TasTAFE has made for the Tasmanian community and the people that we represent particularly. Is there anything which you'd like to share or has that pretty much been done with your first overview?

Mr ELLIS - No, I'm happy for you to start asking questions. Just note that to my left we've got Grant Dreher, CEO of TasTAFE.

CHAIR - Welcome. Nice to see you again. Thank you. Mr Edmunds.

Mr EDMUNDS - I forgot I had the lead on this one.

CHAIR - You can launch straight into it.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, I've got a few questions. The last annual report show that there were, I think, 2,672 learners enrolled with a disability and 2,381 learners from a non-English speaking background. I'm just interested in what services and positions are dedicated to providing support to those with a disability and which are dedicated to supporting those with a non-English speaking background.

Mr ELLIS - Sure. I probably also just like to note as well the fee free TAFE has been really important in supporting some of those key groups that might need a little bit of extra help to access some of the training that they need. I'll pass to Mr Dreher in terms of the support that's available.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister, and through you. That's a very big question, and I'll do my best to give you a coherent answer.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thanks.

Mr DREHER - We have extensive support across the state for students and learners who require additional support to the skills based training that they get. We have the usual support through disability liaison officers, Aboriginal support officers and general counsellors. They're based in all of our regions, on all of our major campuses. I'd be guessing if I give you an exact number.

We also have a really strong foundations program which supports learners who come in to learn at TasTAFE but may not be quite ready from a literacy, numeracy or digital perspective that we run across the organisation. A lot of the people you've mentioned, those numbers wouldn't be picked up in that, but that's also additional support that we're doing.

We take it very seriously as a public provider that providing Tasmanians who require additional support is a role that we are expected to play and we are very, very happy to play. Getting someone ready for a job is not always about training them in a skills based course first, and I think that's where you're coming from, and we're certainly committed to that. I can give you numbers, but I haven't got them on me now. As far as the numbers -

Mr EDMUNDS - You can come back later if you need.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and I've got some in terms of students if that -

Mr EDMUNDS - Go for it.

Mr ELLIS - So enrolment figures in 2023, 1,321 - this is areas of participation of disadvantaged groups in training - 1,321 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, 2,205 students with a disability, 8,966 students from low socio-economic communities, 419 students from remote communities, and 1,874 learners from non-English speaking backgrounds. In regard to some of the individual support that is available for people with disability, there's things like course application, enrolment, orientation to campus and class, permits to access on campus parking spaces, loans of assistive equipment such as ergonomic seating for example, FM systems if students are hearing impaired, computer accessories, assistive software like text to speech and speech to text or screen magnification, review on reasonable adjustment of classes which is important for some people if they're struggling, learning support including in class notetakers or participation assistance to support skills being learnt in class or one-on-one tutorials outside of the class. There're tutorials for eligible apprentices and trainees. There's Auslan interpreters. There's alternative formatting, and there's also referral to external service providers where that's required as well.

Mr EDMUNDS - So is that one-on-one assistance or?

Mr ELLIS - Depends on the person. Obviously, we're talking about people that it needs to meet their needs. Some of the tutorials, for example, can be one on one. But I'll pass to Mr Dreher if there's anything further to provide.

Mr DREHER - Thanks, minister. I think you alluded to the correct answer. Sometimes it's one on one, sometimes it's not. Sometimes it's embedded in a mainstream class, sometimes it's outside of a mainstream class, depending on the learner's needs.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. I can keep going if you want me to.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Armitage has a question.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - Okay.

CHAIR - Thank you. I'll come back to you.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, no worries.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. You mentioned earlier, minister, when I was asking about upholsterers that we have a relationship with Victoria to do that. I'm just wondering how many people have taken that up. So how many upholsters or trainees from Tasmania have actually gone to Victoria to actually do upholstery?

Mr ELLIS - I'll just double check that we have the latest on that. We'll come back to it if that's okay, Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - That's fine.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. If we just go to the budget papers, minister, page 123, TasTAFE, there's a significant move around of about \$26 million in terms of TasTAFE's assets, cash and deposits. It says here, 'The decreasing cash and deposits primarily reflect the timing of asset purchases associated with planned capital projects'. I might just say, this is a very thin chapter in this report, the TasTAFE chapter. It doesn't tell us very much at all.

Mr ELLIS - Okay.

Ms O'CONNOR - But what are those asset purchases associated with planned capital projects that are costing \$26 million.

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to Mr Dreher to provide an update there.

