



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A**

Hon. Madeleine Ogilvie MP

**Tuesday 18 November 2025**

### **MEMBERS**

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair)

Hon Dean Harris MLC

Hon Sarah Lovell

Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC

Hon Bec Thomas MLC

### **OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS**

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

### **HON. MADELEINE OGILVIE MP**

Minister for the Environment, Minister for Innovation, Science, and the Digital Economy,  
Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Arts and Heritage

### **Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy**

#### **Department of State Growth**

##### **Mike Mogridge**

Deputy Secretary

##### **Ben Marquis**

Director, Economic Strategy

##### **Travis Boucher**

Director, Finance

#### **Department of Premier and Cabinet**

##### **Noelene Kelly**

Deputy Secretary

##### **Dr Justin Thurley**

Chief Information Officer

#### **Ministerial Office**

##### **Tristan Bick**

Chief of Staff

##### **Jeremy Grey**

Senior Advisor

### **Environment (including Climate Change)**

##### **Jason Jacobi**

Secretary

##### **Louise Wilson**

Deputy Secretary

##### **Catherine Murdoch**

CEO - Environment Protection Authority

##### **Jo Crisp**

General Manager, Environment

**Holly Mackey**

A/CEO - Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Board

**Daryl Cook**

Director - Finfish Compliance - EPA

**Cindy Ong**

Director - Environmental Regulation - EPA

**Raymond Bannister**

Manager - Salmon Science and Standards - EPA

**ReCFIT (Climate Change)**

**Vanessa Pinto**

A/CEO, Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania

**Dr Sarah Russell**

Director, Climate Change

**Ministerial Office**

**Tristan Bick**

Chief of Staff

**Alister Pearce**

Senior Adviser

**Kandace Giligan**

Senior Adviser



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**CHAIR** - Thanks, minister. We're here to look at your portfolio of digital government, Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) and at 3.1.

If you'd like to introduce the people at your table and then if you wish to make an opening statement?

## **Output Group 3 - Community and Government Service Delivery**

3.1. Digital Government and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) - Strategy, Policy and Service Delivery

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, that'd be great. I will try to sort of cut through it quickly so that you have a chance to speak - folk here.

We have Dr Justin Thurley, Department of Premier and Cabinet. We have Michael Mogridge, Department of State Growth. Tara Martin, Department of State Growth. That's who we have at the table.

Am I okay to go straight into a statement?

**CHAIR** - Sure.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Thank you.

Good afternoon, or evening, everybody. Now, we all know of course that the future economy will be a digital one powered by knowledge, creativity and innovation.

In this year's Budget, we're investing \$37.5 million in a whole-of-government ICT and digital transformation initiative - or initiatives - with more than \$98 million being invested across government in innovation technology projects in 2024-26, and \$225 million over the forward Estimates. This investment underpins our long-term digital transformation strategy, Our Digital Future, which is being refreshed to ensure Tasmania remains at the forefront of digital government innovation and cyber resilience.

Our goal is clear: delivering efficient, transparent and secure services that meet the modern expectations of Tasmanians. We're modernising outdated systems, strengthening cyber security, and building the digital capability of our workforce. Importantly, we're also focusing on inclusion, ensuring no Tasmanian is left behind in the digital age.

Already, we're seeing significant progress across agencies. Projects like the digital driver's licence, the EPA information management system upgrade, the gaming and licensing information system replacement, and the parliament digital transformation project, are improving accessibility and efficiency across the public sector. The Cyber Hubs initiative represents a major step forward in protecting Tasmania's data and digital infrastructure to strengthen defences, improve coordination, and help government respond to emerging cyber threats.

We're also ensuring that our digital future is powered by Tasmanians, through initiatives like the Advanced Technology Industries Strategy. We're guiding industry through policy, workforce capability development, and the provision of world-class digital infrastructure to enable the sector to flourish right here at home in Tasmania.

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We're also working closely with UTAS to ensure that its future developments, including the proposed STEM campus at Sandy Bay, deliver real outcomes for Tasmanians. Now, a key part of this partnership will be to ensure the university continues to build the skills and capabilities our state needs for the future.

In closing: as leaders in government and industry alike, we must continue to champion that spirit to demonstrate that digital transformation is not only about technology, but it's about leadership, vision, and the courage to think differently. All of these initiatives come together under one vision: to make Tasmania a place where innovation thrives, government leads by example, and technology serves the public good. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, minister. So, just in terms of- you talked a bit - we've got a couple of those I want to go to - but the cyber security side of it. I mean, there's obviously constant threats and attempts to breach the provisions of [inaudible] protectors.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Defences? Yes, absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Can you indicate whether - how many attempts there have been to breach our defences, and if there have been any breaches?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Thank you. I will actually ask Justin Thurley to speak to this. He is our expert at the table and I think it's helpful to go directly to him, if that's alright.

**Dr THURLEY** - So, for a 12-month period that we've had - and we won't go into the details of each instance -

**CHAIR** - No, I'm not asking for that. Don't want to expose any weaknesses, do we?

**Dr THURLEY** - Yes, good - no, no. So, from 1 July 2025 to 30 September, we've had 65 incidents that we categorised as incidents. Before that, in the 12 months to June 2025, we had 311. We can go back a bit further; it was 282 for the period before, and 237 in 2020.

**CHAIR** - For the same periods, you're talking about?

**Dr THURLEY** - Yes, the same periods. We talk about financial years.

**CHAIR** - Were any of those able to breach the defences?

**Dr THURLEY** - We have - defining 'breach' is an interesting term as well, but ones that we would consider incidents that needed to be handled by an incident management team with significant effort to run it under the incident management arrangements that we have for Tasmanian cyber security, and that is the Tasmanian cyber security state emergency management plan. What we would have had since then - and just bear with me - there's been two incidents managed under the set from 2024 to 2025 in that reporting period. So, only two that required major mobilisation to address issues.

**CHAIR** - Were you able to prevent any data being stolen, or infiltration into that?

**Dr THURLEY** - There's various controls that we have in place within government. They range based on the status of the data and the classification of the data. We've recently

introduced the protective security framework, our policy framework which is known as the PSPF, which has also introduced information classification, so it allows us to identify and classify information and then add the appropriate controls, i.e. better controls for more sensitive data.

**Ms OGILVIE** - That's the click-down list we're all doing now.

**Dr THURLEY** - Yes, that's true. Beyond that, we use the preventative controls that we have in place, we won't go into the details on what those controls are, but they are risk managed, so they're based on risk, and we put those in place to make sure that we aren't opening the government to risk and that information to risk.

I would just add: one of the concerns that we have would be in third-party risk, so we've got a third party that's handling and using our data, or using government-related data, and we seek to manage that through a range of controls, particularly in the procurement side of things. When we sign contracts we add in additional clauses to ensure that the data protections, et cetera, are all in line with government's expectations under the PSPF.

**CHAIR** - Minister, we heard from the Auditor-General yesterday that there was some funding provided over the last few years for data analytics in the audit office, which has been really important work. Obviously to maintain the security of that, they need ongoing support to do that. His budget's been cut quite significantly. Does this concern you at all? Obviously we want the Auditor-General to have access to data from various departments, otherwise they can't do their work. Is there a role here for you in advocating for that office to have appropriate data analytics capability, but also protection?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, of course. Yes. Absolutely, and look, there's a role for me and the main role that I have in this area is to seek to advocate for the best protections that we can have and that we can afford across government. But also, in parallel, I have a role in helping uplift knowledge and capability in the broader community in relation to cybersecurity as well.

We've done quite a lot of work across that digital divide piece, for example, as well, and we have invested quite a lot of money, particularly in our cybersecurity uplift program to do cyber hubs. I'm just not aware, whether because it's quite a disaggregated portfolio, we sit right across each of the areas, I might turn to Justin. I'm just not aware of where the funding for the Auditor-General's tech comes from; is that out of their budget or consolidated with you?

**Dr THURLEY** - Their budget is separate from ours.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - And it's been cut, just for the record.

**Ms OGILVIE** - So they would have to ask for -

**CHAIR** - It's been cut, that's the thing, that's my point.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I would suggest that managing your data securely is a high priority.

**CHAIR** - But you can't do things without money to do it. Minister, just on that, you talked about - correct me if I'm wrong, \$37 million in the digital transformation piece that's going on, that's right across the whole lot?

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**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - The very long gestation HRIS (human resources information system) was originally with Health and now with DPAC, do you have oversight of that or how does that fit in?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes. Perhaps if I give you a description of how it all fits together and then if you have specific questions about specific projects, that's probably to Justin. Justin as CIO sits across a number of portfolios, and each of them have CIOs or have that capacity in them. Budgets flow down from the top and each - please correct me if I get this wrong, each department defines and works out what money they're going to spend on which projects. That's done in consultation with an overarching strategy, and I brought some of those strategy documents here today. Projects that are going on in health, I'm aware of. They have them within at departmental -

**CHAIR** - It's not in Health anymore, it's in DPAC; it's been pulled over to DPAC.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I will refer to Justin to speak to that.

**Dr THURLEY** - Yes, so the Human Resources Transformation Program was transferred into DPAC this year. The oversight -

**CHAIR** - It had been in Health for a long time and hadn't really gotten very far.

**Dr THURLEY** - Yes, it has been in Health and that's where it's been progressing. It is now progressing in our department, in DPAC. It's probably more of a question for the Premier, but what we can say is that the project is underway with DPAC and implementing across whole of government.

**CHAIR** - So the Premier has carriage of that now; is that right?

**Dr THURLEY** - Correct.

**CHAIR** - Okay. In terms of the strategies you were talking about, are these new strategies?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, I've actually brought a couple of things which I thought you might be interested in. We have - and I assume that this is acceptable to hand over as well - we have the Cyber Security Strategy 2024-2028, and we are part way through these and I just thought you might be interested, so I can table that. That gives you an overarching view of what we're doing. I think there was earlier, in the conversation with the Premier, some discussion around artificial intelligence use in the government. I've brought that as well, even though -

**CHAIR** - Is there a strategy around that or is it a policy position?

**Ms OGILVIE** - There is a lot of work being done in relation to that, but again, Justin did that work. He's right here if we would like to hear from him.

**Dr THURLEY** - Yes. So with the artificial intelligence side of things, we commenced our work some time back, a few years back, in relation to where we would head with artificial



intelligence. Primarily, in the early days we were concerned about risk and the ethical and responsible use of AI, so we focused our attention in that space in the original time. That was done at a whole-of-government level because we felt that it needed a whole-of-government response.

From there, we produced what effectively are the guidelines that have been presented here to you today. From the guidelines, once we finish those guidelines, we obviously accept that it's a very dynamic and changing environment; there's also been a more widespread diffusion of AI across the community and into the general economy. We have subsequently had a roundtable within government and identified what the next steps would be, i.e. a road map for internal policy work.

We have subsequently started work on a policy mandate, like a mandated position as opposed to just having guidelines, so a broader whole-of-government policy is currently in consultation across government. It will probably take us a couple of months to get everybody's input, but we feel it's in a very good position once that's finished, and we will publish that.

**CHAIR** - So will that be a strategy or a policy?

**Dr THURLEY** - No, it will be a policy -

**CHAIR** - What will be the output of that?

**Dr THURLEY** - It will be a policy, not a strategy. The broader strategy will be for artificial intelligence, which as you said, it's got permutations into many aspects of digitalisation. It will be part of the - first of all, a refresh of Our Digital Future which we're working on, so AI will heavily in that, no doubt. That's also the feedback we're getting.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, absolutely. Yes.

**Dr THURLEY** - Beyond that, we expect there will be a component in there specifically for government and what strategies in government will be played out in alignment with the work of the EPU.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes. So, if I may also, that's one realm. AI, as we know, is a complex beastie that touches many things. At the other end of the spectrum, we are doing some important work on thought leadership vis-a-vis AI and economic development for Tasmania; particularly I'm working with the university economics department to do that work, and we're commencing with an AI dialogue, getting thought leaders, business leaders, tech leaders, artists, people together to have this discussion about what the big picture for Tasmania should and could look like, but I'm very grateful to Justin and his team because of work they've done at the frontline with the tech sector in particular. Getting that feedback has been phenomenal.

**CHAIR** - What work is being done right now to ensure that the use of AI is ethical?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, so the document that I -

**CHAIR** - Yes. Just pass that over, sorry.

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**Ms OGILVIE** - That's the work that's been done within government, making sure that that's communicated properly within government is all of our responsibilities and a lot of work has been done already, but as you heard, there's a strategic layer with that policy work and then also in relation to the work that's outside of government, which is also incredibly important, and that's where I'm leading some dialogue and some thought leadership conversations.

**CHAIR** - Alright, so in the meantime people are using AI for a variety of uses, probably within your department, us.

**Ms OGILVIE** - There is -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Election posters, for example.

**CHAIR** - Well, all sorts of things. We know the risks associated with that, so, how is that being considered and addressed potentially?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Staff have ability to access and are appraised of the guidelines for use, ethical use of AI as well. I mean, it's here. People are getting used to it. I think when it first arrived, there was a lot of concern and fear. Now, people using ChatGPT and they seem a lot more comfortable with it just at this layer, but when it comes to the opportunities for portfolios to improve productivity through the use of technology, AI is the global uplift that is happening. I think it is incumbent upon Tasmania, not being a hugely wealthy state, to do everything that we can to participate in that future digital economy.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The corollary of that is job-losses. If the economic productivity unit is looking at AI, the corollary of that obviously is loss of jobs amongst human beings.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I don't agree with that, actually.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - All of the modeling says that's the case.

**Ms OGILVIE** - What we're seeing, and I've done - can I finish my sentence?

I've actually done a little bit of work with Stanford University on this around the future of work. What we're looking at is a complete change in the way we work. What we want to do is use AI to improve people's working lives and to take the drudgery work out, so form-filling or trying to find bits of information to aggregate into spreadsheets, that work can be done by AI more efficiently and more safely than by humans. It frees humans to have more interesting jobs. Now, I won't speak for the EPU because I'm not on it and I don't know much about it. But I have worked across productivity improvement in the past in the tech sector and I think we have a good plan to utilise AI both within government and more broadly.

I think also. Government, because we have so many technologists in government, we are a lighthouse for what the broader community can see about how to run these sorts of change programmes well. So that's what we're doing. I think it will be a very interesting journey. I feel very confident that our team has done the work and is sensible. The ethics of it matters. People's work lives matter. But we're open to ideas and very happy to hear from people. Sorry if you if.

**CHAIR** - Some say policy development is being assisted by tools like ChatGPT, public platforms, if you like. We know there's an inherent biases in those. So for example, they're one

of the concerns I would have if you're developing a health policy, the gender bias is extreme in some of those things. And so I think what barriers or guardrails you're putting put around that to ensure that we're not seeing policy development that has inherent gender bias or other biases that are inherent, yeah, in these tools?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I will ask Justin to speak to that, but I can give you a personal view very quickly, which is having been in and around the tech sector my entire working career, which is male-dominated, I think that there is a concern about that. And I also think that there is a solution to that, which is about having a human in the loop within a year.

**CHAIR** - It's not just that the bias in the in the gender bias in the in the tech sector; it's the gender bias in healthcare. The General Quality Committee reported on this, if you haven't read the report, you should. It's quite extreme.

**Ms OGILVIE** - So I understand about the health sector generally, but the application of AI, the bias you're talking about is built into the algorithms that do the AI consolidation. So if there's bias there, that is a place where having a human in the loop with any AI-made decisions is ethical, sensible and prudent. But I agree with you with the merging advancing technologies like this we have to take great care.

I will ask Justin, though, because you've probably had a bit of a think about this issue on your ethics side of things.

**Dr THURLEY** - Yeah look, with the development of the guidelines and in particular we were closely working with other Australian governments, states and territories, also the Australian Government and their people. We co-developed the assurance framework for AI, responsible use of AI in government, and we have aligned our policy with that arrangement. So that framework's published online. However, to put it in perspective, what the reality is of how do you mitigate the issues of bias and also the transparency so even if you are using it, you should probably have the transparency to admit that you know there could be biases.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, I agree with that.

**Dr THURLEY** - It's based on the risk-based approach that's built into the guidelines that we have provided, the specific areas inside it that mentioned the issues of bias and to ensure public confidence and trust we have to make sure that we look and assess those risks and mitigate those risks within a framework.

It comes down to if you're dealing with a high-risk scenario for AI use or deployment then you should be using a recommended assurance framework to make sure that you do that assessment. One of those frameworks that we've looked at is the NSW government's AI assurance framework. If we were to involve ourselves in a high-risk scenario, that's where we would be going towards and probably unlikely to employ a high-risk scenario.

**CHAIR** - What would constitute a high-risk scenario?

**Dr THURLEY** - I feel that that comes down to risk tolerances, et cetera, but effectively the full automation from end-to-end of a process that could particularly impact the community or a decision that would impact the community. That's where you start to employ AI for

automation and we always look at something like robo debt, one of those examples of what not to do.

**Ms OGILVIE** - To give you a level of comfort as well; I might just also add that in September 2023, a Tasmanian government secretary's board established the AI working group, and I'm sure if you were interested in ongoing conversations, they'd be happy to hear from you. We have the single year but preliminary road map for AI governance across the Tasmanian government.

