



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Roger Jaensch MP

Thursday 26 September 2024

MEMBERS

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair)
Hon Dean Harriss MLC
Hon Sarah Lovell MLC (Deputy Chair)
Hon Bec Thomas MLC
Hon Kerry Vincent MLC

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. NIC STREET MP

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

Kathrine Morgan-Wicks

Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Jason Sowell

Deputy Director, Finance and Budget Services, Department for Education, Children and Young People

Jenny Burgess

Associate Secretary, Department for Education, Children and Young People

Craig Woodfall

Director Community & Custodial Youth Justice

Shane Gregory

Associate Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Melissa Gray

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

Steve Gall

Director, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

Output Group 4 - Children Services

4.1 Services for Children and Families

CHAIR - Welcome, minister, to Estimates hearings for your portfolios. We note you have a number of people at the table. I will ask you to introduce those people in a moment and if you bring anyone else to the table to introduce them and their role and title before they speak so that Hansard knows who's here. I also invite you to make an opening statement in relation to this area of your portfolios.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much, Chair, and committee members, for the opportunity to present today. To my right at the table is Sue McKerracher, who is Acting Deputy Secretary, Keeping Children Safe; to my left, Claire Lovell, Executive Director, Children and Families; and to her left, Jason Sowell, Deputy Director, Finance and Budget Services.

I would like to open by acknowledging Tasmania's Aboriginal people as the original owners and continuing custodians of the land that we're meeting on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors and Elders.

There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people, and I'm very pleased and proud to be here today as Minister for Children and Youth. I also want to thank all of our staff in the child safety, out-of-home care and youth justice systems for their extraordinary work. They work with children and young people who've had trauma in their young lives, and they build trust and advocate for them to ensure their safety and provide them with opportunities. This is a very challenging job, and in undertaking it, they exhibit great integrity, service and professionalism. I thank them.

On 1 December 2023, our government released Keeping Children Safe and Rebuilding Trust, our response to the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, including the acceptance of all 191 of the commission's recommendations.

Our clear focus is now to use the commission of inquiry recommendations to build on the work that we have already done in ensuring safety for children and young people. Accordingly, \$174.89 million has been allocated over the 2024-25 Budget and forward Estimates for commission of inquiry initiatives across the children and youth portfolio, including significant reforms in out-of-home care and youth justice services.

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

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

We're developing a whole-of-agency complaints management system to achieve a robust, consistent and transparent complaint management process, resulting in timely and relevant reporting of information. We are prioritising the transition of out-of-home care to non-government organisations as part of ongoing reforms to the out-of-home care system, and we continue to prioritise the recruitment and retention of our highly valued Child Safety Advice and Referral Line and youth justice workers across the state.

In youth justice, we have released our Youth Justice Blueprint for 2024-2034, and are delivering a comprehensive reform of our entire system in line with commission of inquiry recommendations. This includes building a new therapeutic Youth Justice facility and delivering services that better respond to the needs of young people at risk. It's important to acknowledge that achieving the outcome set out in the blueprint is more than just building a new facility and closing an old facility.

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

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

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Before we open for questions, I might just make the statement that some of the content of the matters we talk about today could be quite challenging and triggering for some people who may be watching online or in the room. I urge people to be conscious of that on both sides of the table, and also if those watching online or anyone else in the room needs assistance, they can find it around the various locations that they're easily able to find on the website. I made that point because it can be quite a challenging topic we're about to discuss.

Mr JAENSCH - Definitely. Thank you.

CHAIR - Minister, because we are scrutinising your budget on this as well as the performance of the department in this area, I'd like to go to the actual allocation. You mentioned the figure of \$174.89 million in response to the commission of inquiry. Did I write that down right?

Mr JAENSCH - That relates to the commission of inquiry recommendations.

CHAIR - I am just trying to understand the amount of money that's been allocated to Children and Youth and Youth Justice.

Mr JAENSCH - In the Budget more broadly?

CHAIR - In the Budget, particularly for response to the commission of inquiry.

Mr JAENSCH - The new investment covered in the 2024-25 Budget and forward Estimates is a total of \$199.05 million, comprising recurrent funding -

CHAIR - This is in your department?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, in this portfolio.

CHAIR - Yes, that's what I mean, sorry.

Ms LOVELL - Children and Youth and Youth Justice?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. That includes \$190.72 million in new recurrent investment in Children and Youth, including \$174.89 million for commission of inquiry initiatives. \$11.314 million in 2024 election commitments, \$4.52 million related to 2024-25 Budget decisions, and there's capital items - \$8.326 million - for Children and Youth child-centred business systems, and I understand they're largely information management systems across our services.

CHAIR - They're not directly linked to a recommendation of the commission of inquiry though? Am I safe to say that the \$174.89 million funding is to directly respond to the commission of inquiry for your portfolio? That's outlined in 4.1 and 4.4, Children's Services. It's really unclear, minister.

Ms LOVELL - The \$199.05 million total new investment - I'm assuming that there must be some crossover in those further breakdowns of figures that you've given us, because that doesn't add up to \$199.05 million.

Mr JAENSCH - The \$199.05 million includes the \$190 million that I've just mentioned plus \$8.326 million for the business systems. I think that's going to be your \$199.05 million. Jason, do you want to speak to this? This is just maths.

CHAIR - What I'm trying to understand is that we're scrutinising the Budget, and the Budget's tight. We need to be sure that particularly this area that's responding to the commission of inquiry and the needs of children generally is adequately resourced. I'm trying to understand what the baseline budget is and how much additionally relates to the commission of inquiry - not that that won't have a benefit for children, but I'm just trying to understand the breakdown. We might have to pick it apart slowly.

Mr SOWELL - The \$199.05 million - the two key elements relating to the commission of inquiry are the \$174.89 million that the minister referred to and the capital component of \$8.3 million that relates to the children and youth-centred business systems. They are both specific responses to the commission of inquiry that were funded as part of that funding pool.

CHAIR - What do those two add up to?

PUBLIC

Mr SOWELL - It would be about \$183 million, and the remaining difference -

Ms LOVELL - Could I please clarify, the \$174.89 million is recurrent?

Mr SOWELL - Yes. Plus the \$8.3-million capital component for the business systems. The \$11.3 million is election commitments that are listed in the key deliverables, and the \$4.5 million for Budget decisions are new decisions around the child safety workforce package, which is in the key deliverables table as well.

CHAIR - But that's not directly in response to the commission of inquiry?

Mr SOWELL - No, those two elements are separate decisions.

Mr JAENSCH - They are contingent in some ways. Everything is linked in their system, so the commissioner of inquiry's recommendations also assume that we've got a fully staffed service. The workforce package of \$4.52 million - you'd need the people.

CHAIR - Absolutely.

Mr JAENSCH - There's another item as well that is related. There's also in the Budget \$8.072 million committed across four years for additional commission of inquiry initiatives that apply right across the DECYP portfolios more broadly, not strictly this output area.

CHAIR - I found it difficult to follow. On page 6 of budget paper 2 -

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have that at the table with me, but others will.

CHAIR - Shame, when we're scrutinising that, minister.

Mr JAENSCH - What I've found in the past is it's better for me to have the information. I'll take the reference from the Budget, otherwise there's not enough desk.

CHAIR - Okay. Page 6. In 2024-25 for DECYP - it is across both - there's \$40,555,000. I was unsure as to whether that is captured in the later figures under the chapter for Education, Children and Youth that relates to the commission of inquiry response.

On the key deliverables, which starts at page 43, you have election commitments, and they're outlined, and then you have commission of inquiry responses.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Mr Sowell if he can help us navigate.

Mr SOWELL - That is outlining the total allocation to our department.

CHAIR - Which one is?

Mr SOWELL - On page 6, which has the \$40 million then the \$50 million for each of the out years, which is \$190 million. On page 43 in the key deliverable statement for the department's chapter, that then details the specific initiatives at the line item level.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - That includes both education and your responsibilities, minister. You might have said it, but I'm trying to link this up. I spent ages trying to figure out what was what. How much in table 2.1 in key deliverables for 2024-25 relate to the commission of inquiry?

Mr JAENSCH - Isn't that going to be the \$174 million?

Mr SOWELL - For the 2024-25 Budget, or the out years as well?

CHAIR - I'm interested in this year's Budget, or are we counting the whole forward Estimates?

Mr SOWELL - When we're quoting that \$174 million figure, that is across the four years.

CHAIR - Do we have a total for the 2024-25 year?

Mr JAENSCH - We could prepare that for the committee and have that today.

CHAIR - What I'm trying to understand is, there's been an increase in funding from the Budget of 2023-24 to the Budget for 2024-25, noting the information I was given in response to a question last week that in the preliminary outcome there's already a significant jump there. That's how much is expected to be spent. We know there's been further investment in this area, rightly. I'm just trying to understand if there's a roughly \$40 million increase, it seems - and without this figure it's a bit hard to know - that there's an increase related to the commission of inquiry, but the other areas that remain your responsibility perhaps haven't had much of an increase. Do you see what I'm saying? If you took out the commission of inquiry funding, has there been any actual increase to the funding for these two items, 4.1 and 4.2?

Mr JAENSCH - There's considerable overlap, of course. For example, the Youth Justice Blueprint existed before the commission of inquiry did. The commission of inquiry recommendations have aligned with the direction that the blueprint was taking, so there were some actions that were already underway that will continue.

There are things like the out-of-home care delivery which is happening and has always been part of our service. The commission of inquiry has recommended significant uplift in funding for that and hence uplift of funding of \$30 million a year; the biggest single item in these figures is \$120 million over four years for out-of-home care. The out-of-home care activity was already funded. It's been increased by about 50 per cent off the back of the commission of inquiry recommendation. That's a core pre-existing activity which is under pressure because it needs to diversify the range of placements that we need to reconsider who's providing the care and with what supports and resources. The commission of inquiry has come up with recommendations that align to that and so that significant investment is an uplift in an activity that was there before and a response to the commission of inquiry as well.

CHAIR - Minister, are you confident there's enough money to address not only the commission of inquiry recommendations but the needs of children and youth generally?

Mr JAENSCH - We're working on needs that have been identified through planning like the youth justice reform process that we undertook over the last two to three years and we have the commission of inquiry's recommendations as well. There's strong alignment between them.