Mr DREHER - Yes, thanks, minister. Through you. I think we'll bring our CFO to the table to explain that. Will McShane is the chief financial officer at TasTAFE.

CHAIR - Welcome, Will.

Mr McSHANE - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thanks for joining us.

Ms O'CONNOR - Did you hear the question, Will?

Mr McSHANE - I did, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay.

CHAIR - If you just pull that lovely microphone down because they like you to get fairly close to them. Thank you.

Mr McSHANE - Through the minister. The large amounts we'd be spending on things such as the Burnie student accommodation, using money for part of our transition planning, our virtual campus projects, our regional engagement projects. There's a series of other smaller items such as the \$10 million that's been allocated to the north and northwest facility and equipment upgrades. It is a composite of the 2021 election commitments.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Thank you for that, Will. That's most helpful. On page 122, when it talks about a statement of comprehensive income, it says, 'TasTAFE's sales of goods and services will increase by about nine and a half million over the course of the forward Estimates'. Is that through an increase, minister, in TasTAFE fees?

Mr ELLIS - Things like training more students. I'll pass to Mr Dreher and Will to give us a bit of a sense about the other elements as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just to get an understanding because that's a significant increase in sales of goods and services.

Mr McSHANE - Through the minister. That's more of a classification. The fee free TAFE initiative in this budget has an end date, so it's more that revenue would fall to sales as opposed to being fee free.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Well, the related question obviously, and this is probably one for the minister or the CEO, what is the plan in terms of the fees that are charged for TAFE? Because I know you know this, minister, but for some people from disadvantage backgrounds, even though relative to a HECS debt is very small, that fee itself is a disincentive. Are there any plans to increase learning fees, course fees for TasTAFE students over the next four years?

Mr ELLIS - So usually it just aligns with things like inflation, but certainly particularly for low income people, we have very significant concessions for learners that are coming through TasTAFE. It's one of the most important things about the public training provided, that we're able to provide those services for people who are really doing it tough. It's been a really good partnership with the Commonwealth too around fee free.

Those courses are often in areas of targeted need and targeted groups of people too that might need additional assistance. Getting that balance right is really important, but when we have effectively fee maintenance, fees that align with inflation, CPI, that sort of thing, that's pretty standard. But we're very conscious of the cost of living for people and making sure that we align that. And I have some -

Ms O'CONNOR - Some numbers of people who are either fee free or assisted to learn.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. This is the course list for delivery in 2024 which has the subsidised course fee, because we subsidise all of our fees.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - And then there's the concession course fee, which is then significant on top of that, and the number of training places as well.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, minister, what's the - in order to be eligible for a concession fee, is it similarly - what's the criteria? Is it that they have a concession card or that they are a recipient of Commonwealth payment?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I'll look to the team from TasTAFE?

Ms O'CONNOR - What's the criteria for assistance?

Mr DREHER - Yes. Generally, a recipient of a Commonwealth payment to be eligible for a concession.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay.

Mr DREHER - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - All right.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, while I think of it, for the member for Launceston we have three places in the current agreement on upholstery, and there were five in 2023 and 10 in 2022.

CHAIR - Thank you. That's good, isn't it? That's good to know. I have a question just in regard to expenses on page 122, and it's supplies and consumables. The note tells me that the variation reflects the timing of expenditure, but it talks about libraries, TasTAFE and libraries. I'm just wondering what the connection is - are you helping libraries out in helping pay their consumables?

Mr ELLIS - No. We've got a great partnership with libraries and TAFE. Because libraries have a really great footprint across our community, including -

CHAIR - Don't disagree.

Mr ELLIS - Including in some of the communities that you and I represent where they're a bit more remote and we can provide support for learners through that process. Ill pass over to the team from TasTAFE around that.

CHAIR - So is this printing or turning the lights on? Let's drill down.

Mr McSHANE - Sure. Through the minister. It relates to a \$4 million commitment for a partnership with what we view as a regional engagement, but it was originally provided for a partnership with Libraries Tasmania.

CHAIR - Right. Does that spread, minister, right across the library network in more rural and remote communities, then? Is that the initiative, \$4 million?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I'll pass to the TasTAFE team around the coverage that we were able to get.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister, and through you. As Mr McShane said, this is an initiative that's around increasing regional access to TasTAFE training.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr DREHER - We have worked with Libraries Tasmania on where we can do that. A lot of the communities that need access to our training have libraries that may only be open a day a week or two half-days a week, which is not long enough, so we're currently exploring how we can make access available, perhaps, through piloting laptop lockers in regional communities where people can get a fully-functional laptop to take out and be straight onto the TasTAFE site to be able to begin their learning that way. All right. Whilst it's in there in the libraries section, it is more broadly about increasing access into regional communities through different methods. There won't be one particular way that we do it.