**CHAIR** - What you tabled?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, you have that one, and the Data and Digital Committee, which also sits with us, is using the recommendations from the data and digital subcommittees of the Secretary's Board and their AI round table to update that two-year roadmap. So, recommendations there were made in relation to directions for policy, opportunities for government collaboration and knowledge-sharing, procurement and technology-sourcing, longer-term governance.

I will pause to say this portfolio is unusual because it has two realms to it. We have the internal government technology side and then we have the more economic development science side. Totally happy to speak to either of those but just wanted to acknowledge so my friends here are being very quiet.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This comes to that issue? Minister, you hold both the information technology and environment portfolios. There is a proposal which was a government election announcement with a person jailed for 15 months for insider trading, Oliver Curtis, to establish an AI centre in the north of the state. Did you not know about Mr Curtis and his chequered history?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I'm waiting for your question.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You just looked confused about.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I'm not confused.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The Premier's been chatting with who spent 15 months in gaol on insider trading.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Is there a question?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, are you able to explain how facilitating an AI data centre in the north aligns with your environmental responsibilities, given that AI data centres are known for high energy and high-water use as they require very significant cooling and powering?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Interestingly, Fermus is a low-water use centre. They have patented an unusual and very interesting technology which immerses the racks in oil, which means it's lower energy-consumption and lower water-use. I've been and visited. It is interesting and implore you to go and have a look. The benefit of data centres and the digital economy for the environment, particularly in Tasmania, is the future is digital, and by using that capability and connectivity we will engage in the global economy.

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What does that mean, like in proper language? Well, what that means is that when we invent, develop, do some scientific research, create a musical work, make a film, or into all of these industries, we're able to sell that IP over the internet and the royalties come back in. We don't damage the environment. It's high intellectual work. It's good work for our people and for our scientists and researchers. We have IMAS, we have UTAS, we have this great amount of incredible science going on so coming down this end, I can see my science folk perking up. That's why, globally, everybody needs more data centres because it is hungry for information.

AI is coming and content is the king of everything.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I say, as the Minister for Climate and the Environment, to hear you say -

**Ms OGILVIE** - Don't you like data centres? I would have thought you'd be right into them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Interesting.

**Ms OGILVIE** - No, not right?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The examples of data centres that are being established in the United States, which are massive power consumers, which are already driving price rises to the towns around those data centres. The fact that in many parts of the world, they're powered by fossil fuels, means that they're not the utopia - and to have you, as minister, come to this table with this Pollyanna view -

**Ms OGILVIE** - Hah, that's funny. It is absolutely ridiculous to say that, Cassy. Come and see Firmus. You will love it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But it is. It's 'everything's going to be great.' You say the answer to the future-

**CHAIR** - The question?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes. You say the answer to the future is more data centres, so I am wondering what your threshold is.

**Ms OGILVIE** - No, I said it's 'digital'. The future is digital -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'll go back and look at the *Hansard*.

**Ms OGILVIE** - And to manage the digital future, you need data centres. QED.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How many AI data centres does your government expect or intend to see developed in Tasmania?

**Ms OGILVIE** - That's a good question. We have a data centre strategy. It is connected to the amount of energy we have, as you've correctly pointed out, and also needs to be fired by cable connectivity. Those two things are in balance. The Firmus - which is actually not so much a data centre as an AI factory. It has the same technology as a data centre, but they're going to

do more in AI, which is helpful. But I am looking towards you, Michael, to say if you could perhaps give some more information about that policy.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, the question is: what's your threshold? Is there any limit?

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - I think there's a piece of work being done via the economic statement articulating there would be an economic diversification and investment strategy. The purpose of that would be to look forward and see what the sorts of businesses and industries are led by - and I suppose with digital innovation, that we do want to turn our minds to in the context of the future - jobs and solutions and economic opportunities that Tasmania may need.

And I would presume as part of that analysis, we'd be turning our minds to the energy required for these sorts of businesses, whether or not it's green energy and how that provides jobs and regional outcomes for Tasmanians.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, and connectivity. I can give you a good example.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - As part of the assessment, data centres themselves are not big employers. That's the experience from the around the world. You can build them and create a few jobs in the build, but they're not big employers ongoing.

**Ms OGILVIE** - No, they're not. That's right. Where the jobs are in content creation, and management of data and information, and scientific work, and all of that great stuff we do really well here in Clark-land. And so, our proposal - we're really tapped into this - is to support that - to support IMAS and the university and our space sector, which is incredible.

And I was just going to give you that example of a company like Geoneon, which is using the data and information in our telecommunications capacity and our radio telescopes to measure climate change from space. I always like to use that example, because it is a prime example of how these two worlds come together so beautifully to make life better for everyone.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I ask as a last question, because we are running over time. Minister, do you foresee any environmental standards or conditions being set for AI infrastructure in Tasmania? Has any analysis been done by the agency on the environmental impacts of large-scale data centres, including energy demand, water use, and emissions?

**Ms OGILVIE** - That's back to this forward planning.

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Some of those concepts would probably go to the broad environmental implications of any particular business, which some of that falls outside of this portfolio. But certainly, when we're turning our minds to ongoing strategies like the diversification strategy, which is influenced by the policies that sit within this portfolio, we'd be willing to turn our mind to how do we create sustainable businesses that are the right sorts of businesses for Tasmania moving forward.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - [inaudible 5.24.15] our brand, don't drain our lakes...

**CHAIR** - Maybe you can follow that up in the Environment profile.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I reckon I might, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any other questions you want to ask under this one? It's been a pretty short time; we're trying not to finish at midnight tonight.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Sorry, that's alright. It's my favourite area. I wish we'd had longer, but nonetheless.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister, for you and your team. We will give you a break. We will see you back at -

**Ms OGILVIE** - Pleasure. Yes, absolutely.

**The committee suspended from 5.24 p.m. to 5.28 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - I know this is perhaps a bit of a first for you with as we see you as an independent statutory authority that has important roles and responsibilities. We appreciate you being here. I will ask you to introduce yourself and the people at the table for the benefit of *Hansard* and then did you want to make an opening statement?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Catherine Murdoch, I am the CEO of the Environment Protection Agency. With me at the table is Cindy Ong, who is the Director of Environmental Regulation, and Daryl Cook, who is the Director of Finfish Compliance.

Good afternoon, everyone. As you've said, this is a new experience for us as the EPA to have our own session today. I see it as a sign of maturity as an organisation and welcome the opportunity to answer questions put forward by the committee today. We will endeavour to answer all your questions here today, but this is a new process for us, please bear with us at some times. We will try and get all the information in required within the session, if not as soon as possible for you.

In the seven months that I have spent in my role with the APA, I have become aware of how qualified this team is. I am privileged to lead this team. They are here at the EPA because they are committed to upholding our vision to protect and enhance the quality of the Tasmanian environment and balance with economic and social values.

The 2025 Budget allocates \$16.9 million from appropriation and a total of \$3.2 million over the forward Estimates. This funding supports environmental regulation at \$13.449 million for our compliance enforcement and incident response across more than 500 level two activities, including major industrials, waste facilities, and TasWater's larger wastewater treatment plants; also, our environmental assessments at \$5.079 million for timely and rigorous assessment of increasingly complex proposals, including large mines, renewable energy projects, transmission lines, and green hydrogen facilities.

Additional retained revenue streams include the salmon levy of \$2.993 million, which is for oversight of marine and freshwater aquaculture under strengthened environmental standards, the landfill levy for waste compliance and illegal dumping investigations, and grants for digital transformation of regulatory information systems and air quality network upgrades.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I just ask, do you have another whole page to read?

## PUBLIC

**Ms MURDOCH** - No. I'm happy to - I didn't know protocol or process or how long. Happy to get into - I think that's a good opening statement for us. We're in your hands.

**CHAIR** - There is a lot going on in your space at the moment.

**Ms MURDOCH** - There is.

**CHAIR** - Just about every area would be of relevance to the EPA. So I will go to Cassy.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the introduction, and hello, everyone. Documents released under right to information show that the director of the EPA, the secretary of NRET, and the CEO of Salmon Tasmania had a discussion on Tuesday 5 August this year about a document entitled Draft Environmental Monitoring of Florfenicol in Salmon Aquaculture Marine Sites.

### Output Group 1 - Environment Protection Authority

#### 1.1 Environmental Regulation

**CHAIR** - Would this be a better fit under 1.3? We're trying to do them in order - 1.1 is Environmental Regulation; is that where it fits?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, this is about environmental regulation.

**Ms MURDOCH** - No, that's finfish regulation. If it's to do with florfenicol and salmon, it's definitely in the finfish regulation area.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Okay, Chair. I wouldn't have thought it was problematic for it to fit within this section of the outputs. I don't know why there would be a problem with just answering it now rather than trying to box us in on this.

**CHAIR** - The only reason I say that, is if there was a question on notice that was left open, it needs to be under the line item it's relevant to.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Of course. I will come back to this.

**CHAIR** - We will see how we go.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This is about broad environmental regulation issues which the EPA is responsible for and what influence, if you like, industry has on regulatory decisions made by the Environment Protection Authority. If you want me to ask you questions about stadium fill or something like this in this output, I'm happy to do that too. If perhaps we could just do this. If there is a question on notice, I will go back to it in the other output. So the documents provided in the RTI documents, there's no author. Are you able to tell the committee who wrote this draft?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I actually am unsure of what documentation you're referring to.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So were you - so the director of the EPA was at this meeting?



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**Ms MURDOCH** - You've said 5 August.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The document is RTI documents and the document is entitled Draft Environmental Monitoring of Florfenicol in Salmon Aquaculture Marine Sites.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Are we able to see it? If I can confer with Daryl next to me.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This is the bundle that referred to in the RTI, and a lot is blacked out. This document's not ringing any bells with you?

**Ms MURDOCH** - No. I'm just checking in case it might have been something they lodged with us which was - I'm not quite sure what document we're talking about.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How about I find the exact reference in the right to information documents. I'd be surprised - who's the director of the EPA?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I am.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That's right, but I'd be surprised if you hadn't -

**Ms MURDOCH** - Was this an NRE Tas RTI? Otherwise, I haven't seen it. I'm EPA.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Whether or not you've seen it I'm not sure is relevant, because you were at this meeting according to the RTI, and there was a document before you about environmental monitoring of florfenicol.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Honestly, I do not remember having a face-to-face meeting with John Whittington. I'm presuming it was a Teams meeting potentially, but I'm honestly - I'm presuming it was a florfenicol monitoring program that the industry put forward. My team saw that document. We had a look at it, as you will see, and I'm happy to answer when we get asked about what monitoring we're doing. It might have helped inform, but I think what you can see is that we have gone well above what was put forward in that document.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So you're confirming that this document to which I refer -

**Ms MURDOCH** - I don't know what document you're referring to.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The draft Environmental Monitoring of Florfenicol in Salmon Aquaculture Marine Sites document.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Is it a -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's not in the RTI. It's referred to in the RTI.

**Ms MURDOCH** - I don't know, and I have not seen that RTI.

**Ms THOMAS** - Is it a state government document?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, this is what I'm trying to establish, Bec, whether it was written by government or the EPA or put forward by Salmon Tasmania.

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**Ms MURDOCH** - I'm happy to talk through, absolutely, our monitoring program that we have put in place, and that was only put in place in September, correct me if I'm wrong, Daryl.

**Mr COOK** - It may have been August, but after that date that you're talking about. You're talking about 5 August?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes. And we're very happy to absolutely walk through our monitoring program and what's being done and I'm also happy to answer that question, in regards to we are completely an independent, scientifically-based organisation. I take that exceptionally seriously, as do all the staff in this room. It is absolutely a privilege to work for this organisation. We make all our decisions on robust science, and I am impartial, independent and that is the core of what the EPA is.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you for that statement. The EPA's website says that it has:

... developed a new florfenicol antibiotic residue monitoring schedule prepared through a review of scientific literature and support from public health services.

**Ms MURDOCH** -Yes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** -. Was there any influence at all from the industry on the development of this schedule, and did the EPA undertake an entirely independent literature review -

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - or did they rely on the one done by industry?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I'm really happy to answer this question because I'm pretty proud of how the team have done this work. So yes -

**CHAIR** - Are we doing this under 1.3 where it fits?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I know. I understand, Chair.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, we will get back to various questions about finfish regulations.

**CHAIR** - I'm just trying to make it easy for *Hansard* and for our reporting purposes, that's all.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes. Industry had put forward some ideas and obviously we already have the oxytetracycline monitoring schedule as well. Our team looked at those and have come up with - and I'm actually happy to table the research that my team over 41 - documentation -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That would be great.

**Ms MURDOCH** - I brought that with me because I thought this might come up. My team, in working with public health, developed a monitoring schedule, they reviewed 41 current literature on florfenicol, and I have to say they're continuing to look at literature. I think

public health only sent us one the other day so we're constantly in this. I'm happy to table that bibliography to here.

We looked at that and compared, and I think it's fair to say we have gone a lot stronger, and we can document where and how. For instance, the first sampling that has occurred is over 700 sites are being done under that sampling. There is extensive baseline and there is other extensive monitoring. If you would like me to go through the monitoring program, I'm happy to do that and go through exactly what we're doing.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I don't know if we need a blow-by-blow of the monitoring program. I think it'd be great if you could table the literature review.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Absolutely.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But a summary of the monitoring program would be helpful.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Do I steal your thunder, or would you like me to - Darryl?

**Mr COOK** - I'm happy to -

**Ms MURDOCH** - I'm happy to go through it. The summary, just so you know, is still pretty extensive because it goes through the baseline of what we're doing there and then during treatment monitoring, and there are treatment sites, non-treatment sites, control sites and reference sites. There is a lot.

**CHAIR** - Before you start that, could I just ask on that point, what interaction do you have with the Director of Public Health in this?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes.

**Mr COOK** - Yes. We communicated - the process that was outlined, that the director has already mentioned - Salmon Tasmania came to us initially with the intention to use florfenicol and that was 29 July, and they had proposed some monitoring, they had done some literature reviews, so we picked up from there. We did our own literature review, we made contact with the Director of Public Health and got input from them as well as our own review of the literature, and we significantly built on the schedule that was put to us by Salmon Tasmania. I can start to take you through some of that if you like.

**CHAIR** - Sure.

**Mr COOK** - All right. In chronological order, the first thing that happens is baseline sampling, so that sampling that's undertaken before any florfenicol is put into the water, so we have water sampling. We have that at internal site within the lease, and we have it at external sites 35 metres from the boundary of the lease at three compliance sites. We then have reference sites which are some distance away from the lease ranging from 500 metres away to -

**Ms MURDOCH** - To 8.5 kilometres.

**Mr COOK** - Yes.

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**CHAIR** - Based on water currents?

**Mr COOK** - They're selected from our broadscale environmental monitoring program from within the region.

**CHAIR** - Sure.

**Ms MURDOCH** - There is actually really harsh conditions as well. Apart from what they have to do, like for that one for instance, it says samples must be taken at the edge of the [inaudible 5.40], the pen downstream of prevailing water currents, and the position must be reported at the time of collection. There's a lot of science and methodology in this.

**Mr COOK** - Then we have sediment sampling sites. Again, we have internal sampling of all the stock pen bays within the lease. We have the external sites in it, the three compliance points 35 metres from the boundary of the lease and the reference sites again. We have the sediment sampling there.

Then we have an untreated lease at some distance away which is also a stocked lease, so sampling of pens at that lease for some stock pen bays and compliance points at that untreated lease.

Then we have what we call in fauna sampling which is looking at the invertebrate communities living in the sediment. We have all stock pen bays again of those leases. The three compliance points are 35 metres from the boundary and the same three reference sites. Then we have the untreated lease again for the in-fauna sampling and then we have sediment microbial sampling. This is to look at the microbial community that is in the sediment, again a similar thing. We have all the internal stocked pen bays within the treated leases. We have the three compliance sites, three reference sites and the untreated lease. A similar thing with the stock pen base, three stock pin bays and three compliance points. That's an example of -

**Ms MURDOCH** - Baseline.

**Mr COOK** - For one of the companies and we would have a very similar thing to the other company.

The numbers may change slightly, the number of compliance points.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you for that. I am trying to double check in terms of the monitoring that you've outlined here. What we have in the right to information is on the 5 August, the document sent by John Whittington to Jason Jacobi and Catherine Murdoch, which is the draft environmental monitoring of florfenicol in salmon aquaculture marine sites.

**Mr COOK** - That wouldn't have had any of these baseline requirements.

**Ms MURDOCH** - We have added baseline requirements, so really happy to get that on the record, we are absolutely doing extensive baseline monitoring of any antibiotic treatment.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - OK and so if we held up the industry's proposed monitoring program that they certainly would have hoped that you'd adopt -

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**Ms MURDOCH** - Vastly different.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - and the one that the EPA has in place now. How far from pen sites is the monitoring extending to, given that there's a three-kilometre impact exclusion of florfenicol.

**Ms MURDOCH** - It varies. We've just gone through the baseline - and as was said, those sites are reference sites for up to 508.5 kilometres from pens as well as within external. In the monitoring that happens then on day one, 714 and 21.