PUBLIC

There've been significant new resources provided. I personally think that our biggest challenge is to mobilise those resources quickly and to get the money out the door, delivering on these recommendations.

The money's there now and we have substantial budget allocations that we're here talking about. We have to make that work. That includes things like getting our workforce up to full establishment and working with them, building the capacity of our partners in the non-government service provider sector to take on more work and to meet their own challenges of growth, including staffing and issues like insurance and governance that they have to meet under the new child and youth safe organisations standards as well. There's work to be done and there's a budget there for it.

At the moment, I think our biggest challenge is to ramp up the capacity of our government and non-government systems to deliver all of this.

CHAIR - You're confident that they have enough money in the Budget to do what you need to do in the next 12 months?

Mr JAENSCH - Absolutely, yes. Again, our challenge is going to be getting it all out the door and getting on the ground.

CHAIR - In terms of 4.1, Services for Children and Families, can you provide a bigger breakdown of the budget for \$181,878,000? There's a lot of money in that. Obviously, it's for a range of areas within your department there. I'd like a more detailed breakdown of what sits under that.

Mr JAENSCH - What was the number you referred to?

CHAIR - \$181,878,000.

Mr JAENSCH - From which table?

Ms LOVELL - Table 2.10, it's on page 71.

CHAIR - Yes. Revenue from Appropriation by Output - that's how much is being appropriated to that line.

Ms LOVELL - Allocated, yes.

Mr JAENSCH - What I need to do is attach that to which - just so we don't get total number confusion Jason, have you got the reference number? Okay...

189,985 - is that the one you were referring to?

Ms LOVELL - No, 181,878.

CHAIR - You're probably in the expenses by output. We scrutinise the appropriation - Revenue from Appropriation.

PUBLIC

Ms LOVELL - Yes. It's page 71. It's the money that has been appropriated to this portfolio for the budget.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay, I have a summary of that.

CHAIR - We can look at the expense side, if that's going to help. Minister, you might have information under the other table?

Mr JAENSCH - Here's a way of characterising the uplift from 2023-24 to 2024-25, which I think is the other figure you're looking for. The increase of \$38.8 million in Services for Children and Families in 2024-25 reflects additional funding for the after-hours service; out-of-home care, which is what we've just been talking about with the \$30 million a year; enhanced case management for children and young people; Child and Youth Empowerment; and the Office of Aboriginal Policy and Practice.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, do you have a breakdown of the proportion or a dollar figure for those?

CHAIR - The \$38.8 million dollars.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, for those four that you've just given us? There was \$30 million for the out-of-home care, so presumably it's \$8.8 million broken down amongst the others.

Mr SOWELL - All of the initiatives that the minister described are actually extra funding that is listed in the key deliverables table, so we could give a breakdown of each of those.

Ms LOVELL - Can you point to where that is? If it's already broken down in here, I can take it from here.

Mr SOWELL - Again, on page 43, under Commission of Inquiry, After-Hours Service, the increase for 2024-25 and onwards is listed there. For Out of Home Care, it's on the next page.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

CHAIR - There are two aspects to that. There's the additional funding and the implementation unit.

Mr SOWELL - That's correct. Enhanced Case Management is up above, as well, and Child and Youth Empowerment is back on the previous page. That table is in alphabetical order. Again, that's the increase in 2024-25 and onwards. And then, the Office of Aboriginal Policy and Practice is on page 44, which equally lists the amount for that initiative, which contributes to that increase of \$38 million.

Ms LOVELL - It is essentially six items: After-Hours Service, Out-of-Home Care Additional Funding and Reform Implementation Unit, Enhanced Case Management, Child and Youth Empowerment, and the Office of Aboriginal Policy and Practice, and Implementing the Placement Principles.

PUBLIC

Mr SOWELL - They are the major explanations for that movement between years.

CHAIR - We will just go back to the question I was asking you, minister. The breakdown of a line item 4.1, services for Children and Families of \$181,878,000 across the department. How much is staff, how much is other things in it?

Mr JAENSCH - Across that series of initiatives that we just went through.

CHAIR - No, the total. What I'm trying to see is a breakdown of that amount of money for that line item.

Mr JAENSCH - Jason, are you able to provide that at the table or as a -

Mr SOWELL - We can absolutely provide some greater breakdown of that figure. We might take that on notice and get that information for you.

CHAIR - While you are asking for that, you might do the same for 4.2, minister, for services for Youth Justice.

Mr JAENSCH - I can undertake both of those and it might be that we can return that by the end of the day.

CHAIR - I hope that we could get them earlier than that, minister, because it is key to some of the questions. With all due respect, other departments have come and they've had those breakdowns to show us how much you're spending in particular areas of that line item. It's a big figure in one line and we're trying to understand -

Mr JAENSCH - But that's where these other breakdowns are.

Ms LOVELL - That doesn't include everything. That would include new things. But what we don't have available is a breakdown of, as an example, the money that's being invested into staffing, not new initiatives, but staffing compared to last year.

Mr JAENSCH - The breakdowns we've got at the table here for you are probably more to do with the breakdown of what the money's for. Within that there would be an explanation of whether it is additional staff or if it is contracted services or if it is something else.

CHAIR - Perhaps, in a slightly different way, minister, how many staff who run the department are included in that figure?

Mr JAENSCH - How many staff who run the department?

CHAIR - People who are involved in service for Children and Families work in your office, don't they? Or is this all the service delivery, there's nothing in there that would be considered corporate overhead?

Mr JAENSCH - Across the portfolio we have 400 and something frontline and support FTE. That's in the Children and Youth areas, my areas of DECYP. We have a 500-odd DECYP wide corporate staff as well. We can give you endless lists of how many staff we have and those sorts of things, but I'm not quite sure how to give you what you're looking for.

CHAIR - The problem may be part of it sits across both education and all areas.

Mr JAENSCH - That's right. A lot of the back of house is agency wide across DECYP, which includes Education as well.

Ms LOVELL - Can I ask a question, then, on that. The funding for those agency-wide operations, staffing, running of that office, where does that sit in this Budget? Is that included in your line item or is that included in a separate line item?

Ms McKERRACHER - If I could speak to that. What we have here is a raft of initiatives and new spending that we're going to be putting in over the next few years. Some of that is to support that behind-the-scenes piece, but actually very connected to the front line. A lot of it is frontline delivery. For example, we've got \$1.69 million to establish the Office of Aboriginal Policy and Practice.

CHAIR - That's all in the papers. That's not the question we're asking.

Ms McKERRACHER - What we don't have, potentially, here for you today is a split of those numbers of the new positions that are front facing and the new positions that are behind the scenes.

Ms LOVELL - Not just new positions though, existing positions as well. What we're looking for is a breakdown of the workforce and the offer as it exists, and including that new investment. It's not just the new initiatives that we wanted to be talking about.

CHAIR - From what I understand, the core services, not necessarily the service delivery, the front-facing people out there working with children and young people across a whole range of areas, does the core operating expenditure sit in this line item or does sit somewhere else?

Mr SOWELL - I can give some context around output, some of the key areas that we spend money. I have some figures here in front of me if you're happy for me to talk to that. In that output that has the approximately \$180 million, the core services are absolutely in those figures. Out-of-home care is approximately \$97 million of that budget. Child safety is about \$33 million. Advice and referral line is about \$8 million. Then we have a budget setting in Children and Families for \$40 million, which is again in the frontline space. We also have \$2.5 million for Keeping Children Safe. Then effectively the remainder -

Ms LOVELL - That figure for Keeping Children Safe, could you repeat that, please?

Mr SOWELL - \$2.5 million. Essentially, the remainder of that output then, we have an area called Business Coordination Innovation, which is also supporting improvements in Children and Families, that's \$4.5 million. And then the balance is essentially for systems, strategic improvement, to bring it to the total.

Ms LOVELL - Do you have those figures for last year?

Mr SOWELL - I don't have them in front of me but we could absolutely get them.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Can I just confirm that the figures that we've just been provided relate to the \$182 million effectively.

Mr SOWELL - Yeah, sorry, can I just add one other element. There is an overhead component in there, it relates to the \$181 million. The overhead in the output, which is a standard across all outputs, we have umbrella services that sit across each of our outputs and a portion of that applies to this output, the same as it would each of the other agency outputs.

CHAIR - But it's not included in those figures, or it is included?

Mr SOWELL - It is. Yeah, absolutely. Each output within our budget has a component of that.

Ms LOVELL - If I added up all of those figures and whatever is left over, the balance for systems and strategic improvement, that would give us \$181, 878, 000.

Mr SOWELL - Yeah, there's also an overhead amount and there is an adjustment in -

Ms LOVELL - Sorry, I thought you just said the overhead amount was included in those figures.

Mr SOWELL - In the total, yep. But there's a little bit more -

Ms LOVELL - Not included in the figures that you've already given us?

Mr SOWELL - No.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. There would be a balance left over that would be overhead and the systems and strategic improvement?

Mr SOWELL - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. Yeah, if we could get that same breakdown for last year, that would be helpful. Thank you.

Mr SOWELL - Okay. Sure. We'll arrange that.

CHAIR - And, when we come to it, so you have time to prepare, in line item 4.2. We don't want that now, we'll do it when we get to line item 4.2. We'll stick in 4.1 for now. We do things methodically in this Chamber.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, we've talked about budget efficiency dividends with the Minister for Education, and, just so you know, I'm talking now to budget paper 1 and page 72, table 4.5, there's a budget efficiency dividend that's been allocated for DECYP. Has any of that been allocated to your departments? And, if we could talk about Youth Justice as well while we're doing it, so Children Services or Youth Justice, Children and Families.

Mr JAENSCH - The budget efficiency dividend to be achieved in the Children and Youth portfolio is \$1.7 million in 2024-25, \$3 million in 25-26, increasing to an estimated structural reduction of \$4.1 million in 26-27.

PUBLIC

Ms LOVELL - Can I ask you a question, minister? That term, 'estimated structural reductions'. Is that what you said? Every Minister has used that phrase. I haven't asked the question until now. What does that mean? Can you explain that?

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Sowell can correct me if I'm wrong, but the intention of making savings like this is to capture, wherever possible, savings that become recurrent in the future. You change the way you do something to save money, which saves money every year thereafter.

Ms LOVELL - It's a saving?