CHAIR - Okay. My question was that is it for those more rural and remote communities more so than providing it to the Launceston Library, if you like?

Mr DREHER - Yes.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We've got libraries at our larger TAFE campuses and things like that. I was only at - gosh, what was Alanvale? Yesterday, I think, around. The time is flying. But, you know, they've got a great library there. But, yes, it provides us the capacity to support the needs of learners that are in more remote areas. When I was working down the west coast, for example, very difficult to service that area in terms of facilities and, sometimes the internet connectivity can leave a lot to be desired. We can work closely with different community groups that have a footprint in local areas. That's one of the beautiful things about Tasmania. You know, we're a small community but it also means we're very connected, too.

CHAIR - Right. I would like to just get an update on where we are with TasTAFE staffing. I mean, over the journey and the iteration into this new model there - well, I think it's fair to say there was a bit of pushback, minister, from some of the staff. The aim, if my memory serves me correctly, was to be a more nimble and flexible training provider.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

CHAIR - I'm just interested in how that's going. Now, I didn't receive any correspondence from any TasTAFE worker this year, so I think that's a plus; any staff member. I'm interested in how you see things - you know, that things have settled in regard to not shutting down for all of January and half of February and still providing some of those training opportunities for apprentices and the like.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. That's right, Chair. This is a really important area and it's actually unlocked a lot of possibilities for TasTAFE in their ability to pay our staff more, to get higher productivity, provide more training for learners. We've had some significant success. I will just put a few things on the record. On 22 March 2023 TasTAFE initiated bargaining for a new enterprise agreement to cover teaching and general employees. The process of bargaining for a separate agreement for education facility attendance commenced on 8 August 2023. Note, as a result of an agreement between TasTAFE and the employee bargaining representatives, facility staff will no longer be included as general staff.

On 23 November 2023 a majority of TasTAFE general employees voted in favour of the proposed agreement, and over 80 per cent of eligible employees participated in the voting process for the proposed general employees enterprise agreement, and the new agreement was approved by the Fair Work Commission for an effective start date, 11 March 2024. On 8 March 2024 the majority of TasTAFE teaching employees voted in favour of the agreement and over 72 per cent of eligible employees participated in the voting process for the proposed teaching employee enterprise agreement, and that was approved by the Fair Work Commission as well in April.

Then very significantly, because it rounds out our entire workforce, on 12 July 2024 a majority of TasTAFE facility employees voted in favour of the agreement with over 80 per cent of eligible employees participating in the voting process. That effectively started on 27 August 2024. It has been a big step forward and it's been really pleasing to see all three sectors of our workforce have voted in favour of going down this path. It demonstrates the staff have been really keen to go on this journey with TAFE.

It is still a process that we need to continue to build on and backing the faith that they've shown for the reforms, backing their desire to do more training with an increase in pay. Those opportunities as well have unlocked significant capability in the organisation. We've actually increased our teacher equivalents through our teachers delivering more training by effectively an additional 24 teachers. When you've got highly-trained, highly-skilled people, that also have a teaching qualification you really want to make the most of that. So, look, I'll pass over to the TasTAFE team to add to my remarks there.

CHAIR - I might change that 'nimble' word to 'responsive'. I don't think that's quite the right word.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I don't think people know what 'nimble' really means.

CHAIR - Yes. No, they probably don't. But 'responsive', I think, was possibly the word I should've used.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

CHAIR - It's Thursday afternoon.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. Look, I'll just reiterate what you've said and certainly acknowledge that training is required at different times throughout the year and throughout the day. The changes that we've been making at TasTAFE are making it easier and more rewarding for people to be able to do that. I wouldn't like to use a calendar of when we're open and shut. The main thing is that we can respond to industry when industry need us to respond, and I think -

CHAIR - That was the whole aim of changing the model.

Mr DREHER - Yes, and I think we're getting there. We've done that, and we have a - it's not just the model of industrial relations, it's the model of how we deliver our training. We're moving towards using a lot more technology, a lot more simulation, and using what they call a flipped or blended model to make sure that people can access the training easier and in the times that they want to access it.