**Mr COOK** - Yes, after treatment.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Again, we had - after treatment - we have a collection of wild fish sampling, water sampling, in-fauna, microbial and sediments again at different ranging sites again. Some of those are within the pens. All the fish, to help inform the monitoring is, is at zones that public health have worked with us, which are 500 kilometre and three kilometres. We are really specific on those of where they have to be collected from. 24 fish, mixed samples and on which days and mid-treatment for those.

Then the water sampling is across all of those sites and the reference sites as well, some of them. We've just had another one that potentially sites are actually 9.1 kilometres from the side. In response to how this varies from what was put to us, I think you will find, there was no microbial, we have added in water quality, we've added in baseline. We've done far more extensive sampling than what was originally proposed and it's extensive.

**Mr COOK** - You will find we have adopted what industry put forward, though, but we've just added a lot.

**Ms MURDOCH** - We have added a lot.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Noting that other people want to ask questions and wanting to make sure that these questions are asked. Yesterday, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation informed us there was an estimated 130,000 cubic metres of contaminated fill beneath the footprint of the proposed stadium at Macquarie Point. Has the EPA engaged with MPDC on this volume of contaminated fuel, and does the EPA believe it can be safely treated?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Just to check, what numbers have you there? Because we have our numbers.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you confirm this? 130,000 cubic metres yesterday. Ms Beach, I think, said?

**CHAIR** - I would have to check the *Hansard* to be sure.

**Ms MURDOCH** - It's 130,000 to 220 000 tonnes that matches with our table here.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I think a cubic metre is sort of a tonne.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, that's about right.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - 130 000 to 220 000 possibly is the range of volume?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, so what would you?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What we're trying to establish here is the role of the EPA as one of the regulators under the order, although you are not as empowered as the Secretary of State Growth. What is the role of the EPA in assessing that contaminated material is and how to dispose of it. Do we think Copping has the capacity?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Happy to answer, there's different classes. Our understanding is that only 10 per cent or 30,000 tonnes is of level three which would need to go to Copping. We understand that Copping does potentially have that capacity. The remaining is potential level two material.

I think you will find in what our management plans and their statements in regard to the Macquarie Point hearing outlined was that is up to them to do the site contamination assessments. Determine if it can be used on site, if it can be treated. That is our preferred. But it is level two, it's not Level three and if whether or not it can be reused.

**Ms ONG** - In assessing the contaminated soil on the site, Macquarie Point Development Corporation needs to engage a suitably qualified person to do that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Environmental auditor accepted by the EPA.

**Ms ONG** - Yes. There is a particular qualification that they have to have. They will do the assessment, and this is a means we commonly use for contaminated sites and then once the final tonnage is known, then it's up to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation to ensure that it goes to a place approved to receive it. As Catherine said, we expect that around 10 per cent will be Level 3 and the Copping can accommodate that

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Do you expect there to be any level four contaminated soil?

**Ms ONG** - I don't believe so, but this is part of the assessment that will happen.

**CHAIR** - There's a risk it could be under the goods shed when they have to move the goods shed. Because that hasn't been cleaned up under the goods shed.

**Ms MURDOCH** - But the site contaminator in that process should identify that and then they would have to completely comply with all those regulations in regard to those waste levels, yes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Given that you're responsible for waste management, is the EPA comfortable that Copping has the capacity to take the contaminated fill that you don't know the full volume of what you will be dealing with exactly at that site.

**Ms MURDOCH** - I am happy if you want to answer because the team has done that analysis for us. That was part of our consideration to put forward our recommended conditions. Yes, we understand Copping has availability at this point, but that's obviously a commercial decision for Copping as well and that's up to Macquarie Point to work within those.

Our requirement is obviously that it must be disposed of appropriately in accordance with the waste regulations. We will be informed of that when the the auditor is doing its work and actually determining on site exactly what this makeup is, but it is a decision for Macquarie Point, but they need to make sure where it's going -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In terms of the sequencing - Macquarie Point Development Corporation is responsible for commissioning an audit to have a look at what that fill is, including an assessment of what the composite of that fill is, what contaminants are in there and whether or not there's a risk. It then makes an assessment of what needs to be moved. Is that where the EPA as a regulator might come in?

**Ms ONG** - We set limits on the landfills that we regulate, including Copping as to how much they can receive every year. As Catherine said, it's a commercial decision on the part of the landfill operators to decide whether they can accommodate what might come off Macquarie Point.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What if they can't accommodate it? What happens then? It's that Macquarie Point Development Corporation's problem?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Well, it's contaminated. It's contaminated soil that can only go to a facility. If it can't be treated on site, it needs to go to a facility that can handle that level of waste.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There's only one in the south, isn't there?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Copping.

**Ms MURDOCH** - That's for them to enter into those arrangements with it's - until they find out exactly what they've got. But they're aware of that process. We have stepped through that process with them. As this process continues, I would expect that we would be kept informed of those matters.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is there any sort of requirement in the order for the EPA to be kept informed? I don't think so, but I'm just double checking. It's been a couple of weeks since I've been into it.

**Ms ONG** - I think it would be part of our normal process.

**Ms MURDOCH** - We're still a regulator.

**Ms ONG** - To be onsite and check what's is happening. Just in terms of the material that's not level 3, there are options other than Copping. There is McRobies and also Jackson Street.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - For the level 3 and above contaminants, what's the cap that the EPA has put on Copping?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I don't have that but we can get that, I'm pretty sure pretty quickly.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - That's a volume cap, isn't it?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, it is.

**CHAIR** - Which also then potentially has some flow-on it -

**Ms ONG** - Tons.

**CHAIR** - - in tonnage. I'm not sure what other developments have been planned in Tasmania where there are contaminated sites. Do you have any vision of that? Any other likely proposal that's going to create that sort of waste that would require storage at Copping? Dispose, not storage. Well, whatever it is.

**Ms MURDOCH** - This is - all of our assessments would look at contaminated land. We would know what's coming up. That's why that is important for the waste sector to talk to each other, but that's why it's Copping's business decision as to whether or not they're going to take Macquarie Point or if there are other projects that come up that might. But at this point - and we did ask the team to do the analysis. We thought - sorry, Cindy?

**Ms ONG** - B-cells

**Ms MURDOCH** - They've given us the B-cells. We want the C-cells.

**CHAIR** - Copping would charge MPDC for that disposal.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Absolutely. That's their business to do. As we've said, under EMPCA, we still have regulatory functions and things. We would still regulate that space.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We did ask this question of MPDC yesterday, or I did. What's the EPA's knowledge of the historical contaminants onsite? What are we looking at here? Mercury, copper, lead, zinc, arsenic?

**Ms ONG** - Yes, there are metals, hydrocarbons, probably asbestos. A range of things that will need to be investigated -

**Ms MURDOCH** - Tested.

**CHAIR** - Magnetic sand?

**Ms LOVELL** - No playing in the sand pit there either.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is the EPA comfortable with the level of remediation - acknowledging that the footprint of the stadium, should parliament make the mistake of approving it, has underneath it contaminated fill. What's the EPA's - is the EPA broadly comfortable with MPDC's assurances about site decontamination?

**Ms MURDOCH** - What we're comfortable with are the conditions that we've proposed that the development of a waste management plan. The site auditor will manage risk appropriately and we will have oversight of what that looks like. We're comfortable that our conditions enable us to actually understand the condition at the site, and that we can ensure that



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appropriate regulated processes are actually followed. That's what we're - we're comfortable our conditions will enable us to do that.

The C cell is 45,000 tonnes per annum, that's total that they're licenced for.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you. That's interesting, isn't it, because the broad assessment of the volume of potentially contaminated fill under the footprint of the stadium is that it might reach 220 000 cubic metres, the maximum capacity of copping and that's a regulated threshold, isn't it? Is 45 000 cubic metres correct?

**Ms ONG** - Yes, per annum?

**Ms MURDOCH** - This is scheduling and they get it there in March and then they do another one. That's per annum and on the financial year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You still potentially, given the time-frames for the stadium, should parliament make the mistake of approving the order, you still potentially will have fill sitting on site that can't go to Copping because a threshold's been met within a year, given the volume.

**Ms MURDOCH** - That is not for us. That is MPDC and we have absolutely put those positions forward about here, and this is determining what you've got on site. What is that scheduling on site, so as any construction project, understanding that waste and that volume that they have and therefore the best process. They have to find out what's on site, obviously, but they can schedule that. They can determine that and understand and manage that risk. Our contaminated waste plant, is that what that one's called?

**Ms ONG** - Condition.

**Ms MURDOCH** - The condition that we have will include those things in there because, yes, we can't have risk of contaminants to air into water and storm water. Those things absolutely need to be considered, but we've had those discussions.

**CHAIR** - is gaseous.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes. I'm comfortable they understand, and we've had those conversations with them that that process needs to be well thought through.

**CHAIR** - And planned.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, planning, really important.

**Ms O'CONNOR** -Yes, the state is not particularly good at planning out large infrastructure projects and their consequences, but you can take that as a comment if you like.

**CHAIR** - We will.

## OUPUT GROUP 1

### Environment Protection Authority

#### 1.2 Environmental Assessment

**CHAIR** - This is your activities under the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act. I might lead off, in terms of the number of breaches that you've had are reported in terms of breaches of EMPCA?

**Ms MURDOCH** - There are various things here. So, which are we talking? I think we will go to infringement notices.

**CHAIR** - The number of infringement notices because that would be related to a breach, one would assume. Unless you're being particularly nasty.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes. I think it's the 65 that you're talking about that are in our annual report. There's a list of 65 in there.

**CHAIR** - And what were they related to? What different sectors were they related to? Do you have a breakdown of that?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I do, and I haven't printed that table off. It's in the annual report. I have a table printed. I have it prepared, so there are 65 and happy to table this. What we have is the total fine as well on the penalty units applied, and what the basic offences were. So depositive concentration, controlled waste, illegal dumping, breach of permit conditions, failure to fulfil direction of an authorised officer. There are varying ones that I'm happy to table that. What I will also say is this was the first time it was in our annual report this year. I think this is a process that we're looking to continue to improve. Next year we will have at least this level of detail as well. I think that's a fantastic step forward for us.

**CHAIR** - Public visibility does help.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, so it's the same as the table but a little bit of extra information if you're happy for me to table that?

**CHAIR** - Thank you. That would be really helpful.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Noting that this is about environmental assessment. After the 2025 salmon mortality event. The EPA commenced an investigation into the event. Including:

Various investigative actions are being used to determine the facts. In fact, chemical analysis of deceased fish and oily material, inspections of fish farm activities and offshore and land-based facilities where deceased fish are handled and assessment of salmon company mortality reports and information.

Would it be possible to provide the committee with an update on the investigation and can we confirm the outcome of this investigation will be made public?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, the outcome of all of our investigations are, but it's still underway and it is related to the release of controlled waste into the environment. That is the investigation

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that is underway, because that is what we regulate. I am sure you all know this, it's not appropriate for me to comment on it until the active investigation has completed so I don't finish that ongoing matter, but we are finalising that investigation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This event, from memory, happened in February and March of this year? That's now some nine months ago. I understand all government and statutory authorities has resourcing pressures, but that's nine months, where people who live along the southern beaches have had no answers basically about their summer.

Is this going to be one of those situations where we are at the table next year and the investigation is still ongoing?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I can't tell you, because obviously in regard to judicial matters they take time. They take time to prepare a case, and it will be ultimately; we will put this up to the DPP for decision. Those processes - we don't actually control over those timeframes.

**CHAIR** - It's not being held up by you though.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Completely not. No. Absolutely not and happy to have that absolutely on the record. My team has done a really thorough job in regard to all avenues of evidence. What can be included to get this investigation finished. Yes, it had started when I was there, and it's just taken time to [inaudible] that into an appropriate case file.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I ask then without you having to give anything away necessarily in terms of time: is the investigation near completion?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, it is.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - OK. Can you help me understand what the pathway is here. The investigation is completed, there were significant impacts, there may well be referral to the Director of Public Prosecutions. What is the pathway - if you like - if it's to go to the DPP, does any minister sit in there?

**Ms MURDOCH** - No.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Would any industry people be notified?

**Ms MURDOCH** - No. I have an exceptionally qualified internal legal team, which I'm thankful for. They do an amazing job. This is our case; this is what we will put forward. This is no interference in this process whatsoever.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - OK. Well, that's reassuring, given the history of this island.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Just today, was it, that we have a copy of the Reflections and Learnings 2025 Salmon Mortality Event -

**Ms MURDOCH** - Today?

**CHAIR** - No, that was a week or two ago.

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**Ms MURDOCH** - I think it was a few weeks ago.

**CHAIR** - Who would know?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's the first time a hard copy has got into my hand. I am thinking, wow, amazing.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Happy to provide you with hard copies of these.

**CHAIR** - There was a briefing on it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I wasn't briefed on this.

**Ms MURDOCH** - There was a briefing we did to members. I am sure it was three weeks ago.

**CHAIR** - It probably is three or four weeks ago to be fair.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In terms of the learnings and what kind of actions the EPA can undertake to prevent that sort of salmon mortality event in the future. What kind of reassurance can the EPA provide - not that this sits on your head, by the way. Not that it does - to residents of all coastal areas that, some actions being taken, we're not going to have another repeat.

**Ms MURDOCH** - In the time that that was being done, the team certainly have not sat on its hands, and we've been doing things. I think importantly, what will be in place for the first time, this summer, is in accordance with - because we've been rolling out the environmental standards. They are an extraordinary document in regard to what we are bringing and the changes to the management of the industry in this space. Part 4 of that is already in place-

**Mr COOK** - Some of part four, not all of it.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Part 5 are the additional things we're adding to environmental licences. And one of those that will be the first time this year is waste management plans. Now those waste management, they're currently being prepared. We're getting those into final stages, those plans address the management of all specified waste but including mortality.

That will outline for us how much waste and different scenarios of waste at levels and also matching to ensure that infrastructure for waste management of mortalities is in place so we can say yes, there is a statewide network at any of these scenarios, we understand that waste will be managed.

There are other things that we are doing, and we've kicked the process off yesterday of varying licences.

**Mr COOK** - Yes absolutely, first one has been out.

**Ms MURDOCH** - They're obviously out for consultation, but what we're looking to do there is to actually have stricter language around the removal of mortalities from pens. It was quite a vague licence condition before. We're putting a time frame on that of quite a strict time frame.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - Tell us about it.

**Ms MURDOCH** - We're out for consultation.

**Mr COOK** - It's out for statutory consultation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If it's out for statutory consultation its public.

**Ms MURDOCH** - No, it's to the licence holder under the act.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - To both companies or all companies?

**Mr COOK** - To all licence holders.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes, but it's statutory under the act.

**Mr COOK** - It's because it's a variation of a licence at, at the directors volition. We have a statutory step where we have to consult the licence holder.

**CHAIR** - You don't have to agree with them though.

**Ms MURDOCH** - No, but we have to consult.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What would be best practice then, for example, in terms of.

**Ms MURDOCH** - In summer we're proposing a 24-hour removal. That's absolutely a learning out of that. Let's get them out of the pens, let's ensure that we've actually got a waste infrastructure network that can cope with this. Also, the assessment team has been working with the waste sector to assess and get licences into place for increased volume as well.

Those things have been happening.

**Mr COOK** - That's based on when the water's warm, you get very rapid decomposition and like I say the companies, if they have evidence, they can put something else to us.

**CHAIR** - Do you have the capacity then to ask them also to de-stock?

**Ms MURDOCH** - No.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Who can do that?

**Mr COOK** - The concept that has come up through the debrief process has been called emergency harvest and through the debrief process Salmon Tasmania is to develop a code of practice so that could be addressed in the industry code of practice.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Stocking rates and those things obviously that is in biosecurity and in their biosecurity standards. One of the greatest learnings out of this whole process was us as agencies understanding our statutory roles and our processes and where there is potential duplication and crossover and getting better at that and sharing information amongst ourselves. That was actually a positive outcome of that.

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My team are already out on the water with the biosecurity team a lot more and we're looking at how we can align our compliance activities in a much more efficient, effective way.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I just understand better what an emergency harvest is?

**CHAIR** - Destocking.

**Mr COOK** - Yes, it's another word for destocking.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Emergency harvest is de-stocking. It doesn't mean take the fish out and prepare them like you'd harvest other foods, does it? The broad English language definition of harvest is to pick to feed people, we're not talking about emergency harvesting.

**Ms MURDOCH** - It's not a recommendation in the report that's being progressed and whether or not industry includes that in the code of practice, I'm not aware of.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is the EPA feed into that code of practice which is being written by the industry to govern its own actions.

**Ms MURDOCH** - They're not governing their own actions, because our regulation still stands. They can write a code of practice and lots of industries have a code of practice. There's no issue with an industry going, these are the standards we're going to hold ourselves to. That does not inform our regulatory processes. As we're saying we are getting on and introducing all the technical standards. We have the schedule to get them in place under the environmental standards and into licensed conditions.