Mr JAENSCH - That's the intention, yes, or a reduction in costs of operating.

CHAIR - You said for 2024-25 it was \$1.7 million.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

CHAIR - In the policy and parameters statement Sarah was referring to for 2024-25 for the whole department, it's \$13.5 million. It seems like the lion's share - a lot of it - is going to fall to Education. Is that right? Is that the actual reality?

Mr JAENSCH - The breakdown that I've got is for the Children and Youth portfolio, as I understand it, which is a pro rata based on the allocations in the portfolio.

Ms LOVELL - Does that include Youth Justice?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - That's your departments in their entirety in this portfolio. That's the figures you've just given us.

Mr JAENSCH - As I understand it, yes.

CHAIR - If I take that literally, then, \$4.1 million in 2026-27. That's correct?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

CHAIR - The task, as outlined by Treasury, is \$40.5 million. It seems an extraordinary amount of money for Education to find. Not that it's your concern.

Mr JAENSCH - As I understand it, the numbers that you'd have been presented here show how the agencies' allocated target is allocated by appropriation pro rata across the different parts of the agency. This is our bit of that.

Ms LOVELL - Have you identified, and had signed off, savings strategies to achieve those targets?

PUBLIC

Mr JAENSCH - This is a process that's going to run through the year. Operating efficiencies are the priority while we protect frontline services and service delivery. These savings will be found - where we can, operationally - through the year.

Ms LOVELL - I understand that Treasury have asked agencies to identify where they'll find those savings, and the Budget Committee of Cabinet has been signing off on those.

Mr JAENSCH - You seem to know a lot about the Budget Committee.

Ms LOVELL - We've had a lot of people here to answer these questions all week, so we do now.

CHAIR - They haven't revealed the actual deliberations, minister. Just saying.

Ms LOVELL - Have you gone through that process for your efficiency dividends?

Mr JAENSCH - As I understand it, and it's been explained to me, there are strategies. They are to do with things like, as part of overall resource management in DECYP, the department will consider opportunities to divert resources to roles funded to support the response to the commission of inquiry. These include consideration of pausing or stopping lower-priority activities. This is not a vacancy control process, and the review will not impact on the delivery of key government priorities or frontline services.

Also, things like reducing expenditure on non-salary costs, with no impact to frontline activity. For example, staff travel and transport, consultancies, office expenditure and equipment, office accommodation, staff ICT costs, and process improvements. Those sorts of things as well. There is a strategy there. It doesn't necessarily name-up that 'there is going to be X achieved through different procurement of ICT', but the department has generated a strategy through which they will find the efficiencies.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. I have to say that the strategy sounds remarkably similar to the strategies we've heard from other departments through the week.

Mr JAENSCH - Well, partly because this will be part of a global department strategy, you would have heard from minister Palmer the same sort of things.

Ms LOVELL - I understand. You're not able to point to, for example, the \$1.7 million that you expected to find in this financial year - you're not able to point to the specifics of where you will find those savings?

Mr JAENSCH - We can characterise the areas that we will seek to find them.

Ms LOVELL - Has Treasury asked you to point to specifics? Is that part of the work that's been done? I understood that was what they were looking for.

Mr JAENSCH - I think they have asked for a strategy that shows that we know how we are going to go about that. These are the sorts of elements that are included in that strategy.

Ms LOVELL - Would you be willing to table that strategy?

PUBLIC

Mr JAENSCH - No, I will answer your questions, and my *Hansard* record will reflect the strategy that I have been advised we are following.

Ms LOVELL - I understand the Premier tabled the strategy for his department, but you're not willing to table a strategy for yours?

Mr JAENSCH - As I said, we have strategies, including opportunities to divert resources from non-priority activities.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, you have said that. I am conscious of the time. I don't want us to get repetitive, but my question was will you table the strategy?

Mr JAENSCH - I have given you the elements of that strategy already.

Ms LOVELL - You will not table the strategy?

Mr JAENSCH - No, I have read it into *Hansard*.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, you talked about frontline services. What definition are you using for 'frontline services'?

Mr JAENSCH - I have some tables about numbers of staff in frontline and support and corporate roles. The notes to that is that frontline staff include, for the purposes of these numbers, staff working in the advice and referral line; the child safety service, including in out-of-home care; custodial youth justice; community youth justice; and related programs like the intensive family engagement service and transition to independence.

Then there are non-frontline staffing roles that provide support directly to those frontline staff. They are another layer of staff including the business coordination; innovation; business operations; information systems and strategy; strategic improvement projects; and youth justice reform staff.

Ms LOVELL - Do I take from that, that's the same definition that you will use for the budget efficiency dividends when you talk about frontline services?

Mr JAENSCH - This is the definition that I see the departments working with at the moment, yes. To the extent that efficiencies refer to 'frontline staff', I expect that would be the breakdown we'd be using.

The most important thing is frontline services. What matters most is that, in our case in particular, children and families are getting the services that they need. If we can find better ways to do that more efficiently, and without diminishing the quality of the service or reach of those services, that's the sort of thing the public expects that we are doing all the time. They expect us to make good use of their money, make savings where we can, and not diminish the quality or the extent of the services we're providing.

CHAIR - Can I just follow up. You mentioned a couple of what you consider support services, can you provide the full list of what you consider support staff or support- I think you said staff, from memory.

Mr JAENSCH - I laid out a list of five different groups there, which will list their roles. I think the table you have is just the areas that they are working in rather than the functions they are performing.

Just to give you an idea, across Children and Families and Youth Justice, we have 412 frontline staff. We have 62 support staff or backline staff. Also, in the Department for Education, Children and Young People, there are around 525 corporate staff in the global agency who provide services and contribute to the operations. That is a rough breakdown of numbers of what you'd consider the people that directly support the frontline staff in their roles. Then those who enable the-

Ms LOVELL - The people who directly support them in their roles. That is the description I was after, minister. What are those roles or areas?

Mr JAENSCH - I've mentioned business coordination and innovation, business operations, information systems and strategy, strategic improvement projects, and youth justice reform. They provide services to youth in all of the areas of our activity, so the different areas that we're doing our work. Have we got some good examples that you'd like to bring up?

Ms C LOVELL - Most of the staff who work in my office would be considered support roles, and there are some streams within that office that provide support roles very directly into frontline services. For example, business operations staff sit within a stream within my office, but they're located out at our sites like St John's Park. They work staffing reception areas and answering the phones and working shoulder to shoulder with our allied health professional workforce. They are frontline support staff, without being allied health professionals.

All of the staff in my office I would consider to be really crucial support staff. We would not be making any adjustments to those roles that would impact on frontline service delivery, because there's a key dependency there between some of those roles and the services that are delivered in the operational service sites.

CHAIR - Minister, I hear what Claire just said, which is pleasing to hear because it's like having ward assistants and ward clerks in hospitals. If you don't have them, your nurses and midwives are answering the phone and being paid more to do that.

Mr JAENSCH - You'll see as we go into the different outputs and activities that there is significant investment in things like providing new supports for our child safety and out-of-home care staff - there are legal officers, disability liaison and other specialised positions that we can put in place to provide a higher quality of service where otherwise we might have had child safety officers with statutory responsibilities spending a fair bit of time doing that.

CHAIR - Which brings me to the point, minister, that they are a crucial roles in supporting these frontline services, but they're not excluded from your strategy. Didn't your strategy just refer to frontline staff as defined?

Mr JAENSCH - This is where I made the distinction between staff and services. I understand our mission is to create savings where we can to meet our targets without diminishing services. I don't think it's helpful to only be focusing on staff, as if staff and staff positions are going to be the thing we count in terms of delivering savings.

CHAIR - No, we're not doing that.

Ms LOVELL - That's why we're asking you to explain.

CHAIR - We haven't got a copy of *Hansard* to go back and refer to in terms of the strategy, hence Sarah's request for that to be tabled so we've got it in front of us to refer to throughout this process. You can still change your mind on that, because the Premier did provide a copy of it even though he spoke to it. Can you go back to your strategy and reiterate what it says about what areas are protected from those?

Mr JAENSCH - Strategies include - as part of overall resource management, DECYP will consider opportunities to divert resources to roles funded to support the response to the commission of inquiry. The review includes consideration of pausing or stopping current non commission of inquiry activity. This is not a vacancy control process. The review will not impact on the delivery of any key government priorities or frontline services.

CHAIR - Are the support services included in frontline services for the purposes of that description?

Mr JAENSCH - At the end of the day, it's about the service.

CHAIR - I agree with you. I'm just trying to understand what you've said to us.

Mr JAENSCH - Increasingly the way we deliver that service is we have people who may be front facing, and they can do more front facing if they have someone -

CHAIR - I understand all that.

Mr JAENSCH - who can do the legal background for them. Then over here, we have people who run payroll and do procurement, and who get reorganised into groups to deal urgently with policy development for an area of priority like out-of-home care reform. They might be taken off other work to do that. Where we've got a commission of inquiry imperative to deliver very quickly a lot of new legislation and a lot of new operating systems, we might divert them from other areas of activity to do that.

Ms LOVELL - On that minister, you talked about non-priority actions - I think that was the word you used. We have had the commission of inquiry. Obviously that's a priority action, and I understand you're talking about potentially diverting services or resources to focus on those priorities. But the child safety service has been under enormous pressure for many years. We've been having these conversations across this very table long before the commission of inquiry had even started.

I'm struggling to understand what could possibly be a non-priority action for the child safety service, or for this department. When you talk about non-priority actions, what are some of the things that you might consider to be a non-priority action?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll leave some of those decisions to the department to be making operationally. They know that they have time frames for delivery of certain actions.

Ms LOVELL - But you have to sign off on it as minister, surely.

Mr JAENSCH - I do, and I'll be presented a case from the department regarding how it's going to proceed. If it needs me to authorise a work program that says, 'We're going to do this intensively for the next six months in order to meet a requirement under the delivery of commission of inquiry, and that means we may delay delivery of some other aspect of reform', then that'll be something I'll consider.

Ms LOVELL - Have you had any of those conversations yet? Because we're three months into this financial year and you've got savings to find. What conversations have you been having around where those savings will be identified?

Mr JAENSCH - We have conversations about our program for delivery of our priorities weekly and fortnightly. I've not had a specific strategy presented to me asking me to approve a reprioritisation at this stage, but this is the strategy that we're committed to following. I'll just ask Sue if she wants to comment on that.