CHAIR - Yes. How is recruiting staff? Is that, you know, on par with what's been expected or is it still there's some areas that are going to be more challenging than others when it comes to the right teaching person to be doing the teaching?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. This has been a big benefit of the model. Because we can pay our people more, they're doing more teaching and we can attract more industry experience. We've been successful as part of that process. We've delivered the equivalent of 69 new teachers, so 24 through the uplift of increased productivity of teachers, so 24 teacher equivalents, and 45 net new teachers who are also employed as well. So that's been a major boon for the organisation. We now are in the part of the process, when it comes to hiring teachers, where we are needing to be much more focused and targeted in terms of our approach. Because we have enough teachers in many of our areas, and the areas that we need to find more people are the areas that nationally are struggling when it comes to locating teachers, typically because they are, say, trade qualified in areas that get paid very well in the private sector. There is

often, for many people, not the incentive to leave a very well paid job as an electrician in the mines or on a renewable energy project, do a teaching qualification, and then come to teach at TAFE.

We need to continue to work with that. We have a lot of national work going on around the VET Workforce Blueprint so that we can unlock some of the possibilities of doing things like the qualifications reform so that there is a stronger pathway from working on the tools to working in an institution like TAFE, even unlocking opportunities for hybrid work so that maybe you work in your small business three days a week and then come into TAFE and do two or three days and really also keep that industry currency. I will pass to Mr Dreher around the recruiting of some of those important areas.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. Generally, recruitment into TAFE over the last two to three years has certainly improved. That is easily identified by the number of applicants we are getting for positions in the last, say, 12 months, than what might have been the case in previous years. We have a workforce, yes. Teachers are the key focus and teaching and learning is what we do, but we have a workforce that is not teaching, and the calibre of applicants we're getting for those roles is extremely high and there is higher interest in those -

CHAIR - Support roles?

Mr DREHER - Support roles, yes, whether they be in technology or learner support or HR or finance or whatever they might be. In the teaching space -

Mr ELLIS - Including Mr McShane here at the table.

Mr DREHER - Yes, including the CFO.

Mr ELLIS - We have had some very high-quality people come in as leaders of our organisation as well.

Mr DREHER - Yes. As you said, minister, the key areas that we struggle - and we have enough, but it is areas that we are always open for new teaching staff are in those licenced trades, electrical plumbing, building. To a lesser extent perhaps civil construction-type areas, but then the care industries as well - nursing, aged care, disability, those type of programs.

CHAIR - Yes. Roadbuilding would be a good one to start doing.

Ms O'CONNOR - Maybe we should pay our TasTAFE teachers more?

Mr ELLIS - That's the beauty of the model. It has actually allowed us to pay them more. That has been a really good thing. I have just been advised, Mr Gaffney, that you have made some comments in a recent Leg Co debate about speaking with a school principal who was thinking about coming to TasTAFE as well. I think it is really encouraging that we are able to attract people from all walks of life to consider a career with TAFE. We say working at TAFE, it is an opportunity to be a life changer and be a TasTAFE teacher, and I think that is really starting to cut through.

Ms ARMITAGE - You might teach plumbing at TAFE.

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Mr ELLIS - I hope so one day.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Shelton was obviously a motor mechanic that taught at TAFE for many, many years and he always been an inspiration to me.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Webb and then I am going to Mr Gaffney, thank you.

Ms WEBB - I apologise if this has been covered already, when I stepped out of the room before or was attending to other things. It is good to hear about the recruitment that has been happening, but we did hear about the 100 TasTAFE teachers who were going to be recruited in 2021 when we were looking at this matter. Where are we tracking against that?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that's what we were mentioning.

CHAIR - Yes, we have had the numbers.

Ms WEBB - So you have had the numbers?

Mr ELLIS - So 69 teacher equivalents -

Ms WEBB - Yes. When do you expect to hit the 100, is my question.

Mr ELLIS - This is a really good question. We did a big uplift over the last few years, and we could continue hiring those final 31, no trouble. We need to be actually making sure that we are hiring now in the specific areas that we have skills gaps, and those are the hardest areas to recruit in. We are now moving into a phase where we are being much more targeted so that we are actually delivering teachers that we need in those classrooms.

Ms WEBB - I heard you say that, yes. That's fine. So it's just not clear yet. We are on our way towards it, but you are not able to commit to when we will hit the 100?

Mr ELLIS - That's right. We're actually at the point where -

Ms WEBB - Did you tell us a timeframe when we passed the legislation through the Chambers?

Mr ELLIS - I actually think this was an election commitment that happened afterwards. It's the 2021 election, and we were still committed to -

CHAIR - I thought it was earlier than that.