The raft of changes that are coming into this industry because, in our space, because of the environmental standards, is changing things a lot. We've got the new conditions already in for noise vessel, basically mitigation, which we've already worked with the companies and have had infringements and we're working with the companies on actually using that condition and to improve noise vessel. There is a lot that has already come in, but we are progressively going through the introduction of the technical standards as well, and that will not change because of a code of practice.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Has the EPA had any regulatory role in Macquarie Harbour recently?

**Ms MURDOCH** - We have an ongoing role.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, on ground: have there been any incidents or matters that the EPA has needed to provide oversight or examine in relation to finfish farming in Macquarie Harbour?

**CHAIR** - Respond to, perhaps.

**Ms MURDOCH** - No.

**Mr COOK** - Not incidents-wise: we're over there doing monitoring on a regular basis, we -

**Ms MURDOCH** - Our ongoing role with the environmental licences over there, and our water quality monitoring and all those are ongoing. We haven't had any incidents for Macquarie Harbour.

**Mr COOK** - We receive regular seabed video surveys and that kind of thing for assessment. We're in regular communication around the oxygenation requirements in Macquarie Harbour, so there's regular communication.

**CHAIR** - On a slightly different topic before we run out of time: as an independent statutory office here, we did hear from another one which is really struggling with the funding they're getting to deliver what they need to deliver on behalf of the people of Tasmania. I noticed in the appropriation in the budget papers, on page 53, I can see that there are relatively small increases in the environmental regulation line item, but on environmental assessment, it falls away.

I wouldn't have thought that work would have diminished. When we look at the finfish area, that's obviously self-funded, or funded by the industry, but it's flat. You've had a lot more work to do of late, particularly with the use of florfenicol. Is your budget adequate to do what you need to do? You're allowed to speak freely here because the Auditor-General certainly did.

**Ms MURDOCH** - I know I am. Firstly, I will address what looks like a budget decrease in assessments: that's actually not the case. What's going on here is that there are two buckets really, regulation versus assessment, don't actually match our organisational structure. We might be able to work with Treasury to get it to match. For instance, CEO, everything's in that bucket. There's also an assessments team from our science and technical division that are showing in that regulation. So all of assessments isn't in the assessments bucket. The changing of those budget figures are actually because what we've done is make sure all the operational overheads are actually to the right people in those buckets. So it's just a transfer amongst those.

It's actually not a decrease in funding. It's us actually putting the right money against the right output group there. In regards to more funding, of course I would always love more funding, and my team, I think, are doing an extraordinary amount of work for 117 FTE, a headcount of 129. We're lean, we have a lot of responsibility. I'm so proud of this team behind me and within the whole agency. So, yes, if there was more money to be had, we would probably be able to fast-track some programs, but we are matching our resources to the program we're delivering.

**CHAIR** - So what gives a bit? What do you have to push back to ensure that you can do the really critical work, like the monitoring, or something that gets dropped in your lap? What actually has to be pushed out to enable that?

**Ms MURDOCH** - There's one absolute area that we - I don't think anyone in the agency would agree that we would love to do more - is better communication, data analysis, information out. We have terabytes of data within this organisation. Data's different to information, right? We all know that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So this is the studies, the monitoring and that kind of thing?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes. We put the reports up, but there's no dashboard. Our staff do amazing work and we're getting amazing information in. We know we can do it. I do not have resources for that. I'd also love to have the conversation with the community about what is the

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information that you'd like our data to answer. There's a really good piece of work in that. I have a communications team of one media - and we have had over, I think this year, 165 media inquiries. That's the whole job. We can't focus on doing proactive communications. Kylie does an amazing job, but yes, that is a gap that we would absolutely love to fill.

**CHAIR** - I should know the answer to this, but I don't: how is the \$2.993 million from the industry determined and could that be increased to assist in the extra workload that goes, particularly at the moment, into that sector?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I've actually got - the real figures around that were actually, because they're just estimates, and the actual money we got from the salmon levy that year was \$3.2 million for instance. So yes, what we can influence is through - so my business manager doesn't say she's given me all the information I need - but it's through the salmon levy. Obviously we work in that process with NRE Tas. It's in arrears, but it is for staff paid directly, or effort paid that year that we can -

**CHAIR** - So what's it based on? The profitability of the company? Is it the headcount of the company, the number of fish? What's it based on?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I actually don't know how. I'm just trying to find it here. Is Kylie telling me where to go in the chat? Sorry. Okay, Salmon Cost Recovery Model [Program 6.16.31.]. It's administered by NRE Tas and I haven't yet been through this process with NRE Tas, but I am looking forward to doing it with my team this year.

**CHAIR** - You've got a pretty good case for, you know -

**Ms MURDOCH** - We do.

**CHAIR** - thinking about getting a bit more money into this space, but anyway, that's my view.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Yes. So, 100 per cent of our positions are funded in this space. Further funds are received to cover our corporate overheads and things as well, but it's basically we put in the resources that - in November, December, so it's coming up pretty soon - and I can, through that process, request additional funds, so we are giving this consideration.

**Mr COOK** - It has been going up in recent years, yes.

**Ms MURDOCH** - It has been going up.

**CHAIR** - So you can clearly demonstrate that in your numbers then, when you go for the meeting?

**Ms MURDOCH** - All the money we get in this space completely goes to my salmon team. That's very transparent, that's very obvious, and I don't think anyone would say there isn't a need for this space to be improved. We've got so much information to share and get out that we want to get out and share, and I think it's in the best interest of everybody that we actually are able to do that. Yes, we can put a case forward. Obviously also I can - we have been successful this year in getting money through the digital fund; that if this is something in that respect that future budget bids, obviously, would - I think this space, particularly, is one that



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would suit for us to do that, to go in for that funding as well, to get better interface portals with the community around not just salmon, around lots of our regulatory stuff.

**CHAIR** - Well, the air monitoring stuff is really important too.

**Ms MURDOCH** - It's so important. Yes. It's really important, it informs public health, it informs bushfires, all of those things. It's used by lots of other agencies. So being able to get that upgraded, I know the team's pretty excited about that, and we will get that rolled out over the next three years, obviously, and upgrade the system and that's on a portal, but it can also be better as well. How we go into the future with much better information and our transparency, all of that is definitely a focus for us.

**CHAIR** - We need to wrap up here: just one more, yes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - One quick question: some years ago, the EPA was undertaking monitoring of emissions from cruise ships in the port of Hobart, noting that here, unlike Sydney Harbour, we allow cruise ships using dirty old bunker fuel to park in the port. Has there been any update on the EPA's monitoring of cruise ship emissions in the City of Hobart?

**Ms MURDOCH** - I know we got a brief, and you will bring it up, but my understanding is that because we did that monitoring, cruise ships with that kind of fuel are no longer allowed to dock in Hobart. Is that correct?

**Ms ONG** - That's right. The harbour master has encouraged fuels to shift to low-sulphur fuel when they dock, rather than doing a mix.

**CHAIR** - They just send them to Burnie, do they?

**Ms MURDOCH** - No, because we also regulate there.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But that's not regulated yet, is it? You said the harbour master encourages.

**Ms ONG** - Yes. He requests that, so AMSA is the regulator that ships use, and where there's an issue, the harbour master makes a request and it's these days -

**CHAIR** - Communicates with AMSA?

**Ms ONG** - Yes absolutely. So, AMSA, the harbour master and ourselves are in communication when there's a problem.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. It has been a bit of a whirlwind, but we really do appreciate the information you've provided, I don't think there was anything left outstanding, was there?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - A couple of little bits. You came back with one answer. The volume cap on Copping. You got that?

**Ms ONG** - Yes, we did.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It was 45 cubic each year.

**Ms ONG** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - I don't think we need to write to you for further information. Thank you very much for being so prepared. Yes, and we hope it wasn't too traumatic.

**Ms ONG** - It's parts 3 and 4 of the environmental standards, not 4 and 5.

**Mr COOK** - So part 3 is already in force.

**Ms ONG** - And part 4 has been implemented.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**The committee suspended from 6.22 p.m. to 7.18 p.m.**

**Output Group 7 - Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania  
7.2 Climate Change**

**CHAIR** - Thanks, minister - in your Environment portfolio. We're starting with climate change, then going back to environmental management and working through it, at your request. That's fine. If you'd like to introduce the people at the table.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I would. From the Department of State Growth Office of Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania, we have Vanessa Pinto, Acting CEO of Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania. Dr Sarah Russell, Director Climate Change.

**CHAIR** - Do you want to make some opening statements. Do you want to cover the whole lot, not just climate change?

**Ms OGILVIE** - It's fairly brief anyway. Thank you, Chair. Members of the committee, officials, thank you for joining me. We do have a couple of teams that will move in and out as we need to over the session.

Today's session will obviously cover a number of portfolio areas within my remit including the Environmental Protection Authority - I know you've met with them directly but as the responsible minister, I'm also happy to take questions - and Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Office.

I would like to begin today by stating how committed we are as a government to protecting Tasmania's environment and threatened species. In relation to threatened species, we take our role very seriously, and to support the important conservation work being undertaken inside and outside of government, including committing \$8 million over four years to establish the Tasmanian Threatened Species Fund.

In its first year, the fund enabled a range of strategic initiatives and on-ground conservation action for a wide range of threatened plants and animals. Through the Threatened Species Fund this year, we've partnered with more than 15 organisations to deliver on-the-ground actions for threatened species. These partnerships have also leveraged significant in-kind support and funding from a range of stakeholders.

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Government continues to invest in efforts to recover the orange-bellied parrot, building on the \$2.5 million to construct the captive breeding facility at Five Mile Beach, which opened in July 2019, with an additional \$1.3 million committed in 2023-24 to further support the captive breeding program and to launch a groundbreaking tracking program which aims to learn more about the movements and behaviours of orange-bellied parrots during their northern migration. The first season of tracking was very successful and has already yielded new insights into the migratory behaviour of this tiny parrot.

**Waste and Recovery Board:** One of the success stories of 2025 has been the launch of Tasmania's container refund scheme, Recycle Rewards, on 1 May. Now with more than 50 million containers being returned, this makes Recycle Rewards the fastest-growing scheme in the country. Through the Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Board, landfill levy funds have been invested into Tasmania's waste and resource recovery sector, with key investments including: \$5.5 million in high-protection infrastructure grants, \$500,000 for targeted waste and recycling projects in remote councils, \$4.3 million over four years for a statewide education campaign, \$2.36 million to the three regional waste organisations to deliver local waste and resource recovery programs. In total, \$27 million has been collected in levy since it was introduced. The board has reinvested \$23 million of this to date, which we're very proud of.

**In relation to climate change:** As we are all very well aware, climate change is an integral part of the Environment portfolio, and the Tasmanian Government is committed to taking strong action in this area. The Climate Change Office in Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT) - thank you for being here - have several key priorities this year. This includes executing key projects from Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan, and the six sector-based Emissions Reduction and Resilience plans.

Our Climate Change Action Plan includes 98 actions in total across government, equating to an investment of more than \$250 million. These activities are already under way. The government is also implementing adaptation actions in response to Tasmania's first statewide climate change risk assessment. So, let me assure you that my departments are working collaboratively to deliver on the comprehensive suite of existing priorities that support Tasmania's environment now and into the future, as the climate continues to change. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I'll go to you, Cassy, just on climate change.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I heard you just say that the government is 'committed to taking strong action' on climate. If we have a look at the budget for the climate office, it's a little bit hard to believe what you've said. In 2024-25, the budget for the climate office was \$9.9 million. In the out-years 2028-29, the budget for the climate office generously sits a bit under \$3 million. So, there's been a cut of almost \$7 million to the Office of Climate Change budget. Can you explain, as minister, how you let that happen?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I think we do have some information on the financials, which I'd like to ask Vanessa to explain, and then I'm happy to answer more of your questions.

**Ms PINTO** - Thank you. So, the reduction in the budget that the member has outlined is in relation to some fixed-term funding priority initiatives. That funding ceases in the next period, which is 2025-26. So, that covers funding for the Climate Change Action Plan, for the

last component of the electric vehicle target, the Emission Reduction and Resilience Plans, and some dedicated funding associated with disaster assistance.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Ms Pinto, whichever way you look at it, minister, at a time where the science is telling us that the impacts of global heating are accelerating and intensifying, the Tasmanian Government has cut funding to the Climate Office of almost \$7 million over the forward Estimates.

Can you show me anywhere in your budget where the government has committed to a recommendation of the Tasmanian Climate Risk Assessment Report? Because it's my understanding that when the State Climate Risk Assessment report came out, the Tasmanian government said thank you for your work and committed to no actions.

**Ms OGILVIE** - We have a range of actions we are taking in our Climate Change Action Plan, and I can give you some details on that plan.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - But that's a plan that expires before too long. I don't really want a historical, I'm looking forward because that's where the impacts are coming.

**Ms OGILVIE** - The forward work is the projects that we're doing. It might be helpful if I go through those because they obviously range across the forward years. This is the actual work that is happening on the ground.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If they relate to any of the recommendations in the Tasmanian Climate Risk Assessment Report, which was what my question was about, that would be great.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I will run through them and then you can let me know what you would like to know more about. The action plan funding in particular, because I know we're always concerned about the money and resources. We have \$10 million from the 2021-22 Budget, an additional \$3 million for the Low Emissions Livestock Grant Program through the 2023-24 Revised Estimates Report.

There is \$2.4 million and the 2024-25 Budget of \$600,000, \$1.3 million from the Emissions Reduction Loan Scheme from the 2021 budget that's been reprofiled to support the implementation of the Emissions Reduction Resilience Plans. There are 98 actions in the action plan; that's the the projects that we're doing - in total across government - equating to an investment of over \$250 million marks 50 million.

These allocations are further funding outside the initial \$10 million initially invested. There's quite a substantial amount of action happening, particularly with these projects. Is there anything I've missed, Vanessa?

**Ms PINTO** - The \$1.8 million associated with the Climate Projections Work.

**Ms OGILVIE** - There is \$1.8 million there as well. The work we're doing is the work that we have agreed strategically. The work that we're doing with the Climate Change Action Plan is important because we're working with industry and community and across sectors. It's been very well funded. The projects are underway.

But I'm always concerned about funding and resourcing and each time I've been at this table in every portfolio, it's the same question we all have. Why isn't there more money for the things that we would like to see money go into?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I guess this is a question of community safety. It's a question of protecting that which sets Tasmania apart from the rest of the world. Gondwana island and it's about protecting the economy. If you just want to talk about the kind of money that the experts are telling us will be required, the 2025 National Climate Change Risk Assessment referenced financial and economic modelling from the Colvin Review, which shows Tasmania expecting to pay \$320 million in economic costs from hazards like storms and bushfires each year from 2050. That's equivalent to paying for a new \$1.8 billion Macquarie Point Stadium every 5.6 years.

Minister, are you aware of the evidence in the National Climate Risk Assessment that Tasmania is the most risk exposed state in the nation. Page 51 of the National Climate Risk Assessment has a really confronting graph there. I wonder if you've seen it, minister? And that looks at all jurisdictions and across those jurisdictions it identifies that Tasmania is the most risk exposed state.

Yet, we have evidence in the state budget that certainly from an adaptation point of view, there's very little resourcing being allocated towards keeping communities and the natural environment in our economy safe from the shocks that are coming.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Have you had a look at the National Climate Change Assessment?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I was just waiting for a question.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The question is do you understand how serious the threat is?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, I do and that's why we have this entire department and the work that we're doing. Perhaps I could just turn to the specifics of it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Specifics of what?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, your question. The National Climate Risk Assessment identified Tasmania, as you say, as the most hazard prone state in the country. I think we know that. You've asked what the government is doing to in effect reduce or acknowledge and then reduce Tasmania's risk. We as a government have released our first legislated statewide risk assessment for climate change in November 2024. That's a good first step. Tasmania's Risk Assessment for Climate Change was produced by Deloitte's Risk Advisory Pty Ltd in partnership with the Climate Change Office in RecFit. The risk assessment analysis 40 key risks and opportunities for Tasmania under a changing climate. I am just going to get a little bit of water to make it easy to read.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - To read.

**Ms OGILVIE** - To read.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You were reading from...

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Thank you, Chair. The risk assessment analysis 40 key risks and opportunities for Tasmania under a changing climate; 33 of these risks and opportunities are considered tier 1 and 2 meaning action is recommended in the next five years. In 2024, the Tasmanian government also released Managing Tasmania's Climate Risk and Opportunities, which was the government's response to the risk assessment. Response focuses on building our capacity as a state to respond to multiple risks and opportunities through action in five key areas. They are:

- (1) Helping Tasmanians understand climate risks and opportunities and how they might be impacted.
- (2) Supporting fit for purpose climate science data and information to prepare for the changing climate.
- (3) Building public sector capability to strengthen how we adapt and make the most of opportunities.
- (4) Facilitating collaborative partnerships to support adaptation plan.
- (5) Monitoring and learning as we go. And recognising that adaptation is iterative process.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can you tell the committee how many of the recommendations of the State Climate Risk Assessment the government is committed to implementing?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Let me check, Vanessa, are you able to assist with the numbers?

**Ms PINTO** - There are a number of actions that are associated with that and go across a breadth of areas. They include elements such as managing risks across different factors of the environment.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - As you would expect from a risk assessment. I am trying to understand how many of the proposed actions/recommendations in the state risk assessment have the Tasmanian government committed to because it was zero at the time. The question is: has the Tasmanian Government committed to any specific actions from the state-run risk assessment?