Ms McKERRACHER - What we're looking at is process improvement. There are always ways of doing things differently, more efficiently and more effectively, and that's what we're looking at. I think talking about jobs and positions - what we'd rather do is talk about how we can improve the processes that we're achieving. Finding \$1.7 million is a stretch, but that's what we'll be looking at in order to present a business case to the minister for how we do that.

Ms LOVELL - I appreciate that, and I'm reassured to hear you say you're looking at processes. My concern, and I know the concern of a lot of people, is that \$1.7 million, as you said, is a stretch. This department has been stretched for a long time, and people are worried there is no more stretch.

Mr JAENSCH - For the people who are concerned - and I thank them for their concern and for taking interest in this area - they can take confidence from the fact that there is \$120 million for out-of-home care in this Budget for the next 4 years as per recommendation 9.1 from the commission of inquiry. The commission recognised that that area needs significant upfront investment in the budget - a commitment that we can plan for and use to better deliver for the young people and the needs of the families and the staff who are on the ground delivering for them.

There's \$4.52 million in there, which is the cost of our workforce package, because it's critical that we get our staffing levels up to establishment and above to be able to cater for inevitable unplanned leave and absences from our workforce from time to time, which we don't want to have to cover by asking people to cover more cases or for us to triage differently according to risk. This Budget is probably the biggest new and additional and recurrent investment in children and families that I've seen in my time as minister, or in my time in parliament even. It's a very exciting time, I think, for our people, that we can do this well.

Ms LOVELL - We'll come to some of those new investments. I don't think it's unreasonable for people to want to know and to want to hear from you when you've identified savings that need to be made how you're going to make those savings. The last thing we want to see is investing money with one hand and taking things away at the same time, so I don't think that's an unreasonable position.

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I have one last question on this and then we can move on. You talked about no vacancy control. Vacancy control can mean a lot of things. My question is, do you expect to see any change in the number of people or any reduction in the positions funded across the service?

Mr JAENSCH - I expect to see a significant increase in the number of people employed by our department. We have significant workforce gaps at the moment.

Ms LOVELL - So there will be no savings made through natural attrition or not filling positions for periods of time?

Mr JAENSCH - What we recognise is that, as for the last period, while we'll close this gap as quickly as we can, where we have funded positions that are not filled, we need to make sure that we are managing what is effectively a saving that comes from not having people in those roles. Our ambition is to fill and overfill our frontline roles wherever we can to ensure that we've got some capacity in there to meet unplanned absences and for us to focus our efforts on achieving structural and recurrent savings, which isn't short-term vacancy.

Ms LOVELL - You mentioned there about managing savings from not filling positions or positions being unfilled for a period - that's not part of your savings strategies?

Mr JAENSCH - Where we have unfilled positions that are allocated, we need to capture those savings where we can, but we need to not build them into our longer-term savings plan.

Ms LOVELL - I have some questions about workforce, so perhaps if we go to that now, since we've started talking about that.

Mr JAENSCH - Just before you go into that, I have some information in answer to the previous question. Commission of inquiry funding for Children and Families and Youth Justice for 2024-25 is \$37.2 million.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I have some questions about the Child Safety workforce package, so looking specifically at child safety for now. How many vacancies do you have in the Child Safety Service by region currently?

Mr JAENSCH - While that information is being found, I am happy to update the committee that the national recruitment process that accompanied our announcement of our workforce package is now concluding its interview stage. They've had a very strong response from suitably qualified people, more than 100 I understand, and interviews are underway or being finalised this week. The service is confident of significant recruitment.

If Ms Lovell's in a position to speak to us about the numbers, then we'll give that some context.

Ms C LOVELL - May I first clarify, minister, when we talk about vacancy are we looking at child safety officer vacancies or are we looking at frontline staff vacancies in those operational services?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Lovell to define her question.

Ms LOVELL - Specifically child safety officers, but if there are other frontline staff where you have vacancies, if you could give us those as well, that would be helpful.

Ms C LOVELL - First of all, I can give the child safety officer vacancy data, but I will describe the context that they are only one staff cohort of a broader workforce, including other allied health professional staff who work alongside them.

For child safety officer vacancies for the pay period ending 11 September, the most recent pay period, the north had 25 child safety officer positions budgeted. Of those, 24.4 of those were occupied, leaving 2.4 per cent vacant. In the north-west, of the 23.5 child safety officers, 14.2 of those were occupied, leaving 39.4 per cent vacant. In the south, 56.4 FTE were budgeted with 43.9 occupied, leaving a vacancy rate of 22.2 per cent.

Ms LOVELL - Those positions funded, are they FTE positions?

Ms C LOVELL - They are FTE, yes. For statewide, that was a vacancy rate of 21.3 per cent unoccupied child safety officer positions in the Child Safety Service.

Ms LOVELL - Did you have the figures for the other frontline positions you talked about?

Ms C LOVELL - The other frontline positions, we'll have to do the maths because I don't have them. In terms of vacancies, I have how many are occupied.

Ms LOVELL - Have you got how many are unoccupied and how many funded?

Ms C LOVELL - I can go how many were available for that pay period. For the same period for the northern Child Safety Service, there were 43.8 FTE in total. That includes others such as unit coordinators, support workers, senior support workers, youth workers, practice leaders and practice managers. That excludes out-of-home-care teams. There's 43.8 positions in total, 25 of those for child safety officer positions. Of those, 46.5 were occupied, so we had 41.3 available staff by the time we factor in leave. So, for that pay period, 41.3 available staff members in the northern region.

Ms LOVELL - Of the 43.8 positions, 41.3 were staffed in the north?

Ms C LOVELL - Yes. Sorry, 46.5 were occupied, 5.2 on leave or workers' compensation, leaving 41.3 staff members available and working with children and young people in that region. I can provide the same for the north-west and the south? For the north-west, we have 39 positions in total budgeted, 34.8 of those were occupied, 9.2 on leave or workers' comp, so not available, and 25 people available, or 25.6 FTE available for that period. For the south, we have 100.4 budgeted positions in total, 110.3 occupied.

CHAIR - There are some for the north-west.

Ms C LOVELL - We had 18.3 absent due to leave or workers' compensation and 92 available staff members. The vacancy rate is much lower when you factor in all positions than when we just look at child safety officer percentage vacancy rates.

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Ms LOVELL - Yes, but do those other positions like practice leaders take on work of child safety officers to fill those vacancies?

Ms C LOVELL - Some do. Those positions all provide support to children and young people in varying forms.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I understand a child safety workforce package has been committed to. Can you talk us through the elements of that, please?

Mr JAENSCH - The package includes a payment of \$10,000 for all eligible allied health professional employees and managers statewide. Frontline employees in the north-west will receive the statewide payment as well as a 15 per cent market allowance. There will be relocation incentives for employees moving to and remaining in the north-west region as well.

CHAIR - For how long?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll just get a confirmation of that from Ms Lovell.

Ms C LOVELL - I might have to check that.

Mr JAENSCH - There is also, as part of the overall package, provision for scholarships and fee-free places in university and TasTAFE qualification pathways.

Ms LOVELL - This is part of the emergency workforce package specifically?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, that's been included in the package and it's part of the total budgeted amount of 4.52. There is also an element of additional impact days for a broader group of staff, including those who provide support services to the frontline positions, if you like. This is in recognition that they are exposed to vicarious trauma in their work through the handling of information in relation to cases of children and families as well, and that they have experienced additional workload and stresses in their workplace in association with recent workforce shortages. We appreciate their work. We want them to be able to have access to ways of regulating their exposure and ensuring they have time to look after themselves.

Ms LOVELL - And were those impact days part of the original package or is that something that has been -

Mr JAENSCH - It was a matter discussed with the union in the early days, subsequently included in the final negotiations, which I understand we now have in-principle agreement to.

Ms LOVELL - The question was, was that part of the original emergency workforce package or is it something that has been -

Mr JAENSCH - When I first announced our intentions regarding the workforce package, I made reference to ongoing discussions regarding leave arrangements for staff. That culminated in the inclusion of an impact-days component in the final negotiation needed to get the union support for a package to take to the Industrial Commission.

Ms LOVELL - Is there a budget allocation for this? Is that in the key deliverables or somewhere else? I am having trouble finding it.

Mr JAENSCH - The 4.52 overall, that was listed in Decisions.

Ms LOVELL - That's in the election commitments on page 40.

Mr JAENSCH - No, not election commitments. It is under the Other Initiatives on page

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Ms LOVELL - Here, child safety workforce package -

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, page 44, Other Initiatives, Table 2.1.

Ms LOVELL - That is 4.52 altogether. The majority of that funding is obviously in the first couple of years.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Can you explain that profile?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, the allocation for the purposes of the budget is that the interim child safety payment, which is the \$10,000 payments, \$1.35 million in each of 2024-25 and 2025-26, totalling \$2.7 million. The market allowance for the north-west is at \$970,000 in 2024-25. Relocation incentives budgeted for \$175,000 in each of 2024-25 and 2025-26. The scholarships of various kinds, allocation is provided for \$125,000 for each of the four years over the forward Estimates, totalling \$500,000. That is a provision. It will depend on the uptake of university scholarships versus fee-free training places, et cetera.

The intention is that with the main elements of the package, the market allowance and the interim payment, those conditions will be superseded by arrangements agreed under the new child safety agreement.

Ms LOVELL - That was going to be my next question. So those two, which are probably the critical parts of this, the \$10,000 payment for eligible workers and the 15 per cent market allowance have only been budgeted for so far for the first two years. Is it your intention that they will be continued through the wages agreement? I understand that's up for negotiation quite soon.

Mr JAENSCH - The people who've been around the table discussing this workforce package and enabling it to be approved and taken through the tick are the same people who will be involved in the negotiation of the new agreement. The aim is that this will be superseded by the new agreement.

Ms LOVELL - Can you tell us what the starting salary is for a child safety officer in Tasmania at the moment?

Mr JAENSCH - I can ask for that information to be found for us. We'll bring that to the table as soon as we can.

Ms LOVELL - Oh, you need to get that, do you?

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Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I will ask someone to bring that forward. We'll take that on notice for the moment, but we'll bring that to the table when we can identify it.