Mr ELLIS - We are still committed to -

CHAIR - Anyway, let's not argue about the year.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We are still committed to the uplift, and we think that there is some really good opportunities. The question now is about making sure that we are delivering skills for jobs and not just hiring more teachers for the sake of it. It's about hiring the right people who we actually need for the learners that are coming through our organisation.

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Ms WEBB - Following on from that, how many courses have you had to discontinue or suspend because of staff shortages, say in the last couple of years?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I will pass to the team from TasTAFE around that data.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister and through you, that question was asked earlier in the week, and we are currently working on that data.

CHAIR - You're working on the question.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Sorry, apologies. I hadn't had a chance to read through it.

Mr DREHER - So we will provide it to this group as well.

CHAIR - All right. When that comes through you might send it to both committees?

Mr DREHER - Yes, yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms WEBB - In terms of comments from the community, that is the one I have heard the most, to be honest. In terms of comments about TasTAFE is people - it is generally parents who raise it with me about - they have a child who has been trying to have a course and it's not being run. It is just a little bit of feedback that I've had from my community.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I suggest it is probably typically in those areas that are hard for us to find the vocational education training workforce, such as sparkies.

Ms WEBB - No doubt. It's hard, because the kids are being stalled. They are stuck in other - they're not forward-moving.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, electrical is an example of that big challenge, and there are a few other courses aside. Would that be a fair summary, Grant?

Mr DREHER - Minister, back through you, yes, that would be a fair summary. In most instances, courses are delayed while we get staff in place there. Very rarely do we just cancel a course. The start date would be delayed and not for huge, extended periods of time, but we will pick that information up from the other group and we will bring it back here.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - A gap month for some young people is too long, let alone a gap year.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. Yes, when you're a young person you want to get into it.

Mr GAFFNEY - Something a little bit different. Work placements have been used for a long time through high schools and whatever, and especially with TAFE going from Cert II to Cert III, there are certain work placements. I am interested to know, in light of the commission of inquiry recommendations, it is now the case that if workplaces have an employee or trainee that is under the age of 18 they have to have Working with Vulnerable

People, they might have to have safeguarding training and protocols in place to cover all staff. Going back to my high school years when you used to put students out on work placement, you'd just go round and find out who in the community could have a kid for four hours or that sort of thing.

I am wondering, has there been any impact on being able to find work placements for TAFE students under the age of 18 because of the recommendations? If so, does TAFE play a role in assisting small businesses to cover their requirements from the recommendations of the commission of inquiry? I am interested in how that has come to surface.

Mr ELLIS - You are absolutely spot on, Mr Gaffney. It is an area that we are all going to need to work through in a pretty considered manner over the coming years. It is TAFE, but I suppose you are asking about work experience across the board where young people need to often get a sense of the role that they are looking to go into or demonstrate that they are keen. There is certainly among our community, and in our employer groups, nervousness about making sure that they are meeting their obligations as a child safe organisation. We are seeing some really good examples of work that is being done to try to put some rigour and structure around those processes. For example, the construction industry is being quite forward-leaning to provide some more formalised support to employers for work experience. That has been a partnership with Keystone, so the construction industry training board, and some of our industry bodies in the construction sector, so that there is a clearer sense of what is expected, what obligations you need to meet.

We are also working closely with some of our other peak bodies about how maybe we can leverage the capacity for pastoral care for apprentices and young people not just while they have an apprentice but may before they become an apprentice and how they might be able to work closely with trusted businesses and prospective future employees who are young people to do that.

Our group training organisations have an increasingly large role to play in this space. We're still doing the policy work on that. When we think about ensuring that our children are safe when they're undertaking work experience, it's thinking about how we wrap more supports around them, just as, once upon a time, apprentices in general when they were a bit older maybe didn't have a lot of formal instruction support around them, but we realised as a community that that could occasionally lead to apprentices being let down in their training journey. So we wrap more support around them. Let's think about how we can wrap more support around practical workplace experience.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. My question is twofold. I understand most of the people going to TAFE would be over the age of 18. You'd have some. I'm also concerned with those who might be doing the childcare, those where they'll be working with younger people who might be four and five years of age. How do you manage the TAFE student being working with young people under the age of 18 through your organisation? What training is there or what are the requirements of TAFE students going into underage settings? I've heard that has become a little bit of an issue for Cert III students who need to go into those smaller settings to further their abilities and capacity to work with younger children. How does TAFE coordinate that?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass to TAFE in a tick. I know that they do have a child safe policy in place. Other organisations, say, for example, Lady Gowrie is a great example of a childcare provider that also provides training. They're able to provide both of those services in one so

people learn on-site around children and then are employed by the training provider too. I'll pass to the team from TasTAFE if they want to provide an update on that.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister, and through you. This is a significant issue that has existed all along, not just because we have a new set of rules that we need to adhere to. We're very careful where we place students. We're very clear with employers that students are there to be supervised. They're not to be left alone with young people and, at the other end of the spectrum, with older people either. When we put a student out on practical placement, it's a part of their learning component. We monitor it very closely. As I said, they must be supervised, and there's a formal agreement between us and the employer to make sure that that happens.