**Ms PINTO** - Dr Russell, if you just want to take through some details on the risk response.

**Dr RUSSELL** - The risk assessment was an assessment as a legislative requirement as part of the most recent changes to the *Climate Change (State Action) Act*.

**Ms THOMAS** - Sorry, but could you speak up a bit more?

**Dr RUSSELL** - I am a bit of a low talker, but maybe it's not on. I am notoriously a low talker. This happened last year. I can't help it. We completed the risk assessment. There were no actual recommendations in the risk assessment report. We prepared a government response

which had five core areas and within that there are a significant number of actions that we have been implementing over time. The government response includes a range of adaptation actions in response to both the risks and opportunities highlighted in the statewide risk assessment and includes a focus on those five areas of action which I spoke about. The first one is helping Tasmanians understand the climate risks and opportunities in the risk assessment and how they might be impacted. The second one is supporting Tasmanians to access fit-for-purpose climate science data and information to prepare for the changing climate, and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you and sorry to interrupt you, but the minister did take us through this.

**Dr RUSSELL** - Okay. Well, that would include something like the climate change projections, building public sector capability, which is the policy framework that we've implemented, and facilitating collaborative partnerships. Without partnerships across government we are lost, and we need to work with our colleagues across government in local government, in business and in industry to do that, and have a focus on continuous improvement.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If we go to the first statewide risk assessment, it provides - it's not as comprehensive as the national risk assessment, but it provides some real significant examples of climate risk across all sectors with cascading impacts. The risks that have a tier 1 urgency rating are of particular concern, as I'm sure they are to all of us. Managing the risks rated tier 1 on the adaptation urgency scale:

requires new, stronger or different government policies or implementation activities over and above those already planned, are needed in the next five years to reduce longer-term climate risk or immediate significant climate risk, and it's clear where this action should be directed.

Minister, can you sit here, hand on heart, and say that the Tasmanian Government, in response to its own state climate risk assessment, has taken that step?

**Ms OGILVIE** - We are doing a range of projects that I think encapsulate the activities that have been identified, both by government and also by yourself today. What I will say is that resource constraints are real. I've identified particularly forward projects that I think are substantial and ongoing and we continue to implement Tasmania's climate change action plan, and that's the strategic vision and document under which we are implementing our actions. The government is focused on finalising projects from that action plan and delivering projects from the six sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans and the statewide climate change risk assessment, which were released in 2024.

Now, the six sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans are really remarkable documents, and it's my understanding that a substantial amount of stakeholder engagement occurred to put those together, and that we are working really carefully and well across those sectors. I think the philosophical approach that we've taken as a government to work with stakeholders with sectors across those pillars of the economy, in particular, is bearing fruit.

Progress on the action plan was publicly reported and I'm sure you've all seen that in an annual climate change activity statement in September 24. Now, we know the next statement, which I'm certain you will be interested in, is currently being prepared, I think that's right to

say, and will be released before the end of the year. There's a range of activities under that plan as well, under the action plan.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If we could go back to the state climate risk assessment and those risks that it designates as tier 1 for their urgency, that is, these impact on food supply systems, impact on the built environment - I know you're texting, but if you could just listen. Within the state climate risk assessment report are a range of tier 1 urgency actions required. Are you able to point - and it says in fact that:

Many impacts in the built domain are rated to have a major consequence by 2030. Risks to healthcare and emergency services, built infrastructure and risks to transport networks have an adaptation urgency rating of tier 1.

Minister, can you point to anywhere in the Budget where it is clear that the government has heard this and allocated action and resources to respond, because 2030 is five years away?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I have just actually answered the question, but I'm happy to give more information, in particular, to Vanessa.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Sorry, did you point to areas in the Budget where this is funded?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, I think we have a list here, so -

**Ms PINTO** - One of the areas that's identified as a tier 1 is in relation to some of our inland water ecosystems, and some of those areas fall under the government's rural water use strategy where it's looking at a number of areas to examine and understand what's occurring in the ecosystem and understand how to manage those waterways. That's quite a comprehensive program the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania is running. Equally, there are also factors that are being considered across our coastal ecosystems and equally -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Funding as well?

**Ms PINTO** - As a part of those programs, they're being considered as a part of the marine environments that are being looked at within the environment sections of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I guess I still haven't had an answer to the question about where we can see in the Budget - and I don't mind if you talk about other portfolios and the allocations in those outputs that respond to the urgency within both the state and commonwealth climate risk assessments.

**Ms PINTO** - Other areas that, of course, would be covered within the risk assessment fall within the renewable areas, that are looking at a number of factors such as renewable developments to manage the state's requirements. There are also areas where we're looking at clean fuel sources.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - With respect, just like the rural water use strategy, a lot of the government's renewable projects preceded the release of the state climate risk assessment. Again, minister -



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**Ms OGILVIE** - The challenges remain the same. We're all dealing with the same science and identifying the projects that need to be done in a priority area, so -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If I could just say, everything in response to the question that I've asked about resourcing in the Budget that deals with the real risk, that's been pointed to, is previous government policy, previous funded initiatives.

**Ms OGILVIE** - You want new funding; is that your question?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I want to see evidence of any funding allocation or any program or policy change that deals with the urgency in your own government's state climate risk assessment.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, I think - sorry, Vanessa, please go first and then I will -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I think you should go first.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, I'm happy to answer it. We're all dealing with the same science and we're dealing with the same problem, which is climate change, and we have a group of people who are very good at what they do. The programs and projects that we've established are prioritised. In relation to ongoing projects, they are funded. I've just read to you the amount of funding that's gone into it. I share your concern. I'm not here to have a debate with you about the importance of this area. It's urgent and important and serious. In relation to specifics, if you're looking for me to be able to tick a list off of what that document does as opposed to where we're at -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Anything in the Budget that points to a response to this.

**Ms OGILVIE** - That's another question. Vanessa -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's the same question I've asked three times.

**Ms OGILVIE** - No. Okay. Vanessa, you did want to say something. I will let you do that and then we can come back to it.

**Ms PINTO** - The key point that I was going to articulate for the committee is in relation to the work that is being done across government to increase the level of education and understanding and comprehension in the way existing programs and new policies and programs are being undertaken. There are a number of areas whereby that consideration is being brought in. I've referred to a couple within Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

Equally within the Department of Premier and Cabinet there are resilience and recovery programs that are being run where the integration of the learnings from the risk assessment is being brought into programs that are being run. Now, some of those are across new policies and funding-allocated areas for government. The key message there is that the key learnings, understanding and principles associated with climate change risk adaptation and application is being considered. In many respects, I think, as I would point to my colleague here, the team have over time been conducting a lot of work working with key areas to ensure that that level of education and understanding is instilled within those parts, across government.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - On the education question, what climate change education programs will the government implement and presumably fund? Given that Tasmania's risk assessment for climate change of 2024 states that:

education is vital to successful climate adaptation and increased resilience for future generations.

**Ms PINTO** - As an example, in just October this year, there were developed and distributed climate risk summaries and snapshots across agencies. There was also guidance and development materials provided to enable employees to be able to have access to valuable data and be able to understand how to apply that within the portfolio or policy areas that they oversee. This is also all across into case studies, so people can understand how that may apply, whether that could be in a marine context or it could be in relation to active management of land and vegetation resources. It's around taking the learnings and understanding from the significant body of work such that it is brought across for various policy and portfolio areas to understand how to apply.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you for your indulgence, Chair. What I heard just there is that there's some work being undertaken to better educate people in agencies and state servants, but there's not - I'm very happy for you to clarify this - funded climate-awareness programs in place for the broader community.

**Dr RUSSELL** - As part of the action plan, we've got funding to provide a range in the suite of public education material across a range of areas. That will involve information on our climate change projections and what you can do at home. In education, information awareness is a really key role of what our office does. There's a range of fact sheets available online already. We're continuously going to be updating and rolling those out.

In addition, we have done some work with children and young people on climate change through the action plan and through the response to the risk assessment. We recently worked with the department of education to provide information and advice on climate change resources in the curriculum. We've also worked with the university around the Curious Climate program and the Youth Climate Leaders Program as well. There's a range of activities going on in that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you. Those action plan measures preceded the delivery of the state climate risk assessment because that's for the action plan, which is set to expire.

**Dr RUSSELL** - The action plan did have a time-frame on it of two years, but we've got programs that are rolling out over time. Some of them will be ongoing, for example. There's sort of not a hard start and stop date and information education awareness is a core part of our function.

**CHAIR** - This sort of feeds a little bit into a couple of the questions you were asking as well. When we look at the Budget line item for climate change, it falls away very sharply. I acknowledge what Vanessa said about some of the programs being funded out of other areas, but in terms of the operational expenditure here, which is what this is, how many staff do we have in the office and what and what proportion of that appropriation for 25-26 of \$9.5 million is staff because if it's more than \$2 million, what happens to everybody else?

## PUBLIC

**Ms PINTO** - There's the equivalent of 12.27 paid full-time equivalents within the climate change office.

**CHAIR** - What's the salary bill for that annually?

**Ms PINTO** - I would say probably just under \$2 million of that base funding.

**CHAIR** - If you look at 2026-27, you've got \$2.780 million so let's say you've got \$700,000 to deliver a lot of work in this area. What is the additional funding for right now in this year?

**Ms PINTO** - In this current 25-26 Budget estimate year coming up, there is funding for the Climate Change Action Plan for the electric vehicle target for Tasmanian government fleet for the Emissions Reduction and Resilience plans and for disaster assistance for flood impact. They are the main initiatives.

**CHAIR** - This presumes then that they're all going to be finished.

**Ms PINTO** - That is correct.

**CHAIR** - We can go to the resilience plans. Minister, you said that resilience plans are being done. Which ones have been done, and which ones are still being done?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Sarah probably has that detail.

**Dr RUSSELL** - There are 6 sectoral emissions reduction resilience plans. Don't try and say it really fast. Their five-year plans, they're ongoing. There's a number of actions in those plans. Some of them are fully funded and some of them are future-funding priorities and some of them are long-term policy pieces that we will look at over time.

If you take, for example, the Transport Emissions Reduction and Resilience plan, there's been a number of initiatives that have been delivered in that plan, but there's also a significant amount of policy work that sits behind that which will be rolled out over time.

**CHAIR** - Let's just use that one for now, the transport one. The initiatives have been rolled down to that. Where are they funded from? The electric vehicles are probably here

**Dr RUSSELL** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - But surely the electric vehicles will need to be a project if it goes beyond next year and the year after. Where's that funding?

**Ms PINTO** - The electric vehicle fleet funding?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms PINTO** - Okay. So that was provided over a couple of years ago and has been rolled out over time. We've got \$800,000 to expend next year and then as per budget processes, we'll start applying for further funding associated with that.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - So there is no certainty beyond next year.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I can probably assist a little bit. Where are we getting to this from? Firstly, we need to recall that this is the interim Budget. The Budget that didn't pass is now passing. We're moving into -

**CHAIR** - It's a budget to take to the end of the year.

**Ms OGILVIE** - The funding we've got that aligns with climate action plan goes from 23 to 25 and, given the range of actions that you've heard, some are short, longer-term and quite a deep level of activity, range of actions to be delivered under that plan.

The risk assessment at sectoral plans and more of that project-based work and there is a deep amount of work underway that you've heard already. We are going to continue to develop that and the budgeting for that will be requested through the budget process as we go forward this year.

**CHAIR** - To be really clear then, there are six resilience plans. I will just use the shortened film so that I don't trip over it late in the day

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes, I tripped over it.

**CHAIR** - Six resilience plans. One would imagine they all have actions, not just policy in them, am I correct? And so, actions, usually, or almost inevitably require funding to deliver. How many have been completed did you say?

**Dr RUSSELL** - Through you, minister, all of the sectoral plans.

**CHAIR** - So the six are all done. Okay.

**Dr RUSSELL** - Yes, so they're five-year rolling plans.

**CHAIR** - Which ends this year?

**Dr RUSSELL** - No, they're only in their first year. They're currently in their second year now.

**CHAIR** - Oh, the resilience plans got a five-year plan.

**Ms OGILVIE** - The action plan is renewed this year.

**CHAIR** - But there is no funding evident, going back to Cassy's point. There is no funding evident - certainly not in the Climate Change line. And it's seeing a little bit difficult to point to others - some are in the water space - but what about- let's look at the agriculture one. Let's look at the transport one. Just those two. Where's the funding to deliver the policy and actions that sit under those?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Firstly, I have some information here that I think will assist and I'm happy to table that, which are some of the things you're speaking of. And Vanessa has some further details she can add.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Sure.

**Ms PINTO** - I have provided to the Chair, and I do have some additional copies if other members would like to also reference. That might just assist. There are some initiatives that we have that would go across each of the sectors.

**CHAIR** - There is no funding attached, though.

**Ms PINTO** - If I just talk through the - sorry- through you, minister?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Please do, yes. I know you have the details.

**Ms PINTO** - One of the areas we have listed there which goes across sectors is in relation to a business innovation grant program, and there is \$550,000 that's allocated towards that.

**CHAIR** - But where is that?

**Ms PINTO** - That's in the 2025-26 funding.

**CHAIR** - In this funding under Climate Change?

**Ms PINTO** - Within- yes, that's correct. What I'm giving is a bit of a breakdown of that funding, so you can get to an understanding of how it's been applied across different programs.

That, as an example an innovation grant program. It's currently live at the moment; I think it's been extended to the end of November. It is an important program designed to provide businesses with an opportunity to access funding to support them in how they can innovate in the way they run their businesses or adapt their business. That's one as an initiative -

**CHAIR** - That's \$500,000?

**Ms PINTO** - That's \$550,000 that's associated with that.

There's another initiative sitting under Transport. If you have a look on the details, that's associated with small businesses to purchase cargo e-bikes for last mile deliveries. You might see some, you know, deliveries that are occurring now on bikes versus other forms of transport, and there is allocated funding across that, and also electric delivery -

**CHAIR** - For this line item.

**Ms PINTO** - Yes - of \$300,000.

**CHAIR** - I'm just making sure [inaudible]

**Ms PINTO** - So, there are a number -

**CHAIR** - What are the total commitments? I don't know if you can provide that with the funding on it, because that's what we're asking: what is the total funding for these projects under the resilience plans for the 2025-26 year?

## PUBLIC

**Dr RUSSELL** - The funding that has been allocated to the projects in the Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans - that has come from action plan funding. For these funded programs that are listed in this document, some which have been delivered last financial year and some which will be delivered this financial year, it totals \$3.6 million for all of those service.

**Ms LOVELL** - Chair, are you asking for a breakdown of each? Is that what you're -

**CHAIR** - Yes, can you provide the table with the amount of funding that's been allocated to each of those, where there has been funding allocated?

**Ms LOVELL** - And when, like if it was funded last year or this year? Thank you.

**Dr RUSSELL** - We could do that but taken on notice.

**CHAIR** - Yes. I think the same chart but with the dollars in a column at the end of it.

**Dr RUSSELL** - And we can tell you which ones have been delivered.

**CHAIR** - Yes, and if you can tell us which year, like if it was a 2024-25 program - or if it's split across two, how much. I am just trying to figure out from the amount, the appropriation of \$9.5 million, knowing there's a bit over \$2 million in salaries, what the rest of it is. I mean, this is not the same with this line item; there's many others where there's a lot of things that sit under it and there's no breakdown.

**Ms OGILVIE** - No, I understand. It is difficult when you've got the projects that run across multiple years, but if we get those numbers for you, would that assist? We're happy to do that, yes.

**CHAIR** - Are there any programs in that table that will extend beyond 2025-26?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - A number of them are complete.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I don't know the answer to that.

**Ms PINTO** - I might just use one as an example. If you flip on to page 2 under Industrial Processing Energy, there's an allocation that we've had working with the HILT CRC to work with major industrials to arm them with access to research and intelligence to support them in developing their own emissions reduction plans. The comment I would make is that it's on instilling contacts, research and access to technological solutions for those entities themselves to continue to invest in that. If I was to use an example of that, Grange Resources Ltd is looking at opportunities for how they can electrify the operations.

**CHAIR** - They've got a pretty serious net zero target.

**Ms PINTO** - Yeah, that's exactly right. A lot of these major industrials are seeking to do that. What we've sought to do is create a facilitation role by giving them access to a much broader network through the Australian government's HILT CRC to be able to get access to research, technological advancements and information that they then can invest in.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - That's done through your current staffing, I imagine, or is that extra?

**Ms PINTO** - That's actually leveraging not just within the Climate Change Office itself, but we're actually drawing on other parts of State Growth, extended parts within Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania, but also within the Economic Development team within State Growth.

Further, if I could say part of what we're seeking to do is empower industry themselves to be able to take on this role themselves, invest themselves and seek to take this forward. There's a key role government needs to do to educate and empower, but there is a really important element that, frankly, all parties across society need to take responsibility here.

**CHAIR** - Are there any of those projects - I am not sure exactly what the number is, 34 projects - that will require funding over the forward estimates?