Ms LOVELL - Right. Well, okay. It's sort of important for my next questions.

Mr JAENSCH - Do you want to estimate based on a band and -

Ms C LOVELL - I can look up the jobs and see what the advertised starting salary is.

Ms LOVELL - My question is that I know in Queensland a starting salary for a child safety officer is around \$96,000. In the non-government sector in Tasmania it's around \$80,000-\$90,000, plus salary packaging. I understand it's quite a bit less in the child safety service. That's what I wanted to clarify because I don't know the figure.

Mr JAENSCH - Can you give it, can you characterise that in a broad term?

Ms C LOVELL - What I can indicate is that, to inform the wage agreement negotiations we have -

CHAIR - Can you speak up a little bit, Hansard's having a bit of trouble hearing you.

Ms C LOVELL - Sorry. I'm very muffled. To inform these wage agreement negotiations we have had some comparison work done by consultants.

Ms LOVELL - Would you like to table that work?

Ms C LOVELL - I'm not able to table that at the moment. One is a couple of years old now, and that gave us an indication of national comparisons. At the moment we're having a look at comparisons with the northern government sector. We are going to be tabling that and using that as part of the wage agreement negotiations.

Ms LOVELL - Can you tell us what that showed in terms of where Tasmania sits for starting salaries in particular?

Ms C LOVELL - What it showed us is that there is some variance in starting salaries in particular. However, when taking into account other entitlements between government and non-government, and the life cycle of an employee in future years from that starting salary, it is very similar, taking into account those things. The government starting salary for some levels is slightly lower, however there is increased career progression.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. In terms of the starting salary, which is the salary that you're using to try to attract people into the role to begin with, you said it's slightly lower. Can you give us a ballpark for how much lower?

Ms C LOVELL - I'm sorry, I don't have that report in front of me.

Mr JAENSCH - If we can find a starting salary that we can provide to the table as soon as possible, that would be good.

What I would like to reflect is that the staffing levels that we've had have been too low for too long. They've been holes that are too big. It's been putting unnecessary strain on people and unnecessary risk in our system. My direction to the department was to bring me options to take through, get approval from Treasury and through the State Service Office, to put something out there that would reward the people that we've got, and to attract more people in a very competitive market nationally to come and work here and stay here. As a result of that we were able to put a \$4.52 million package out there. We've had a strong response in the market, which suggests to me that we're meeting the market. Those people have gone beyond their first inquiry. There's a significant cohort now being processed through an interview process, which I'm very grateful for. I'm hoping that's going to yield us a result.

What we're conscious of is that that will also set a starting point for our new wage agreements, but it'll be based on the experience of doing what we needed to do to meet the market. That's what we've done. That's what we have to do. We can't sustain low staffing numbers because, for all of the good intentions and sophisticated recommendations of the commission of inquiry and our own documents, if you haven't got the people in the roles delivering the service now, you can't hope to undertake ambitious reform.

You need the people and we need to ensure the safety of children and families. That's our priority and our job. The direction to the department was to find out what it takes to get a response from the market to keep our people and give them more colleagues to share the load with, and, if this initiative gives us some results, then we know what works and we'll keep doing that.

Now, I've been advised that the starting salary for child safety officers outside the north-west - interesting qualification -

CHAIR - Honestly, positively discriminated against, minister, I must say.

Mr JAENSCH - Is usually \$75,500 to \$81,000 depending on their skills and experience. So, there's sort of a band there.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Minister, I just wanted to comment on what you've just said and I'm very pleased to hear you make those comments because, with respect, workers have been telling you these issues for years. I'm glad that the Emergency Workforce Package was agreed to and is yielding some results, clearly, and that you've said that that will inform the wages negotiations because -

Mr JAENSCH - It can't not.

Ms LOVELL - Well, it can't not, and I'm pleased that that's the realisation you've come to because these are issues that have been raised with you for a number of years now.

Mr JAENSCH - And I'm grateful to the staff who spoke to me. I spent time in all of our regions speaking with our staff in a range of our different services, one-on-one, and I got a picture from them of how their workload and their workplaces were faring and heard from them their concerns about being able to sustain that.

They know that we can't fix it in an instant, but I think the picture I was taking away is that they're very committed people. If they could see that there was a solution coming, more

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recruitment to give them the ability to share the load and to get things down to a sustainable level of activity, they would stay the course and they would continue to do extra to make sure that kids had the service they need. So I thank them for doing that, and hope that what we've got now is the light at the end of the tunnel that they've been looking for.

Ms LOVELL - They do know, and they should be listened to. In terms of their commitment, I can tell you the staff you have now are the most committed of the committed because they wouldn't be here any longer if they weren't.

Minister, on that, what budget do you have for wage negotiations? Is that budgeted for already in terms of the allocation over the forward Estimates?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't think I'd be a very good negotiator if I made all that up at the beginning of the process. And, frankly, it's not me at that table. There are teams of people who go into those discussions whose job it is to do that. I won't interfere with that.

My intervention in this case, was that the department had exhausted its options in terms of what it could offer staff and its strategies to cover the bases. I intervened where we had a situation where that was just not producing the results in terms of numbers on the ground and I needed to seek cabinet's approval and the Treasurer and the head of the State Service to put together a package that was not planned for. I'm glad we've been able to deliver it and that it's producing some results.

Now, going into the next stages, we will use the normal processes of negotiation. I think that the workforce package that we've put out there would seem to have been pitched right in the market and got a response that will inform the next round of discussions.

Ms LOVELL - Well, you've given some pretty strong indications today, so, I hope we see a much more streamlined negotiation process, I suppose, in the coming months.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm sure that there will always be new issues brought to the table in those discussions but I've been very grateful for the constructive way that the unions in particular have engaged around this workforce package and grateful for their support for that.

Ms LOVELL - I'm sure they'll continue that. I didn't have anything else on wages. I've got other questions.

CHAIR - If I can go back to the staffing numbers in Child Safety services. You note that there was a number of people on leave. Can you provide a breakdown of what sort of leave those people are on? How many are on annual leave and how many on long service leave, how many on -

Mr JAENSCH - maternity, et cetera?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - Ms Lovell, are you able to characterise that?

Ms C LOVELL - That leave includes planned and unplanned leave and a very small amount of workers' compensation in the Child Safety Service.

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CHAIR - How many are on workers' compensation leave?

Ms C LOVELL - If it's maternity leave, those positions are backfilled as quickly as possible. So, it tends to be shorter stints of annual recreational leave and unplanned sick leave.

CHAIR - Do we have a breakdown of that then?

Ms C LOVELL - I don't have that breakdown.

CHAIR - Do you know how many staff are on WorkCover leave?

Ms C LOVELL - I guess we can get that.

Mr JAENSCH - I think in relation to this one as well, Chair, the department will need to be mindful of small numbers. When we get down to areas of our service in different regions of the state as well, we may be dealing with five or less people in these categories. We would like to avoid effectively identifying individuals.

CHAIR - I'm asking for north-west, north and south.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm just conscious of that.

CHAIR - If it's easy to provide across the state, that's okay too,

Mr JAENSCH - That might be best.

CHAIR - Because of the challenges in the north-west, as you and I both understand minister, the need for leave is exacerbated by that.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I fully understand. If you're able to provide some overview or state-wide figures there on that one, Ms Lovell.

Ms C LOVELL - I can provide some overview around workers' compensation claims. It seems an unusual period I have, but from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 there were 17 new workers' compensation claims lodged for services for Children and Families.

CHAIR - Were they spread evenly across the state or they predominantly in one area?

Ms C LOVELL - No, I don't have the state-wide breakdown and that would include the Advice and Referral Line as well as the Child Safety Service, and we currently have 21 open and active claims.

CHAIR - You said workers going on maternity leave are backfilled. Workers going on long service leave, I assume there are some who may be on long service leave, are they backfilled.

Ms C LOVELL - If that was possible, they absolutely would be. So, that backfill applies where that is available. Some of those vacancies we have talked about are due to inability to fill fixed term roles in those circumstances.

CHAIR - And what's the leave liability across the area.

Ms C LOVELL - I don't have that in front of me.

Mr JAENSCH - If that's something that can be pulled up from records, we can provide that.

CHAIR - That's one of the things that can come back and bite you a bit financially too, building up of leave liabilities.

Ms C LOVELL - Our operational managers certainly have visibility of leave liability and actively manage leave through performance development plans with each staff member and through our supervision, planning leave throughout the year so that people are using leave.

CHAIR - That is actively managed?

Ms C LOVELL - Is that actively managed? Yes.

Mr VINCENT - Minister, the out-of-home care - can you outline what you're doing to strengthen that for us, please?

Mr JAENSCH - We know how important it is for children to be with their families, safe wherever that's possible. We also know that sometimes a child or young person may not be able to live safely at home with their family. When that happens, the government's Child Safety Service plays a critical role in protecting children's rights and providing them with care and support in a safe environment away from their family home.

We're committed to building a high-quality and accountable system of out-of-home care that meets the needs of children and young people. As a result of our Strong Families Safe Kids and out-of-home care reforms, already, more families are receiving the support they need to stay together and keep children safe without the need for a statutory child safety intervention. This has been a significant achievement, particularly since 2018, when the Strong Families, Safe Kids reform first kicked in. This is reflected in the numbers of children in out-of-home care, which are continuing to trend downward, indicating that more issues are being resolved by referral to family supports and other services, successfully diverting families away from involvement with the statutory child safety system and entry into out-of-home care.

We embrace the commission's key principle that a high-quality and well-functioning out-of-home care system is vital to protect children from abuse, and to respond appropriately when it does occur. We're working to implement all recommendations relating to child safety services and out-of-home care as a matter of priority. The recommendations from the commission of inquiry will only serve to strengthen and build on the work that has already been undertaken over the past decade to strengthen and reform our out-of-home care system.

As we've mentioned earlier in our discussions, \$30 million per annum is provided in the Budget to assist in meeting the cost of out-of-home care, aligning with the commission's recommendation 9.1, to meet increased costs in relation to foster and kinship care, respite and salaried care, and special care packages.

Funding of \$3.1 million over four years is provided for the Out of Home Care Reform Implementation Unit. This unit will lead and progress the Out of Home Care Reform agenda to accelerate the delivery of whole-of-government approaches to the commission's recommendations in this area. They'll be responsible for developing policy and planning to implement all recommendations that are nested in a broader view of system improvements, undertaking business planning, data analysis and budget modelling for those.