Mr GAFFNEY - Further than that, does TAFE offer support to the businesses? Do you have the capacity to help out those businesses that may be involved with offering the training or whatever?

Mr DREHER - Yes. We will work with businesses to help them. We don't have formal processes in place to support businesses, but we will work with them to help them meet their obligations and their requirements for our students.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Gaffney, it is probably also worth mentioning that for entry into many of these qualifications, applicants must show evidence that they have a registered Working with Vulnerable People card. That's part of the safeguarding process as well.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you. I have a question about RTI, if I could. One of my colleagues in the lower House put an RTI through about TasTAFE. It took about three months to get a response, but the reason for that was they were advised that the payroll data that they requested was coming from a third party. What is the arrangement that's in place for external parties to manage TasTAFE payroll?

Mr ELLIS - I think the Department for Education, Children and Young People is the external party. But I'll pass to Mr Dreher.

Mr DREHER - Yes, that's the answer.

Mr EDMUNDS - Cool. Thank you. Does TasTAFE have a dedicated RTI officer?

Mr DREHER - Yes, we do.

Ms WEBB - Are you able to provide us with your RTI stats for the most recent year that you've got them, including how many requests you got and how they were determined in full, partially or refused, and any stats on internal reviews or external reviews that arose?

Mr ELLIS - We'll check that for Skills Tas and Jobs Tas as well, I suppose, if we've had any.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.

CHAIR - Ms O'Connor? Anything?

Ms O'CONNOR - No, I'm fine thanks, Chair. It's been informative.

Ms WEBB - Chair, can I follow up on that RTI?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Do you put your RTI disclosures up on the TasTAFE website or through another central point? How are they made public?

CHAIR - Just getting a little bit of advice. How nice that everyone gets an opportunity.

Mr ELLIS - I have a disclosure log here on the website of TasTAFE.

CHAIR - Well done. Not a skerrick of paper in site, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Just don't overthink it, Chair. That's the key. Mr Dreher.

Mr DREHER - At this point in time, we report them annually and we report them in the annual report. We're currently working on the Ombudsman's requirements to start to publish them. We're looking at that now.

Ms WEBB - In terms of the disclosure log on your website, they're put up there as a matter of course? Have you got an internal guideline or policy about uploading them to your website? I'm asking each department that, just to see what their internal arrangements are around -

CHAIR - You're not special.

Mr DREHER - Yes, we do. We do.

Mr ELLIS - We're special but for other reasons.

Ms WEBB - Are you able to provide that internal policy or guideline to me as an example?

CHAIR - Thank you. And we've got a couple of documents here.

Ms WEBB - Can I put that on notice to you as a question? Thank you.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister, if it's okay. So there were 10 RTI applications relating to business and jobs, which is the division in which Skills and Jobs Tasmania sits in. The department complies with the Premier's directions for the routine disclosure of information on the department's website. It's standard.

CHAIR - Thank you. Minister, I'm pleased to say that you've done a really terrific job today and you've managed to get us through our output groups and our line items quite nicely.

PUBLIC

Thank you very much. On behalf of everyone on this committee and including our secretariat support and Gaye from Hansard, we'd sincerely like to thank you all for your contribution to this budget Estimates process for Committee B.

As always, we look forward to sending you some question requests and receiving the answers back in a fairly timely manner. We'll be reporting to the parliament about mid-October and we'll need to have a look over those. So, thank you all and we hope that you've been able to provide us with some information, and we know that it's been very useful for our understanding of what you all do.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I really appreciate the committee's work. I put on record as well my thanks to my ministerial team and my departments for all their work to prepare for this week.

CHAIR - Before we do close, I sincerely thank the members of Committee B. They are an exceptional group of people and I'm proud to be chair of this committee because they all put so much into their work. I thank them. So thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - We need to thank the Chair for keeping everybody, particularly the ministers, in order all week.

CHAIR - We shall cease the broadcast. Thank you very much.

The Committee adjourned at 6.10 p.m.