**Dr RUSSELL** - I would have to probably take a bit of a look, but if you take something like the HILT partnership, for example, we've paid the money, and the partnership continues over a number of years so, it will go out beyond the forward estimates.

If you take something like a grant program, sometimes that could take a little bit of time to execute one of the grant programs, for example, like an electric vehicle charger potentially, that can sometimes go out across the forward Estimates. These programs will be managed over the forward Estimates but the funding is in this -

**CHAIR** - To be clear then, the current allocations in the forward Estimates don't make provision for those at this stage. Is that correct?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Provisions for ones that are -

**CHAIR** - That continue on or any new ones that are developed as ongoing work. I mean, this is not a set-and-forget thing.

**Ms OGILVIE** - No.

**CHAIR** - Is that a fair statement the ones that will require ongoing funding are not included here because -

**Ms OGILVIE** - If new funding is required, that would have to be -

**CHAIR** - Yeah, it's not included. If it's not implied in the numbers from 2026-27 onwards. There's going to need to be new funding found.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Budget cycle. Yep.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I just - off the back of the Chair's questions - make an observation that when you look at the actual actions in this list, we've things like hold round table meetings, expanding engagement, develop information and resources, work with partners, work with partners, develop a program, seek opportunities, consider climate change impacts, review the \$250,000 Carbon Farming Advice Rebate Pilot Program, establish a group. I mean, minister, undertake a gap analysis, work with the Australian Government. There's a lot of things in here

which are, to be frank, small beer in terms of what's required. Reviewing a grants program is not really what you call a climate action.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I sort of don't agree with you and I will just explain why as gently and sensibly as I can. The work that you're looking at is the work of the government. The work of the government is to make sure we do what we can internally but also externally. I think the environment movement has done a superb job over - I remember the dams days, from those times in elevating the understanding of not just what were issues around dams in those days but now climate change and climate action as well.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's not just the environment movement doing that.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Superb job, I'm trying to give a compliment, a superb job. We all care about the environment. The question is what is the role of the government in climate change action? Now, we've taken an approach which is strategic, and we have the strategic-level work happening, we have the action plans and then we have the work where the rubber hits the road with industry, with sectors. That actually has been a very clever and smart way of going about elevating and supporting companies like Grange who want to do the right thing.

By adopting this strategy, which is really project based, that's why it gets complex when you're asking about other projects. The change is happening. Government ought not to be at the top dictating to others how they should do things. We ought to be bringing people on the journey, and I think that is what's happening. We heard a bit about that this morning. I take a different perspective, but I appreciate you want to see more direct action. I'm happy to hear your ideas on that.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, with respect, I was an actual minister for climate change for four years. You're part of a government that won't even allocate a portfolio.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Is that a question? No. So I have the portfolio, and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It's a little bit hard to take you seriously when you say committed to taking strong action on climate change when they won't allocate you a climate portfolio. There's cuts to the climate budget across the forward Estimates. There's no indication that the tears and the urgency expressed in the state climate risk assessment have been taken seriously, because the actions that we're looking at are reviews and working groups and conversations and expanding engagement. It worries me that we're sleepwalking under this government.

**CHAIR** - Do you have a question?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, always. Thanks, Chair. Well, how many - it just really worries me because it seems like we're tinkering around the edges, and if you want to talk about the role of government -

**Ms OGILVIE** - I don't believe that's true.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Hang on a minute, if you want the role of the government -

**Ms OGILVIE** - No, you're making a speech.



## PUBLIC

**Ms O'CONNOR** - you might talk about the climate act.

**CHAIR** - Do you have a question? I'd really like to get to it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I will get to the question, Chair, because what industry needs as well as partnership, and I know, I went and talked to the major industrials and had them at the table -

**Ms OGILVIE** - Exactly, I'm trying to give you some credit here.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What industry needs, for example, is to work towards sectoral targets. You need some carrot and you need some stick. Let's talk about your climate act review. How many public submissions, minister, were made to the climate act, and when is the government planning on releasing a summary of submissions and a response to them?

**Ms OGILVIE** - All right, so we had a huge preamble to that question -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It was an expression of frustration.

**CHAIR** - Just focus on the question; the rest were all comments.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Don't play dumb, the question was there at the end.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I'm not playing dumb. I'm just pointing out that, firstly, we're on the same page in the need for climate action -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I don't think so.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Secondly, I support my team and what they are doing and they're doing a great job. Thirdly, we know we're in a budget-constrained environment. I speak about it every time at this table. It's real. We all have to manage through it. What I have is stakeholder and community engagement through the consultation process was strong, you will be pleased to know. A total of 370 pieces of feedback were received, including 99 written submissions, 202 survey responses and 69 ideas or contributions, and there were 84 attendees across the five online workshops.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The answer to the question that I asked, about when will the government released a summary of submissions and a response to them, and what's the time frame for finalising the review?

**Ms PINTO** - The expectation is, because the independent organisations that are working together are preparing that, are looking to provide a report through by the end of this year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Okay, and can I ask a question for the third time, see how we go for an answer?

**CHAIR** - Yes, just ask one at a time perhaps.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, I did ask this one just now, the third time. When is the government planning on releasing a summary of submissions and a response to them?

## PUBLIC

**Ms PINTO** - What we would be seeking to do is, having received that report, provide an opportunity to review the feedback and the areas that are covered. There are a number of submissions that were provided through that process, and provide that advice through to government such that then the government would be in a position to be able to respond to that. I would expect that that would be something sought to do in early 2026.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm still not sure I have an answer. Is the government going to release a summary of the submissions and the government's response to them?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I think we just heard the answer.

**Ms PINTO** - In answer to that specific - yes, part of that would be to provide those responses that were submitted and then for government to then respond.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - When does the government plan to release proposed amendments to the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I don't think I have any details on that. Let me confirm.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Could you confirm it's your expectation there will be some amendments to the act?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I don't know, actually.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Christ. Okay.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I don't know about that.

**Ms PINTO** - Once we've received the independent assessment of the review of the legislation -

**Ms OGILVIE** - We will make a determination.

**Ms PINTO** - We will make a determination at that point, noting that when the prior review was done in 2022, is that right, there were amendments that were made at that point in time, and part of the assessment of the independent report, when it comes through, will be to consider the robustness of the legislative changes that were made at that time to determine.

**Ms OGILVIE** - We will assess what is needed.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So dispiriting.

**Ms OGILVIE** - You're being quite rude to me, Cassy.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm really dispirited by these responses.

**Ms OGILVIE** - You're being a bit rude, though. It would be nice if we could have a genuine conversation.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Just keep going. We have to move on to other areas. We've still got several line items.

**Ms OGILVIE** - We are actually mostly on the same page, and I am trying to assist.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm just worried about - anyway, what I'm hearing from you, minister, is that there's no certainty that the act will be tightened up or any of the recommendations that people have been making about sectoral targets, overall emissions targets.

**Ms OGILVIE** - When I see the recommendations I will make an assessment. We will have a discussion, and if amendments are sensible, then we certainly will consider them. It is a pretty sensible, straightforward process.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The former minister for environment and climate change, Mr Jaensch, said in a letter to the Tasmanian Conservation Trust in 2022 that the Climate Office had:

advised government to complete a baseline emissions inventory prior to setting a target to become the neutral target.

That is, a carbon neutral target for government operations, and the minister stated:

The Tasmanian government has committed to completing a baseline emissions inventory that will inform the approach for government operations.

Has that work been undertaken?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Let me just see if I can get some information on that. Obviously former ministers, I don't have the background. I thought we might have some more information. I understand the baseline assessments are close to being finalised, but you might have a bit more information.

**Ms PINTO** - As part of the work that was done to develop the Tasmanian government operations, ERM Australia was engaged to undertake a baseline emissions inventory for government operations. This project commenced in August 2024 and is expected to be completed quite soon, probably in early 2026, and it's a key input into the government's Operations Emission Reduction Resilience Plan that's currently in development at the moment.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Why did it take two years for that work to start following the correspondence with the Tasmanian Conservation Trust?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I would be guessing, but I assume there's resourcing and planning requirements.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The Australian Government has set an emissions reduction target of 62-70 per cent emissions reduction on 2005 levels, I believe, by 2035. That's just 10 years away, minister. How will the Tasmanian government and our emitting sectors contribute to that national target?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I have some information to assist with that.

## PUBLIC

We as a government are committed to supporting the national transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The national climate adaptation work program engages with the Australian government on key climate change policy issues. Many of the Australian government's legislative and policy commitments align with the Tasmanian government's agenda for action on climate change.

We as a government are seeking to maximise the opportunities for Tasmania through relevant Australian government climate change policies and programs including opportunities for collaboration and joint funding of programs through the implementation of the national net zero plan, National Climate Risk Assessment, National Adaptation Plan and national sectoral decarbonisation plans.

The Tasmanian government is also supporting Tasmanian entities to access relevant climate change opportunities, including encouraging participation in Australian government funding programs and consultation processes. Tasmania's climate change legislation promotes Tasmania's contribution to international, national and local government emissions reduction and adaptation measures to support the transition to a low emissions future.

We know that on 15 September 2025, the Australian government released the first National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan. On 18 September 2025, the Australian government released its emissions reduction target for the 2035 along with its net zero plan and six sectoral plans.

The Australian government has set up working groups. We've engaged with those, particularly with the Australian government and other jurisdictions on a range of issues, both formally on development of Australian government policies and informally through working groups. Those groups include - Chair, you might be interested in these:

- decarbonisation of infrastructure and transport working groups and associated subgroups,
- adaptation working group,
- coastal hazards working group,
- national partnership for climate projections and associated working groups,
- national electric vehicle action plan implementation group,
- national greenhouse gas inventory committee,
- cross-jurisdictional community of practice for greenhouse gas emissions data reporting,
- inter-jurisdictional working group on greenhouse gas emissions in government operations,
- regional drought resilience planning,
- Australian climate service,
- jurisdictional roundtable, and
- climate risk management community of practice.

I've read those out specifically to show the level of work and the level of integrated conversation that is happening between Tasmania and the federal government. I want to reiterate what a good job ReCFIT with its not huge number of staff and resource constraints does do. They have my full support and enjoy working with them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I have one more, is that okay?

In the climate risk assessment undertaken by Deloitte for the Tasmanian government on page 63 it says there is limited research linking climate change impacts on retention of Tasmania's net zero status explored in the scenarios used for the risk assessment. As you know, minister, when you look at our greenhouse accounts, it's the forests that do the heavy lifting, but they will suffer the consequences of global heating in the years ahead. Forests aside from in the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, I might add.

Minister, Tasmania's net zero status relies almost entirely on carbon sequestration by our forests, with little to no absolute emissions reductions across any other sector. Does the government have access to or plans to fund modelling of the changes in Tasmania's forest carbon carrying capacity against future private scenarios and the impact on the state's emissions profile and net zero status?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I want to understand the question; you want to know if we plan to do modelling on the change in -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If there's any understanding in government given that our net zero status and our net zero target are predicated on continuing sequestration from forests because there're no emissions across the other sectors. If you haven't had a good look at the greenhouse account -

**Ms OGILVIE** - There are emissions across the other sectors.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There are no emissions reductions across the other sectors, and given that our target is net zero by 2030 -

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, we are net zero.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I know that, because of our forests, but the fact is the climate risk assessment has identified the global heating's impact on the forest's capacity to sequester.

**CHAIR** - Say there is a big bushfire that wipes out a fair bit of forest.

**Ms OGILVIE** - So, it's a hypothetical situation?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, it's not a hypothetical situation. It's a scientifically grounded analysis of risk because of heating that would make forests more flammable. Given that our target is net zero, and it's our forests that are letting us be at net zero, has the government done any sort of modelling on the risk that climate poses -

**CHAIR** - Climate change.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Climate change poses to our net-zero status as a result of the impacts on our forests?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I think we can give you some information on that. Thank you, Sarah.

**Dr RUSSELL** - Thank you. In 2021, when we reviewed the *Climate Change (State Action) Act*, we did a number of foundational pieces of work, including an emissions pathway review and an economic impact analysis. The review considered a 10 per cent year-on-year increase over the previous five years of areas burnt and emissions from modelled bushfire events, an assumption that 5 per cent of the area burned in these bushfire events will be forest land converted to another land use. These assumptions are based on the expectation of increasing impacts of climate change and bushfires over time, and assume both land use change and the short- to long-term forest degradation that may result after major fire events. We've considered this in our previous work over time.

**CHAIR** - We might move otherwise we will have time to get through the others. I know you've got questions in other areas. Thank you, climate change people.

We will move to 7.1 Environmental Management and then go on to 7.2 Analytical Services and Threatened Species.

## **Output Group 7 - Environment**

### **7.1 Environmental Management**

**CHAIR** - When you're ready, if you can introduce the new person at the table.

**Ms OGILVIE** - We now have, from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, Jason Jacobi, Secretary, and Louise Wilson, Deputy Secretary.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms THOMAS** - Thank you, Chair. I wanted to ask, Minister, whether you have an update on the ban of single-use plastics? The commitment was to introduce this by the end of 2025. I wonder where it's at? There's a discussion paper released in September 2024. The website says a consultation summary is now being prepared, but at some 14 months later, I was wondering why the delay and where it's at?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I can help you with that. Single-use plastics phase-out. Please bear with me one second so I make sure I've got the right document.

Thank you. We are addressing the impact of single-use plastics - it is a priority as you quite correctly point out. We will reduce landfill and reduce the amount of plastic litter that ends up in our beaches and waterways and parks and by the roadside. We all appreciate that. In 2021, we committed \$1 million over four years to develop an implementation plan, draft legislation, and support businesses through the transition to phase out single-use plastics. A report on the public consultation undertaken in response to the phasing out problematic single-use plastics in Tasmania discussion paper is released today. That's just gone live today, so it might be helpful perhaps you could have a look at that, or we could provide you with the link.

The Revised National Waste Policy Action Plan 24 updates the commitment from the 2019 Action Plan which was to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025. Going to the timing of things. The updated commitment removes the year 2025 from the target but confirms the commitment for the continued phase-out of problematic and unnecessary plastics.

The Tasmanian government intends to introduce legislation for the phase out of certain single use plastics across the state and that and that is stage 1. Stage 1 items being considered for phase-out have been assessed as low-risk and have been phased out or banned in at least one other state or territory. All states and territories, with the exception of Northern Territory and Tasmania, have already legislated bans on certain single-use plastic items.

We've done quite a lot of consultation. The first stage was the release of a discussion paper in August 24 outlining the planned phase-out process, including timing, specific products to be phased out and the potential for exemptions where required. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania has considered the feedback received through an online survey and written submissions. The survey received over 1,100 responses with approximately 97 per cent of responders supporting reducing single-use plastic in Tasmania.

Since the release of the discussion paper, NRE Tas has established a stakeholder reference group, which I think is a positive thing to seek input from key stakeholders. NRE Tas is undertaking targeted consultation to inform government and how the phase-out on some single-use plastic items will impact industry and businesses and what kind of support may be needed before, during and after the transition.

So NRE is continuing to work with government agencies, key stakeholders and importantly businesses to identify challenges and opportunities associated with implementing the phase-out. Draft legislation and implementation plan will be informed by feedback from the community and the industry. Learnings from other jurisdictions and harmonisation work which is tricky bit occurring right across the country.

**Ms THOMAS** - Thank you for the comprehensive update, Minister. My question was also why the delay? So, Tasmania first committed to this in April 2021 as part of a national agreement. It's four and half years later, why has it taken so long?

**Mr JACOBI** - We're conscious of the fact that there has been a lot of learnings from other states in this space. I will defer to Louise Wilson in a minute, but one of the advantages of being the last cab on the rank is that you can learn from what the other states have - the challenges about having implementation of the Subs. But also, I suppose the positive is that we can take those learnings and make sure that we don't make the same mistakes and some of that has led to a delay in the program, but I might defer to Louise Wilson just for further clarification.

**Ms WILSON** - Yes, that's right. We've been watching the national scene and watching issues come out there and also how other states and territories have been adapting to that. It's comparable to what's happened with our container refund scheme, Recycle Rewards. We've actually benefited from watching some of the issues, lots of learnings.

Some other reasons for some of the delays is we actually we've had a couple of elections and changes of ministers, so that always slows things down and just a little bit, but we have been doing a lot of work behind the scenes, and we're actually really well placed. Soon we will release a consultation report saying that describes what we've heard from the consultation, and we're really well placed to develop a draft bill and a regulatory impact statement. We're doing work behind the scenes to make up for lost time.

**Ms THOMAS** - When do you expect that will occur?

**Ms WILSON** - The consultation report we're expecting to release this week, and as far as we've got a regulatory impact statement that has been prepared, it hasn't been through approval processes. It's quite a hefty document and neither Jason nor I have had a chance to read that. That will take a little bit of time, and we will have to go through Cabinet processes as well.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I think, though, what I can say from my perspective at this - at the ministerial level, with the harmonisation challenges, they're quite real and quite big. So, coming into this portfolio, this was one of the areas that we wanted to make sure we delivered, and I know that there were some single-use plastic replacements that then ended up not being appropriate for the market. So, to make sure that we get it right across Australia, it's a fairly challenging array of areas that have to be harmonised. Just to read a bit of the list, we've got:

- those expanded polystyrene food trays,
- single-use pre-packaged condiment containers - you know, those soy fish sauce packets,
- produce stickers,
- bread tags,
- cotton buds,
- microbeads in rinse-off personal cares - I've been on and on about that for years,
- balloon release,
- balloon plastic accessory items,
- EPS consumer food containers,
- expander plastic packaging,
- heavyweight shopping bags,
- barrier bags,
- cups with and without lids,
- bowls with and without lids,
- food containers,
- pizza savers,
- lightweight bags,
- straws - the big one,
- cutlery,
- plates,
- stirrers.