This will ensure that the benefits of reforms are fully realised, and that the safety and stability of the system is prioritised. Importantly, improving our out-of-home care system is contingent on engaging with and understanding the experiences of children, young people, families and carers who engage with those services, and so we can only do this work in partnership with the communities that we serve, as well as researchers in the field, child safety experts, and professionals and organisations who work with families every day.

But as we're talking about before with the workforce package, we can't do this with an understaffed system because we need to look after children now and ensure that they're getting what they need. With that strengthening now, we can proceed into developing these policies and making them hit the ground.

The reform unit is about an intensive period of time, taking all of the things that the commission of inquiry spoke to and also making sure that they fit together. The commission of inquiry came across many needs. It made a lot of very specific recommendations, but these have to be coordinated so that they work together, and that's what our reform unit is working on now.

We'll hopefully see from that a wave of improvements and better outcomes for children and families the way we saw from the Strong Families, Safe Kids reforms that were undertaken and have been hitting the ground and changing the numbers since 2018.

Mr VINCENT - That's good to hear and hear the budget there because what you said a couple of times in there was that the numbers have been improving. I see the reform unit is a preventative measure.

Mr JAENSCH - It is, yes.

Mr VINCENT - Before the next step occurs, which can be devastating for all parts of a family and for the administrators and government as well.

Mr JAENSCH - Absolutely, and we know that where we talk about trying to help families to be and stay safe places for their children, it's based on a recognition that removing children from a family for their safety and wellbeing also introduces a trauma into their lives as well as for their family. They will be the children of that family forever and that stays with them wherever they go. So, where we can support those families to do the best they can for their kids, with whatever support that takes, that's our aim. They're still going to have challenges to address, but for as many kids as possible, the trauma of removal is one we want to avoid where we can do it safely.

Mr VINCENT - It would be very interesting to know, over time, how those families or how many of those families have a chance to rebuild to a normal lifestyle or situation through this unit.

Mr JAENSCH - Again, this is where the commission of inquiry has shone some light on that. We've responded with some more resources and reforms happening in a number of sectors, because this is not something which is only for the Department for Education, Children and Young People. Some of the supports and some of the issues that those families need to deal with are about things to do with their housing and their mental health and other services. We need to be able to draw in from across government to make sure that we're providing those supports, and I think that we've developed the tools for that now or are developing them.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, will this additional funding increase payments for fostering kinship carers and respite carers?

Mr JAENSCH - The out-of-home care reforms include a review of the supports needed, including the payments made to foster carers, but also the identification of where we might need new types of placements. At the moment we have a traditional sort of reliance on family-based foster care arrangements. We also have traditionally had, in recognition that we have some kids with very complex behaviours and needs, specialised special care packages that are provided by a small number of suitably qualified providers. The discussions more recently are that there needs to be a lot more in between, where we might be able to have a different form of family-based care which involves people with more training and experience, and who are also remunerated differently, to provide a more intensive care experience in a family setting.

I want to ask if Ms Lovell might speak to something like the Care 2 Thrive initiative, if that's relevant to this discussion as well, which has been a bit of a pilot that has been tried recently.

Ms C LOVELL - Care 2 Thrive does recognise that some children have exceptionally high needs and that their carers need a lot of additional support and need to be provided with a lot of additional attention in terms of hours, so that is a different model where carers are available to the children and where they're receiving a lot of support from their foster care agency as well to be able to provide for those needs. We've started with a very small pilot, but as we go on and develop our model of out-of-home care, I would expect that that's a feature likely to expand.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Back to the question, you said, right at the start of that answer, that the reforms include a review of the supports, including payments. Is that work still underway? Is that something that could be considered?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Lovell to give us an update on that.

Ms C LOVELL - Yes, we did engage a consultant to review our payment structure for family-based carers and we have received some advice which we are currently considering because it includes a range of options for us. The Out-of-Home Care Implementation Unit will be supporting services for children and families in developing that new model and implementing that in an appropriate sequence with the other changes for the out-of-home care sector. It certainly does recognise that the model needs to change.

CHAIR - Just on that, while we are talking about some of those matters. I know this is prior to investment being made, minister, but when you look at your performance information,

which is on page 60, the foster care households with five or more foster children, their target is to be less than 3.5, but for every year since 2021 there have been more, up to 5.3. That's a lot of children, and by their very nature, likely to have needs that can be complex and different for each child. Then the children in out-of-home care who had three plus non-respite placements in the last 12 months, would the targets be less than 4 and it's 4.4 in the last year. Clearly, that's not sustainable.

Mr JAENSCH - No. Foster care recruitment is an important thing for us as well, getting more carers in.

CHAIR - I appreciate that. Do you have a clear plan in getting that back down to at least below those number targets?

Mr JAENSCH - That is a factor of how many foster carers we have -

CHAIR - And then other children needing care.

Mr JAENSCH - - and where they are across the state as well. Relevant to this, we've been running, since December last year, a recruitment campaign called 'The Difference is You', which is about attracting new people to consider becoming a foster carer. That has been on social media and on YouTube, and I think that there were some promotions also on buses and things like that. We understand that there's been over 200 inquiries in response to that campaign and 33 new foster carer households have been registered so far as a result of that, and it's ongoing.

CHAIR - Are they spread around the state? Those 33 new ones?

Mr JAENSCH - I would expect that they wouldn't just be in one locality, but I don't know where they all are.

Ms C LOVELL - They are across the state.

Mr JAENSCH - Importantly, as I understand, it has not been driven by recruiting carers working under the government's management, but rather under the management of the other NGO providers. In keeping with the commission of inquiry's direction on Out of Home Care services being predominantly provided by NGOs in the future, this has been a program that has been coordinated with Life Without Barriers and other providers. The inquiries have been generated directly to them or brokered through the department to them. That's underway and it's getting some good traction which should be able to relieve pressure on some households that have provided a service to not five or more kids, but dozens of kids over their time as foster carers. They do a fantastic job but we need to recognise that we can't rely on them continuing to take larger numbers of young people and it's not good for the young people either.

CHAIR - When I read this is as five or more foster children in one home at any one time, that's not like five or more children over a 12-month period. What does this measure actually represent?

Ms C LOVELL - It does represent large households.

CHAIR - Five or more children at one time.

Ms C LOVELL - That's right. Some of those are large sibling groups and we do in every case possible keep siblings together. It's not necessarily an indicator of overcrowding when that occurs. However, we do seek to reduce the number of large households with multiple unrelated siblings in them because that can be an indicator of strain on the system and strain on the carers.

CHAIR - Even within the family group, the children will have different and unique needs.

Ms C LOVELL - That's right.

Mr JAENSCH - I think the point there is important to reiterate that sometimes for a group of siblings, separating them is traumatic. They provide a level of support and safety for each other as well, and we need to accommodate that wherever we can in the system.

CHAIR - I don't dispute that.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, you've mentioned the trauma that is experienced by children when they are removed from the family. It's really important that there are supports available to those children and supports available to the foster carers or family members who may be caring for them in terms of access to psychiatric or psychological or other counselling support, it's been raised with me that, that can be quite problematic for carers to be able to connect; one, to find supports to provide for children; two, to be able to afford it. So, can you explain what support is provided to carers, whether it be foster carers or families, to help those children in responding to that trauma they've experienced?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd ask for Ms Lovell to just prepare to provide some more detail around how access to those specialised services works and how provision is made for it. I suppose the most important message is that those young people and carers aren't alone in the job of providing that care for the young people. The intention of our service is that every person in out-of-home care has an active care team which is made up of people who are important in their life and in managing their unique individual needs as well; be it their education, maybe their disability, maybe their trauma background or other health matters that they have or what stages they're at, say if they are a young person who is an older teenager who is considering what their next steps are when they transition out of care into independence and what they need to be able to do that well. There might be a range of different people involved in each child's life depending on who they are and what their needs are and that's the strength of a care team approach. In the context of that, their needs around particular health supports would be understood and that would be built into their planning access to what they need.

I'd ask Ms Lovell to talk about the specifics in terms of accessing specialist services through those teams.

Ms C LOVELL - Many children and young people in out-of-home care do access specialist services and they range from things like a non-government counselling service to a specialist counselling service like the family violence counselling service or sexual assault support services, right through to where that also includes mental health concerns where they referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). So, we're very pleased to be working with CAMHS, which I believe is to become CYMPS (Children and Young

People Mental Health Service) around their new model of care, so that we can make sure that all children in out-of-home care are receiving what they need when they need it.

Mr JAENSCH -What does CYMPS stand for?

CHAIR - Youth.

Ms CLOVELL - Yes, it's changed from 'Adolescent' to reflect 'Young People' in the title. Yes, so they have been another -

Ms THOMAS - It's one thing to say that, you know, that support is provided, but how is it provided? Because what I hear is, it's difficult to access. We know it's difficult to access generally for people who are taking on that very important role of supporting someone - sometimes unexpectedly. We hear what you're saying that there are active care teams, but for those specific supports, is there financial support provided? Is that fully paid for when a carer is supporting a young person to access those services? Is that fully paid for by the government? Do you have average wait times that children in out-of-home care wait to access psychiatric or psychological or counselling services?

Ms C LOVELL - If I could respond to the issue of cost to begin with, most counselling and other support services for children and young people in out-of-home care are free of cost. We have an existing agreement with the Australian Childhood Foundation where we fund a number of places for various services so those don't come at any cost. Other counselling services are free to children and families. There is a cost associated with private psychologists and our funding model does cover the gap for that. Where there is a gap, ordinarily carers will see a GP and organise a mental healthcare plan for children and young people to avoid that cost, but where there is one, that's certainly covered by the department.

CHAIR - How long does it take to get with a private psychologist in the north-west?

Ms C LOVELL - I don't know, but I understand that there are wait times. So to respond to that second -

CHAIR - Three months probably. It's not unusual.

Ms C LOVELL - Yes. So, to respond to that second question, there are wait times for some services, yes.

Ms THOMAS - What about access to diagnostic services if children have learning or behavioural difficulties like ADHD and autism - those sorts of diagnostic services. Is support provided for those as well?

Ms C LOVELL - Children in out-of-home care do receive paediatric reviews on entering care and then as required after that. Those do consider diagnoses, but where there is a specialist diagnostic service required the paediatric out-of-home care clinic will make a referral to the relevant specialist for that to occur.

Ms THOMAS - And that cost is again fully funded? The carers aren't out of pocket for that?

PUBLIC

Ms C LOVELL - Carers shouldn't be out of pocket for diagnostic services or health services at all. We do have a scalable model of payment rates at the moment. Where we do find there are situations where there are costs associated with the child's care regularly; a carer can be subsidised at one of the higher rates to cover for that, so that they don't have to repeatedly seek reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses.

Ms LOVELL - I have a question on the paediatric clinics. I understand from the commission of inquiry recommendation joint house committee hearing that there are to be clinics in each of the regions. Is that right? There's one in Hobart currently, but there'll be clinics in each region. I'm assuming that's north and north-west. Can you show me where the funding for that is in the Budget? Is that within Children and Youth or does that sit within Health?

Ms C LOVELL - I believe that sits within Health. We might need to confirm our paediatric service.

Mr JAENSCH - Just while that's being looked up -

Ms LOVELL - If it's not within your budget, that's fine, I can find it in Health.

Unknown - We understand it's in Health.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, that's all I need to know.

Mr JAENSCH - Can I just provide - so that we don't go too far past it - in relation to a question you raised before, Chair, regarding the workforce package and the relocation allowance, I understand that the \$5000 settling-in allowance that's associated with that relocation package doesn't have a specified retention period but it's about helping people to thoroughly move in and address some of their -

CHAIR - Assuming they can find a house to live in.

Mr JAENSCH - That's acknowledging things like finding accommodation that meets their needs and incurring costs if they're going to need some interim accommodation while they find a place. There's a \$5000 settling-in payment associated with that relocation package which acknowledges that there are costs and disruptions associated for people moving and setting up home in a new place.

CHAIR - There's no expectation that they will stay for any length of time though.

Mr JAENSCH - We expect that everyone, once they realise how good it is living on the north-west coast, they never want to leave.

That's what happened to us.

There is not a claw back in that, as far as I understand, or a minimum period.

CHAIR - You suggested that there was.

Mr JAENSCH - It's to help get that commitment and to get them over the line.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Minister, I wanted to ask you about the Commissioner for Children and Young People who conducted their own investigation last year, into case management of children in out-of-home care. The report was called 'A Place at the Table'.

This is a very genuine question. I've had a look and I haven't been able to find it, but I haven't had a lot of time to have a look. Has the government issued any formal response to that report and in particular to the recommendations and findings?

Mr JAENSCH - One moment. As I understand it, we've made statements to the effect that we have accepted all recommendations arising from that report and some of them are internal operational matters for the department; others that the government responded to, saying that we will adopt and respond to the matters that have been raised by the commissioner. We are grateful for those insights and we are continuing to evolve the model, particularly ensuring that young people have care teams around them, plans for their wellbeing and also key adults in their lives who they have a trusting relationship with. We also want to ensure they have a voice in decisions that affect them, which I think was quite central to the commissioner's theme - that they need to be heard.

Ms LOVELL - There were seven recommendations. We don't have time to go through one by one now. Is there anywhere where your progress on those recommendations or the actions that you are taking to implement them is available, or would you be willing to provide anything like that to the committee, perhaps in writing or table something if there is a plan?

Mr JAENSCH - We don't have any reporting for that, do we, Ms Lovell?

Ms C LOVELL - Not as yet because the actions are being implemented simultaneously to the relevant actions from the commission of inquiry so they have been included in the planning for that and will be included in the reporting around the implementation.

Mr JAENSCH - That's right. I think in our response at the time of the tabling of the commissioner's report, we noted the strong alignment of the recommendations with specific recommendations in the commission of inquiry's report. Therefore there is a mechanism there for those commission of inquiry recommendations to be reported against with reference to the commissioner's recommendations as well. That will be something that you can expect to see in the routine reporting of progress, and the independent monitor will have oversight of all of those recommendations as well.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. I wanted to ask specifically about recommendation 4. The reason for the commissioner starting this report was in response to the government's model of care for children and young people in out-of-home care where not all children had a dedicated child safety officer and instead were managed by a team of officers. One of the recommendations is that there is appropriate resourcing provided to child safety to implement a key worker model, so that children and young people in care are allocated a dedicated child safety officer who they know.

Can you provide an update for the committee on how many children in out-of-home care currently have a dedicated key child safety officer, and how many are still being managed by a team?

Mr JAENSCH - I do not think that those two groups are mutually exclusive. I understand that the aim is for every child to have a team of people around them who are working on their -

Ms LOVELL - I think there are two different things. There are care teams, absolutely. No argument that children shouldn't have a care team of people, but they should also have a dedicated child safety officer allocated to them, which is one of these key recommendations. The care teams are not what we are talking about when we talk about team 7 and team 10 case management. My question is around how many children have - or do not have, I suppose is more the question - a dedicated child safety officer allocated to them. And is it still team 7 and team 10? Are they still in operation?

Ms C LOVELL - Those are the two southern arrangements that are in place for children who do not have an individual child safety officer. There are arrangements in the north and north-west as well.

Ms LOVELL - Start perhaps with the numbers.

Ms C LOVELL - Children allocated to their own individual child safety officer - 435; and those who are not allocated to an individual child safety officer but are receiving services in another way, for example via a team or from a youth worker - 675.

Ms LOVELL - Are you able to tell me how many children are allocated to each of team 7 and team 10 and whatever arrangements there are in place in the north and the north-west?

Ms C LOVELL - Not the number of children allocated to team 7 and 10 currently. I can describe the arrangements that are in place for each region, though. Service-managed or team-managed refers to systems in place to deliver the services that these children need when they don't have an individual child safety officer. It's a risk mitigation approach during a period where there haven't been enough staff members for every child to be allocated their own worker.

In the north and north-west, children are service-managed. That's where all available staff from those services work together to provide the support. They keep track of what needs to be done and they allocate the duties to the right person at the right time, and they also respond to any incoming requests and provide advice to care team members as needed.

In the south, children who don't have their own child safety officer are team-managed rather than service-managed. There are two teams, team 7 and 10, which you referred to, where that's their focus area. They have the same roles as the general case management teams in the Child Safety Service. They have a practice leader, a supervisor, they have child safety officers within them, they have youth workers, they have administrative support, and case aids, known as support workers. The only difference is that they don't have the individual allocation model.

Ms LOVELL - So you don't have with you the number of children currently allocated to team 7 or team 10, or, I presume, the number of children who are being service-managed in the north or the north-west?

PUBLIC

Ms C LOVELL - I could get that breakdown. We could assume that for those who don't have an individual child safety officer, the majority of them are allocated in team 7 and 10.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Can you tell me how many staff are currently allocated to or are working within team 7 and team 10?

Ms C LOVELL - No, I couldn't.

Ms LOVELL - If we could get the number of positions and vacancies as well, so how many staff are actually on the ground for each of those four - team 7 and team 10, and then in the north and the north-west, the number of staff who are responsible for the service-management model.

Ms C LOVELL - In the north and north-west, all staff provide support to the service-managed model. There aren't staff quarantined specifically for that purpose.

Ms LOVELL - Are there staff in the north and the north-west who are also allocated to individual children in care?

Ms C LOVELL - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Well, perhaps if we could get the number of children allocated to each of those services, and then we've got the number of staff already.

Mr JAENSCH - Are you able to do that?

Ms C LOVELL - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. In relation to this, I note that the Child Safety Service is funded for every child to have their own child safety worker. Whether we have all of those positions filled at a point in time is a matter that we've discussed earlier today, and we're working towards ensuring that that's the case.

The other thing that I've been briefed on is the importance of a child having continuity of a relationship with a trusted adult as part of their care. Someone outside the household doesn't necessarily always need to be a child safety worker. If the matter is of greatest relevance to that young person's age and stage of life and their circumstances, it might mean that the most important person for them could be, for example, for a 17-year-old, a youth worker who works with them through their planning for their transition to independence over a couple of years in terms of their education, accommodation, work and other life skills, where they've got extra supports.

Where the primary matter of their care is not necessarily child safety and dealing with aspects of their trauma and their relationships and the rest, but rather their transition into life, the most important person that they have regular contact with may not be a child safety worker. It may be someone else from the team. We're very conscious of ensuring that we're putting the right people around young people and ensuring that they've got that critical, trusting relationship with the most relevant person who they have a bond with.

PUBLIC

Ms LOVELL - I understand that. I think they're important points. What measures do you have in place to monitor that and make sure that young people have that appropriate best person for them to be -

Mr JAENSCH - That's where we come back to the care team arrangement. That's important for the individualised care of young people.

Ms LOVELL - What reporting have you got in place to make sure that those needs are being met for young people by their care team?

Ms C LOVELL - The teams responsible for these children - so let's talk about the child safety teams, perhaps, if the examples are team 7 and 10 - they do a fantastic job of keeping track of what the children need, depending on their age and stage. Their legal status is nearly always in order to 18, but if they're getting towards adulthood, they make sure that they have the services that they need around leaving care and they're the ones that the transition to independence worker would be focusing on.

For example, within the team, if they find that needs are changing and that things are getting wobbly for some of the children and young people, that's where they do - I don't know whether they allocate them, but they certainly appoint a child safety officer to be working with them more intensively through that period. They are very good at tracking what the needs are of all of the children who they're supporting and who the best person is to be supporting them, but they have systems in place to do that.

I can provide the regional breakdown for you now, if you like?

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, yes.

Ms C LOVELL - In the north, allocated to a child safety officer, we have 146.8. Those not allocated to a child safety officer is 76.4 -

Ms LOVELL - How does the point come into it?

Ms C LOVELL - Look, I can round them up or down for you if you like, but this -

Ms LOVELL - No, it's a genuine question, like how is that measured? Surely you've got a number of children and then you can tell whether they're allocated or not.

Ms C LOVELL - I think our data people would be better to answer that than me, but I think that they do calculate how many active child safety officers we have by the number of children receiving those services.

CHAIR - That doesn't make sense.

Ms LOVELL - That doesn't add - no, it doesn't. You can't tell from that whether children are specifically allocated to an individual child safety officer just from knowing how many children are there and how many child safety officers are there, surely.