So, it's a vast array of items that when you go to perhaps get your takeaway, you think, 'Oh, this is simple, we'll just change out the packaging,' it's actually a huge array of items that go right through the value chain, particularly in food services.

We need to make sure - some of the challenges businesses have had, not just with the replacement - the cost of the replacement, making sure it's appropriate and safe and that it's all agreed, and then also I've seen - been invited to some businesses particularly in the multicultural sector where they've actually struggled to find storage room for different-shaped containers. So, even the fit-out of their restaurants was made for the old days.

So, there's a range of challenges that we're having to deal with, right across the spectrum of this. But I will also say changes of ministers and obviously elections does tend to slow things down.



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**Ms THOMAS** - Minister, the government had committed \$1 million over four years to plan and implement the legislation to phase out single-use plastics. So, is that funding allocation still within the budget and the forward Estimates?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I will ask Jason. I think that's been allocated [inaudible 8.32.28]

**Mr JACOBI** - I will refer to Louise [inaudible 8.32.30]

**Ms WILSON** - Thank you. So, since this initiative has been announced, the government has introduced the landfill levy and established the Waste and Resource Recovery Board. And the waste - the board has released a Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy, and it is looking at single-use plastics as part of that strategy. So, we're in discussions with both the minister and with the board to look at how we can work better together to deliver on these really important initiatives for Tasmania.

**Mr JACOBI** - You will note, though, that in the budget profile for Revenue for Appropriation, the 2025-26 increase reflects \$250,000 for the problematic single-use plastics.

**CHAIR** - Oh, that's for that - right. It does drop away as well as we go.

**Mr JACOBI** - It does drop away, but in 2025-26, there's \$2.3 million -

**CHAIR** - Sorry - yes, I'm in the wrong page.

**Mr JACOBI** - Revenue by Appropriation.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Just on that, the Budget - it all sits under Environmental Management - just that line item, is where this sits?

**Mr JACOBI** - Output Group 7.1. Yes, that's correct.

**CHAIR** - Right. So, it was \$5.2 million, the budget.

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes. That's 2024-25.

**CHAIR** - That's right. The actual appropriation for that year was \$3,050,000, which is significantly less, and then the Budget is back up to \$6.7 - which is fine; I'm just trying to understand why that is - what's covering that, because then it drops right away to \$1.2 million. Acknowledging the expenses are different because you're getting the waste levy into there, I assume?

**Mr JACOBI** - If you go to Environmental Management, Revenue by Appropriation -

**CHAIR** - Yes, page 159.

**Mr JACOBI** - I haven't got the page open in front of me, but what I've got is that the -

**CHAIR** - Trust me, it's on page 159.

**Mr JACOBI** - 2025 original budget was \$30 million -

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**CHAIR** - That's the expenses, not the appropriation.

**Mr JACOBI** - Sorry - I was reading Revenue but from Appropriation. Do you -

**CHAIR** - But that includes your waste levy, doesn't it?

**Mr JACOBI** - No. Cashflow changes relate to the circular economy, the waste initiatives program, and that's due to delays for recipients submitting milestones affecting project scheduling, and this is resulted in appropriation transfer of \$2.6 million into 2025-26.

**CHAIR** - This would be in your appropriation, then?

**Mr JACOBI** - I might get the lawyers to explain it.

**Ms WILSON** - I have the budget papers over there. I didn't bring them with me -

**CHAIR** - We are dealing with Budget, I sort of think people should bring the budget papers to the budget scrutiny, but anyway, just saying that. The Treasurer didn't have his budget paper with us either, so that's -

**Ms THOMAS** - It's only an interim Budget that's maybe why.

**CHAIR** - It's only his Budget, that's all.

**Ms WILSON** - What I did want to say is that the revenue by appropriation doesn't include the levy.

**CHAIR** - That's what I'm saying, that's exactly what I'm saying. Yes. I was saying that revenue by appropriation is how much we, the parliament, is saying you can have. The expenses include what you spend and what you also get through other sources like waste levies.

I'm going back, then, through the revenue by appropriation, how much we say you can have.

**Ms THOMAS** - You were talking about last year's though, which may have confused things because it's not in the budget papers. The actual expenditure is.

**CHAIR** - The actual is not in the budget papers, but I did ask a question without notice last week and got this information. It's also in your annual report, if you just want to find it there as well. Okay, but I didn't want to try to - I don't know how many annual reports to find - I just ask because every department would have this in the spreadsheet.

Anyway. The question I have is: last year's budget, which is in this year's budget paper, was \$5.2 million. 2025-26 is \$6.7 million, but the actual spend for 2024-25 was only \$3 million. That is \$2 million less, roughly, that's rough figures. Why is that the case? Then, there's an increase in 2025-26. I assume this is partly to do with getting rid of the single-use plastics, but then it drops right back to \$1.2 million for the out-years. That's quite a drop.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - They fixed all the problems about them, Chair.

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**CHAIR** - Are you sure?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Nah, they would have, really, because they don't need extra money because it will all be fixed.

**CHAIR** - Well it does make you wonder what's going to be achieved on this line item.

**Mr JACOBI** - I thought the Chair was referring to the original 2025 Budget compared to the actual 2025 Budget. Now, my figures - that's not this brief - it's this one about revenue from appropriation was \$33.03 -

**CHAIR** - No, it's not.

**Ms OGILVIE** - That's for all of Environment.

**Mr JACOBI** - That's for all of Environment? Sorry, we have \$28.136 down to \$15.899.

**Ms THOMAS** - 7.1

**CHAIR** - Maybe someone could get to the budget papers, do you want me to pass you mine?

**Ms WILSON** - Some of the changes for 7.1 are related to circular economy fund and it's about the - that fund is allocated to a range of grants and the milestone payments, some of those are the money has been pushed forward into the next year, into 2025-26, because of the milestone payments. That's where, from \$5.238 million to \$6.709 million, and then those, the circular economy fund, those grants are expected to stop then.

That's where we see that reduced back down to \$1.25, and settle down in the out-years because that's back to environmental -

**CHAIR** - Settle down? It drops even further. Every out-year, which is a decrease in funding - a literal decrease - and when you add in CPI, it's an absolute decrease across the forward estimates.

**Ms WILSON** - On page 159.

**CHAIR** - Yes. See, it's \$1.25 million; \$1.248 million less, \$1.245 million less. It's dropping every year over the forward Estimates. Which doesn't account - so you're having your budget cut, minister. You still got on with the important work to do with no money.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Welcome to my world. We are doing everything we can with the resources that we have.

**Ms THOMAS** - It's false budgeting; that's what we've seen across any line item.

**CHAIR** - This is the point that we tried to make with the Treasurer who seemed to not give (inaudible). He didn't have his budget paper either. Either of them, 1 or 2.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I can't comment on that.

**CHAIR** - What we're seeing here appears to be an underfunding of departments with work they need to do in the out years, which is creating a very unrealistic picture of what the May Budget will need to look like to deliver the services that you need to deliver. What are you going to do in your portfolio? Once you take out the circular economy money, and you might be able to give me the figure of how much of the \$6.7 million that equates to - take that out, what will you be looking to cut to achieve these budget savings that are pretty drastic, adding CPI?

**Mr JACOBI** - The intent was that the waste levy would become the primary vehicle for funding many of these initiatives, and that rather than, I suppose, duplicate that in a budget line item, we would be working with the waste and recovery board to identify particular projects that would deliver on some of these.

**Ms THOMAS** - Is the output environmental management about waste management, or is it about more than that?

**Ms WILSON** - This output is a combination of - let's say when the EPA separated, we got some resources from the EPA that stayed in the department and came into my division and they came under the environmental management, and those resources, it was a few FTE from memory, and I have to make sure that's exactly right. They were the environmental policy resources, if you like, looking after EMPCA.

We also, in some of the staff that were allocated to waste initiatives and funded through a range of means, some of it circular economy fund and other EPA sources, they stayed in the department to do the foundational work to set up the waste and resource act and deliver on those early waste initiatives. Those resources stayed. Some of them were funded through the circular economy fund and that which has dropped off, and so these positions are a combination of waste which looks after - it's actually in a different unit, and some environmental policy people, so that's -

**CHAIR** - Could we have a breakdown of this, minister? Can you provide it, and I'm happy to take it on notice, a breakdown of what in line item 7.1, the breakdown of what the \$6.7 million in the appropriation is allocated to, and then if we can look at the expenses, which is on the next page, 161, this is where you were first, I think, Jason, the budget was \$28 million rounded. The actual expenses, how much you actually spent was \$16 million rounded. Was that because there was less money coming in from the levy than was expected, or why is that the case? Do you want to take that one on notice?

**Mr JACOBI** - No. I'm going to ask Adrian Pearce to come to the table.

**CHAIR** - Is he the finance guru?

**Mr JACOBI** - He is.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Just what we need: thank you, Adrian.

**Ms LOVELL** - You mentioned something was released today on this. What is it and where is it? I can't find anything that's been released today.

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**Ms OGILVIE** - Let me just double check. I hope I've given you the correct information. On the single-use plastics, right? Let me just confirm that for you. Yes, a report on the public consultation undertaken in response to the Phasing out Problematic Single-use Plastics in Tasmania discussion paper. You've not located it?

**Ms LOVELL** - No. Louise said a consultation report will be released this week. Are they two different things? Are they the same thing?

**Ms OGILVIE** - No, it's what I'm talking about.

**Ms LOVELL** - And it's been released today? Okay. No, I can't find it.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Okay. I will see if we can locate that for you.

**CHAIR** - Maybe you could provide a copy to the committee. That way we will have it, or a link if it's on a website, whatever.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I think I have that now.

**CHAIR** - Minister, can you introduce the new gentleman at the table?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Thank you. Adrian Pearce, thank you for coming and I think you will be able to help us with some of the finance.

**CHAIR** - Do you understand my questions?

**Mr PEARCE** - I will cover some of the items. So, when you look at page 159, and you've raised about the \$6.7 million dollars, \$5 million of that is the circular economy initiative.

**CHAIR** - Sorry. How much was that?

**Mr PEARCE** - \$5 million. That ceases the year after and that's the main reason why it goes down to the 1.25 the year after, which is more like the standard budget for that output.

**CHAIR** - The rest of it is just pretty base funding, but it is still falling away in the out years. When you add CPI to it - slightly but it's still falling.

**Mr PEARCE** - Slightly: so the indexation and savings will be the two main elements in those two - in the out years.

**CHAIR** - The savings are factored in?

**Mr PEARCE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - They're baked in there?

**Mr PEARCE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Someone's going to have to find them. Is that your job?

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**Mr PEARCE** - Well, a team effort.

**Ms THOMAS** - How many outputs is a lifeboat? Every second line in the Budget.

**Mr PEARCE** - 2024-25, that 5.2 line, that would have been circular economy as well, but a lot of it didn't get spent and it's rolled over. That's one of the attributes to why it was - it was actually a lot less than the Budget, so about \$2.3 million was rolled over into the 2025-26 Budget. That's why it looks a little bit higher, being 6.7.

**CHAIR** - When we go to the expenses, then, is that due to a less amount from the waste levy?

**Mr PEARCE** - When it comes to the expenses that - so the numbers on page 161 are quite large because that's where the waste levy comes along. That's where the grant - there's a large grant program. I guess a lot of it didn't get spent as expected. That's why there's a big difference between actual, when you were referring to last year's 2024-25 Budget, with the Budget versus outcome, actual outcome. We didn't spend - a lot of the grants didn't go out as much as we would have liked. That's the main reason -

**CHAIR** - The money doesn't go off to some fund in finance general to be hidden away from -

**Mr PEARCE** - No. We have a specific SPA account for the waste resource recovery. It sits there. If you don't spend it one year, it will be forwarded on to forward years. We don't lose it.

**CHAIR** - The uncommitted grants that sit in there are still there.

**Mr PEARCE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - In the 22 million or 179,000 for the Budget year.

**Mr PEARCE** - Well, each year we're planning to spend - I will come and give you the number in front of me, but a lot of them, about \$20 million in grants.

**CHAIR** - That includes the waste levy money?

**Mr PEARCE** - That's the waste levy, yes. The grants are part of the waste levy program.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I have found that link to that document. How would you like me to - would you like the link? Would you -

**CHAIR** - You can send it to Jenny and then she will circulate it to everyone.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, minister. It's not an NRE website?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, recommendation 1 of the *State of the Environment Report* which I, for the purposes of the public record, would remind anyone who is up this late

watching that the government missed two statutory deadlines to deliver, recommendation 1 is to develop a long-term vision and strategy for Tasmania's environment. Are you committed to that and is there work being undertaken on that?

**Ms OGILVIE** - We have done that. I do have some information pertaining to the State of the Environment Report. I do understand the energy around this topic. We did commit to providing a response to the State of the Environment Report before the end of 2024. That is what we did. The response to the report identified four key priorities based on report recommendations, the first of which was develop a long-term vision and strategy for Tasmania's environment, develop an environmental data strategy - very important - focus on securing covenants and other effective conservation measures through the private land conservation program to deliver greater protection for underrepresented ecosystems, improve native vegetation mapping and information and in a manner that is carefully planned and mindful of the current fiscal constraints.

We are progressing, scoping and planning this priority work to ensure that resources are used efficiently, opportunities for partnering are identified and outcomes are delivered effectively. I would also like to acknowledge the important role of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania in coordinating the preparation of the government's response to the State of the Environment Report, and in supporting the commission by contributing data, reviewing reports for 17 of the environmental indicators and preparing a case study and other feedback.

Whilst this report is the responsibility for the minister for Housing and Planning, the continuous improvement ethos for protecting Tasmania's environment is a responsibility that spans multiple portfolios, governments, industries and communities. The government's responses to the 2024 State of the Environment Report and Tasmania's first Climate Change Risk Assessment, along with the threatened species and various sustainability strategies being developed form a substantial platform for investment and action to secure Tasmania's future social, economic and environmental wellbeing. Government priority number one, vision and strategy for Tasmania's environment.

I won't repeat a lot of what I've just said, but we are developing a state sustainability strategy, which will encompass social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, builds on existing policies we have in place across portfolios such as rural water use strategy, climate change action plan, waste and resource recovery strategy, and a new Tasmanian threatened species strategy, which is great.

We are participating of course in national and cross jurisdiction, ministerial and senior officers groups, working with reference groups to support collaboration and learning across environment, water, circular economy, climate change and threatened species and the three regional Tasmanian natural resource management bodies - NRMs people will be familiar with them - which develop and implement their own regional NRM strategies, will be important partners in the development of an environment strategy for Tasmania and other actions to respond to the State of Environment Report.

These organisations have expressed strong interest in working with the government on action in response to the State of Environment Report and the \$2.4 million funding boost to the three regional NRMs in the 2024 budget will ensure these organisations have the capacity to do so.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - When should we expect to see the Tasmanian government's long-term vision and strategy for the environment? And will it include - as is recommended in the State of the Environment Report two-yearly progress reports to the Tasmanian parliament?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Do you have timelines you could share?

**Mr JACOBI** - No we don't have a timeline at the moment. We've begun engagement with the three NRM groups. But I would expect that we would have a landing on an overall vision and strategy within the next 12 months.

**Ms OGILVIE** - That's good.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I ask in terms of natural values -

**CHAIR** - Just one more because we have to go to the other line items. We've got analytical services and threatened species.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Threatened species is important.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, so important you've defunded the Orange-bellied Parrot Program in the out years, but anyway, we will get to that.

In terms of the other recommendations of the State of the Environment Report: tapping into Aboriginal knowledge and values, developing an environmental data strategy and contemporising the resource management planning scheme objectives and legislation, establishing more marine protected areas. Are any of these on the government's radar?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Happy for Jason to say something of course, but I am very excited about the *Marine Environment Act* and that work that we are doing, that picks up a range of important matters that were spoken of in that document that is absolutely on our agenda. I'm working with Mr Garland well on that. I can say that it is a priority of mine to land that. Jason may have some other information in relation to the other elements you've mentioned.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well they're political questions and not for the secretary of the department. Has the government committed to those other recommendations?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Okay, sure. The marine environment act is a prime example and look, I'm prioritising that. It's a good thing to do and overdue to have the dialogue. It won't be simple or easy, but it's something you need to do as an island state that houses the Blue Economy CRC, that has IMAS, it has our research scientists. We are a seafaring nation, a nation state - I feel like sometimes we are a separate nation.

That for me, is from a political perspective one of the key things we ought to be delivering in this great contemporisation of environmental laws, that I do understand is due to a lot of the organic nature of the way our environmental laws have developed over time. There is a moment where we do need to have a look at the overarching framework and say what can we do better? What can we do in a more contemporary way? What is a good series of reforms that make sense? The marine environment act is one of those. Jason has just also reminded me regarding the state of the environment, that environmental data strategy is important as well. We have been doing some work on that, investing in that.



**Mr JACOBI** - Some very exciting work is being as a consequence of the rural use strategy. We're starting to get some real traction with integrating all of the data from water health and river quality across all the different agencies - Hydro, Tasmanian Irrigation, the departments in the water monitoring program, and the EPA. There's also some really exciting work being done around the Natural Values Atlas.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I do have a question about natural values management. Is that where the Natural Values Atlas sits? In expenses by portfolio, you're saying about \$4 million being spent on natural values management over the next four years. All of that natural values management is under the minister for primary industries?

**Mr JACOBI** - The Natural Values Atlas work that's being done by Jo's team?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Where does that sit? The Natural Values Atlas work, The TASVEG work as well.

**Ms WILSON** - That, technically, could be said to sit under the PIW portfolio, but the Natural Values Atlas covers, for example, the recent OBP tracking data. It's one of those functions in our environment business unit that might be allocated because of the admin orders around legislation. It might sit in one or the other, but really some of these functions actually serve a number of portfolios. Absolutely, the primary industry water, general wildlife management, natural values management, as well as threatened species - it's a bit hard to sort of split them exactly like that.

**CHAIR** - I am going to move on to Analytical Services 7.2 and then we will come to threatened species.

**Mr HARRISS** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you briefly just provide an overview of what the analytical services provide? Just briefly, and then how much of the appropriation is taken up by staffing costs?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Sure, I'm happy to do that. I will refer to the department for the staffing costs issue. Analytical Services Tasmania - we know they provide high-quality, accredited chemical and biological testing to the Tasmanian government, industry, and the public. AST continues to support the Environment Protection Authority and the Director of Public Health with essential testing services. They perform around 275,000 to 300,000 individual tests per year. AST aims to deliver all testing services in a timely manner, of course. In 2024-25, AST exceeded the jobs reported on time target of 83 per cent, so that was good.

However, turnaround times can vary due to unexpected demands that can't be planned for. For example, when the EPA Tasmania responds to an unexpected environmental incident, this may lead to a sudden influx of samples to be tested by AST, at times requiring intensive forensic investigation to determine the source and nature of pollution. To effectively manage these challenges, AST may reprioritise workloads to focus on threats to public or environmental health, resulting in minor delays to lower priority work, which is carefully managed to minimise impacts. Targets for percentage of jobs on time performance measure are set based on known and expected demand for testing and the 2025-26 target has been set at 75 per cent, slightly lower than the target for 2024-25 in anticipation of a number of factors that place pressure on resources in response times. These include relatively high demand for testing services, unplanned demand for testing associated with environmental incidents,

planning for training and delivery of new specialist testing regimes (e.g. marine algal identification).

I do have some key statistics here, and I will quickly give those to you, and then if we need more I will turn to the department. As I said, 309,000 analyses were undertaken in 2024-25. That's an eight per cent increase in work. The increases related to the environmental incident response and regulatory activities.

Performance measures - number of analyses performed:

- 2023-24: the actual was 311.
- 2024-25, 285. 2024-25 - sorry, that was the target: 285 for 2024-25: actual, 309.
- We have a target in 2024-25 of 300, with the year obviously yet to finish.

**CHAIR** - 2024-25? The year has finished.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Sorry, 2025-26. I misspoke. So, the 2025-26 target is 300, with the year yet to finish. So, there's the statistics I have on the actual work that's flowing through -

**CHAIR** - I think one of the questions was, though, about how much the staff -

**Ms OGILVIE** - About the staffing? Yes, which is one for the department. I could refer to you, Louise? Thank you.

**Ms WILSON** - Thank you. In June 2025, Analytical Services Tasmania had 44.67 FTEs. That - it's important to note though that those staff were paid for, not just through appropriation but also through retained revenue, because AST is able to charge some clients and retain the revenue from that.

**Mr HARRISS** - Okay. The 2024-25 actuals, which the Chair questioned on notice. In the total expenses, the actual is \$9,410,000. The budgeted amount for 2025-26 is only \$7,883,000. So, that's a reduction from the actual last year of \$1.5 million. What's that going to do to the services and the testing and the analytical stuff? Where does that \$1.5 reduction come from?

**Ms WILSON** - I will start, but we might bring Adrian back to the table. But, in the budget was \$7.8 million for analytical services to Tasmania, and the actual was - expenses were actually more than that, and there's a -

**CHAIR** - Dean was talking about the appropriation.

**Mr HARRISS** - No, I was -

**CHAIR** - Oh, weren't you? Sorry, Dean.

**Mr HARRISS** - No, sorry, because I got that from total expenses.

**CHAIR** - Sorry, my mistake.

**Mr HARRISS** - So, the total expenses - what I have from the actuals - was \$9.4 million. Is that right?

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**Ms WILSON** - Yes.

**Mr HARRISS** - [inaudible]

**Ms WILSON** - So, would you like an explanation of that bit -

**Mr HARRISS** - Yes, and I want to understand where that - so, if we're to meet that budgeted amount of this year at \$7.8 million, that's \$1.5 million less than was spent in 2024-25. What's that going to do? Am I making -

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms WILSON** - So, the \$7.804 original budget was for 2024-25.

**Mr HARRISS** - Yes. Don't worry about that, because that's irrelevant, isn't it? So, we actually spent -

**Ms WILSON** - And the actual - we actually spent \$9.410

**Mr HARRISS** - That's right, yes. So, the difference between that and this year's budget, so the 2025-26 budget, which is \$7.883 million -

**CHAIR** - \$1.5 million, effectively.

**Mr HARRISS** - So we're essentially spending - or if we stick to that budget, we're essentially spending \$1.5 million less on analytical services this financial year than we did last year. So, I'm trying to understand where that will come from, what will that mean. Will that mean you won't do 309,000 tests? You will do a percentage of that, or?

**Mr JACOBI** - But quickly, because I know Bec's got [inaudible 9.04.44]

So, the increase was due to additional expenditure on salaries and wages. AST operates under do-and-charge arrangements; this is part of their sort of consultancy work. And demand for their services has increased over time, but the 2024-25 regional Budget and the forward Estimates from Treasury's system have not been updated to reflect this increase. The forward Estimates for expenditure and revenue are being reviewed and will be updated to reflect this increased activity, and I know that this is not a budget risk as expenses are covered by the revenue retained by AST, and if we need any more detail, I could ask Damien to come to the table.

**Mr HARRISS** - I will finish off then. What you're saying is, then, the revenue from appropriation won't change? Is that what you're saying? Whilst total expenses will change, the revenue from appropriation, of \$4.7 million that won't change.

**Mr JACOBI** - That is correct.

**Mr HARRISS** - The secretary's just said that the over expenses are essentially recouped back in from the \$1.5 million. The 2025-26 Budget with the revenue from appropriation of \$4.7 million, are we saying that is all that -

**Mr JACOBI** - We don't expect that they will change. It depends on the increased activity and consultancy work that AST performs.

**Witness** - I think what's important here is that there are no cut days to this Budget in any of those figures.

**CHAIR** - So, the same number of staff will be able to deliver, ideally, the target number of tests within the budget you have.

**Witness** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - No-one is losing their job next week?

**Witness** - I hope not.

**CHAIR** - We might move on to threatened species, Bec.

## **Output Group 7 - Environment**

### **7.4 Threatened Species**

**Ms THOMAS** - Minister, in the budget paper 2, volume 1 on Page 159, it has a decrease in the funding over the forward Estimates from \$8.03 million to \$5.8 million.

Can you explain what is going to not be occurring?

**Mr JACOBI** - In revenue from appropriation for threatened species, the decrease in 2028-29 reflects the completion of the 2024-25 Threatened Species Fund.

**Ms THOMAS** - How will the outcomes of that funding allocation over that four-year program be measured?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I do have, and I will just confirm with you, Jason, I do have some performance measures here. Is this the correct document just to make sure?

**Mr JACOBI** - No.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Okay, thank you.

**Ms WILSON** - With the Threatened Species Fund, we're into the second year now and we've started with planning and we've started spending some of that money and the Threatened Species Grants, as the minister mentioned earlier, are about to be opened, a second round, and we have a list of a combination of deliverables - what we've delivered as well as what we've committed to in terms of grant funding from the previous year.

What we haven't done yet, but I think would be a really good idea, you've just given me a great idea, is that we should publish what we've spent and delivered. We've only just delivered a minute to you minister, outlining what we've done in the first year, which is a lot. and we're very grateful to have that funding. It allows us to do a lot of really good work across four streams of activity and I take every opportunity to promote what my team do in this space.

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**Ms THOMAS** - Can you explain what those four streams of activity are?

**Ms WILSON** - Yes. The first stream is for high-priority species conservation activities and those things are things like last year was maugean skate monitoring, things like that. There's some flexibility to adjust each year. The second stream is the Strategic Partnership Grants Program and the idea of that is to allocate an amount of funding and partner with strategic partners that we know can deliver programs and outcomes on the ground that match whatever our priorities might be year on year.

This year's prime themes are healthy habitats and building resilience to invasive species. The third stream - what am I up to?

**Ms THOMAS** - Decision-making tools.

**Ms WILSON** - Decision-making tools. The third stream is specifically to do some of the things that are not showy, and a lot of people take for granted or I guess they're not a real announceable, but important to good conservation outcomes and that is developing guidelines. We're looking at, due to popular demand, some guidelines on masked owls are really important, so we're developing those. We are looking at wedge tailed eagles as well, but that'll take a little bit of time. The fourth stream we're setting aside for emergency preparedness and to date, we've been using some of that funding for preparing for HPAI in relation to our threatened species -

**CHAIR** - HPAI just for the benefit of *Hansard*.

**Ms WILSON** - I beg your pardon, avian flu. We need to make sure that we protect -

**CHAIR** - The chooks.

**Ms WILSON** - and take steps.

**CHAIR** - Well, everybody.

**Ms WILSON** - In the threatened species space, we're particularly concerned about our orange-bellied parrot facility, our captive facility and our wild release activities and also the devils that we have.

**Ms OGILVIE** - There are, if I could just capture a little bit more of that because you may have an interest. In 2024-25, some of the expenditure across those areas included \$515,000 to continue priority research for the maugean skate, funding to enable the Secretariat to support the national recovery team for the maugean skate to implement the conservation action plan. There was \$255,000 for the red handfish habitat restoration activities and a further \$100,000 for mapping the red handfish with a full population census. Allocation of approximately \$400,000 across seven projects being delivered in partnership by over 15 organisations through a threatened species partnership grant program. That leverages over \$270,000 in co-contributions.

These project grants have delivered on the ground conservation benefits for a range of threatened species such as the burgundy snail, forty-spotted pardalote, morrisbyi gum, miena cider gum, southport heath and several Tasmanian orchid species. These projects will have co-

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benefits for a wide range of other threatened species including swift parrot, masked owl and the Tasmanian devil.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Do you want to check on the orange-bellied parrot funding?

**Ms THOMAS** - I am happy for you to ask those questions.

**CHAIR** - Have they got their backpacks on yet to track them?

**Ms OGILVIE** - We will track them from space.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, has there been any information flowing through to the agency about detections of avian influenza, either H6N1 or H5N1 on island?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I would have to ask.

**Mr JACOBI** - I need to clarify, when you say on island you mean information from the recent Miena trip to Heard and McDonald islands or just -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, on Tasmania.

**Mr JACOBI** - Any information.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Any information; any indication that avian influenza has arrived here.

**Mr JACOBI** - No, there been no indication at all that there are any cases in Tasmania. We have had, in the last six months, some alleged reports of concerns from bush walkers around numbers of birds on beaches, which we've investigated immediately and confirmed that there were no cases.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Tested?

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes, they were tested.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Why was funding for the orange-bellied program cut in the two out years? Top line. Because we've heard a lot from the minister how seriously the government takes the protection of threatened species, and the evidence is in the numbers, the funding for an orange-bellied parrot program seems to have been slashed.

**CHAIR** - A thousand this year and then nothing.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I'm just being directed to some more specific information.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This is the sort of stuff you could just know, as minister.

**Ms OGILVIE** - It's good to get the details right.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, but it gets a bit boring after nine hours at the table being read to.

**Ms OGILVIE** - The orange-bellied parrot is one of the world's rarest and most remarkable migratory parrots, as we know. We love the orange-bellied parrots. I've been able to visit them. Tasmania does play a critical - I have been out to visit them - role in its survival. The question and the interest that you have in this, I know is very genuine and I take that for real, obviously. It's an iconic and critically endangered species. It breeds only at Melaleuca, in Tasmania's remote south-west and migrates across Bass Strait to mainland Australia every autumn. It's one of only three migratory parrots in the world and its survival depends on the work we do here in Tasmania.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - So why'd you cut the funding?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Monitoring of the population of orange-bellied parrots at Melaleuca commenced in 1979. Captive breeding started in 1981. We thank generations of hard-working staff and all Tasmanians for their love of this beautiful little bird.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Waste of time.

**Ms OGILVIE** - The Tasmanian government has been investing in orange-bellied parrot conservation for more than four decades. In 2023-24, we committed an additional \$1.3 million over two years to improve our understanding of migration threats and to maintain the facility and critical infrastructure, the Five Mile Beach captive breeding facility.

This funding supports the orange-bellied parrot migration tracking project, which is now in its second year with 42 birds fitted with transmitters - I think you were mentioning those before, Chair - and 18 receiver towers installed across the migration route. Technologies are giving some unprecedented insight into species movement, and at the same time upgrades to the Five Mile Beach wildlife management facility are underway to improve breeding success and biosecurity measures.

The results speak for themselves: last season the wild population reached 91 adults, the highest since the 1990s, and produced a record 99 wild-born fledglings at Melaleuca, 28 captive juveniles and 15 captive adults released. These successes meant an estimated 172 birds migrated north to a future only unimaginable just a decade ago.

**Ms THOMAS** - Was there an answer to the question? The question was why is the funding cut, and there was nothing in that answer, in that very long spiel, about the answer.

**CHAIR** - How many came back?

**Ms OGILVIE** - How many came back? Yes, I've got that.

**CHAIR** - Just to cut to the chase - it's in the capital investment program -

**Ms OGILVIE** - In 2026-27 when the orange-bellied parrot budget initiative funding concludes, the migration tracking project will conclude in 2026 and a final report will be released following analysis of next year's data. Additional monitoring and funding needs will be identified through the course of the project with the threatened species fund, one potential source of funding for this priority work.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - This morning, and I think we're just about to be out of time - in the minister for energy's Estimates - I will note that he didn't need to read too much from his brief, but we were trying to establish whether or not ACEN has been working with his agency or the environment department on mitigation of the impacts of the Robbins Island Wind Farm on migratory orange-bellied parrots. He suggested we ask you. Are you aware of any work that's been undertaken with the proponent of the Robbins Island Wind Farm? There's a contract requirement -

**Ms OGILVIE** - In relation to transmitters?

**CHAIR** - The wind turbines.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - in relation to the impacts of the turbines on the orange-bellied parrots who fly across that region. It's an identified risk by the Environment Protection Authority to the bird itself.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I would have to ask. I think the - I'm not aware.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Last time you visited them?

**Ms OGILVIE** - I think the stage of the process is that an EIS has to be developed.

**Ms WILSON** - I think, just to clarify the question, any interactions we've had with ACEN and in relation to the parrot - with the tracking project, we worked with ACEN. ACEN put some VHF towers in the migratory pathway. That helped us get a constant - I guess -

**Ms OGILVIE** - A feed.

**Ms WILSON** - Feed. Thank you, minister. But their raw data was sent directly to us so there was absolute independence of the data. Where now birds flew over their towers, they would ping and that was a great help to the project. We have liaised with them on that and just incidentally, their towers have contributed more to the data than any of our other towers, so that was really useful.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Will the environment department be working with ACEN on the conservation program - through you, minister - that I understand, they're required to prepare and implement for the orange-bellied parrot?

**Ms WILSON** - ACEN as part of their EPBC -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - To develop a conservation program for a critically endangered bird.

**Ms OGILVIE** - EPBC level, yes.

**Ms WILSON** - As part of their conditions, there are lots of conditions there that will require us to provide some advice and I understand that, from memory, the decision also included approval of management plans and all those sorts of things.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - [inaudible] management?



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**Ms WILSON** - No, it's actually management plans in relation to the specific income, not a recovery plan, as in for the species. I think ultimately under the decision the Commonwealth department, DCCEEW, as the ongoing regulator, is responsible for approving those plans but they will - and we've had discussions with the assessment team - we will be consulted to make sure that they're appropriate.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, minister. I hope those orange-bellied parrots are tweeting their locations so you can record them.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, I'm hoping that we will be able to map them from space if we get some of our good tech on board.

**CHAIR** - They're very tiny; they will be hard to see from space.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, we can measure climate change from space. I'm sure we can track parrots.

**CHAIR** - Anyway, thank you, minister, and your team. We have gone a little bit over. It's been a long day and we'll stop the broadcast.

**The committee adjourned at 9.22 p.m.**