Ms C LOVELL - Perhaps this is because it's not a point in time, this is during 2023-24, this table, so then it would be averaged which would result in the point.

Mr JAENSCH - Do you want to get further clarification with that and maybe bring that back to the table?

Ms LOVELL - I am really interested in a point in time, as in the question was how many are currently.

CHAIR - Is that the last date that you could point back to, which would be back a month or something?

Ms C LOVELL - Yes. I can get the current data. It won't be dissimilar to what I was working through, but I can do that if that's -

Mr JAENSCH - Sometimes, for these figures, because the numbers are quite small and they do fluctuate through the year, the data that we get up is averaged over a period so that it gives you a representative number rather than a snapshot, which might be -

Ms LOVELL - Yes, I was more after the most recent data available that you have, a point in time. You've got 200 children, 50 of them are with the child safety officer, 150 are not. Not necessarily an average because I don't think that gives us the best picture about how things are tracking currently.

CHAIR - It could have been really low early in the year; now it's really high, or the other way around. I'm just conscious of the time. We were looking to have a break shortly and, perhaps, close this line item off. Do you have any other -

Mr VINCENT - One other on this: just talking about services, the crisis and immediate after-hours services. Any information on where that is going?

Mr JAENSCH - After-hours service, definitely. This budget includes \$3.1 million over four years for a new and extended after-hours service. It builds on our current service, which is an emergency-only capability for after-hours. As I understand it, the current service is currently staffed through a roster of child safety staff who take their turn in a roster for the after-hours service in addition to their normal business hours at work. We're grateful for their work there, but, we do also understand that the events that may give rise to the need for someone - be it police or carers, parents or concerned others - to be raising concerns, they don't necessarily follow business hours and we need a full capability around the clock to be able to do that. The allocation is made for \$3.1 million over four years to extend that. I understand that will cover eight FTE new positions, and that the overall service funded then will be equivalent to 14 FTEs across the state. They'll be providing responses including practical support and problem-solving, and more complex responses to high-risk events such as mental health crises, medical events, or circumstances requiring a change of carer, which may happen in an unplanned way.

Helping DECYP-supported carers to work through relational and other challenges within the household, in my understanding, they are to help avoid breakdown of a placement, which has a young person start that process of multiple different placements over their time in care, which is destabilising and prevents them from settling in schools and friendship groups, and other things that are important in their lives.

Also, the service can exercise statutory responsibilities by receiving information of concerns about the safety of children that can't wait to be handed over on Monday morning, for example, and working also with partners who provide specialist programs to infants or high-risk families, or children returning to their families, so they can deal with those issues that might be quite time-sensitive outside business hours.

You would have heard some of these matters being raised over the years by people including police, where, say they're brought in to deal with a family violence situation and maybe there's no responsible adult in the family there. Police are not the appropriate ones to provide a care solution for that young person directly. This is the service that will be able to help them with a more complete service than we've been able to provide in the past. I understand -

Mr VINCENT - Can I ask for some clarification on the regional areas, please? The extreme regions, say Nubeena or Liawenee, your tips, or even the north-west coast?

CHAIR - King Island, Flinders Island?

Mr VINCENT - It's very easy for some of these services in metro areas, but it's not always in regional areas.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Lovell if she could speak to us about how the service would be distributed across the state.

Ms C LOVELL - There's on-call availability in each region. Most of those workers are based in cities but do have vehicles and, where necessary, can be deployed out into communities.

Mr VINCENT - I think the minister mentioned partnerships before. Is that with people like Salvos, or police, or other respected community organisations?

Ms C LOVELL - We certainly do have strong partnerships with police when it comes to delivering our after-hours service that will be strengthened through the new service model. We also have partnerships with our non-government service providers.

Mr JAENSCH - Whilst you might have, for example, a south, north and north-west base for these teams, they will also have their networks which reach into the nooks and crannies of the regions - who's got availability, accommodation, other support services that might be able to be matched with the needs of an individual case.

CHAIR - But in an emergency situation, like at night, like a family violence situation, we don't have our Burnie Arch yet. I'm just not sure that these children, unless they're taken by the police to the police station to get them into a safer situation than they're in, that could be for a period of time until someone can drive from somewhere else.

Mr JAENSCH - Our service will have its own knowledge of what other resources are in the neighbourhood and have capacity to make those linkages. Maybe Claire could help us to understand what would happen in that situation with the police.

Mr VINCENT - Can I just add a bit to that, which you might be able to do in the same response? How do we notify the young people on what number or how they can contact in that period?

Ms C LOVELL - Firstly, yes, when urgent situations like that come up, the Child Safety Service, including the after-hours service, always works very closely with Tasmania Police to coordinate a response so that we're both ready, whether we go together or whether there's a sequential response. But we do work collaboratively. That includes going to quite remote communities where that's necessary. The only circumstance I can see where children would be taken by police might be a triple-0 scenario, but the police response tends to be to remove the perpetrator of the harm rather than remove the victims from the situation. So, I'm not aware of that happening, that children have been taken to a police station in those circumstances.

CHAIR - The idea is to remove the perpetrator. In the worst of worst situations, where one parent is dead, the perpetrator is removed and the child is there on their own. So, there are circumstances where you may need to do that. Obviously, you have to do what you can at that point.

Mr VINCENT - The other part of that was how the children know to ring? Do we publicise this through the school system or anything else? The middle of the night, there's not a real lot of conscious, or of a weekend.

C LOVELL - I think that's a very important point for us in the implementation of this new service. I know that children were consulted in the design of the service, so it was very much based on what they said was needed, and that they would like to have that safety net to be able to contact us. We need to make sure they have the number available to them.

CHAIR - The police would have that number.

Ms C LOVELL - The police certainly do, but children and young people directly, who may need advice or support outside of business hours should have access.

Mr JAENSCH - Would it be a different number or would it be the Advice and Referral Line (ARL)?

Ms C LOVELL - Both the ARL number and the Child Safety numbers go to the after-hours emergency service.

Mr JAENSCH - Go through the number you'd normally use in business hours and it'll find the service that's there on DECYP.

Ms LOVELL - I have a question about the funding profile. First of all, this is a much-needed new service, which I think is excellent. I know that after-hours staff who roster currently are very pleased to hear about it as well. Could you talk through the funding profile? It's to deliver eight new FTEs, but that's obviously a staged funding rollout. What's the expectation around how those staff will be delivered?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that in this financial year, 2024-25, there will be one FTE practice manager, three FTE practice leaders, followed by four FTE child safety officers from 2025-26. All of those positions continue through to the end of the forward Estimates.

CHAIR - We will take a break until 11.30 a.m. then come back and go on to 4.2, Services for Youth Justice.

Mr JAENSCH - Can I thank the team that's been at the table, particularly Ms Lovell, not on her very best day health-wise, who's been able to join us here and help us a lot. Thank you very much for that.

The Committee suspended from 11.15 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.

Output Group 4 - Children Services

4.2 Services for Youth Justice

CHAIR - I understand you have some information to provide to the committee before we start on 4.2, Services for Youth Justice.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. Ms Lovell undertook in the last session to bring us the latest figures regarding children in our out-of-home care system and their allocation to an individual child safety officer, or to a team or service. The regional breakdown: north-west, of 244 young people, 92 allocated to a child safety officer, 152 to other - team or service. In the south, of 625 children and young people, 184 allocated to an individual child safety officer, 441 not. In the north, of 241 children and young people, 158 allocated to an individual child safety officer, 83 not.

Ms LOVELL - Still on notice was the number of staff working within team 7 and team 10 in the south.

Mr JAENSCH - I didn't get that before. It will still be provided. We'll just keep a note.

CHAIR - If not, we'll send it through to you afterwards, minister.

Mr JAENSCH - Hopefully we can provide it during the session today.

CHAIR - Just before we move on to Service for Youth Justice, I remind people that people could be watching who may find this a challenging topic to be discussing and to acknowledge that it could be triggering and difficult for some individuals.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll take the opportunity to introduce the staff at the table with me. To my right is Courtney Hurworth, chief reform officer for the Department of Premier and Cabinet. To my left, our associate secretary and acting secretary for the Department for Education, Children and Young People, Jenny Burgess. To her left, Craig Woodfall, director of Community & Custodial Youth Justice in DECYP, and to his left, Jason Sowell, the deputy director of Finance and Budget Services.

CHAIR - Before we launch into our more contextual information, I did mention we wanted the breakdown of the various components of the line item in the Budget, the \$22.9 million for this Budget.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Mr Sowell if he would navigate us through the relevant tables and give you the breakdown you're looking for.

Mr SOWELL - Of the \$22.9 million, there's \$6 million allocated to Youth Justice, \$999,000 for youth justice reform, \$10.4 million for the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, \$3.6 million for Community Youth Justice, then the balance, which is \$1.8 million, is for overheads and a small allocation from the efficiency dividend.

Ms LOVELL - I have a question about the youth offending place-based initiatives. On page 43 there's the budget allocation and the key deliverables. In the information about it on page 47, it says ongoing funding will 'build on the Youth Justice Blueprint and will support innovative local initiatives', but the funding is only for two years. Can you explain that?

Mr JAENSCH - What the place-based initiatives are about?

Ms LOVELL - And the funding profile. In the description it talks about ongoing funding, but there's only two years' funding allocated in the Budget. What is happening in that third year?

Mr JAENSCH - This initiative was announced in the election as a commitment of \$2.3 million for place-based initiatives. The intention of that is, while we are working on longer-term reforms in early intervention and diversion in particular, and an intake model for the youth justice system that prioritises early intervention, diversions, and non-sentencing options for young people or non-detention sentencing options. What we wanted to do is take what we know now and apply that in areas where there is particular community concern around youth antisocial behaviour and offending.

The allocation of \$2.3 million has been allocated in part to DPAC, and in part to DSIP. It is partly to do with initial youth justice reform responses, and the other operational continuity, where you'll see there are other allocations in the Budget for early intervention and diversion. What we're aiming to do is be able to do something now where we know we've got an issue, using our best endeavours and learning from that, while we develop more longer-term, structural or process solutions to make sure that we keep doing it.

Ms LOVELL - At 47 it talks about ongoing funding. Is that referring to a different funding, or funding that will be in the next budget? Page 47, under 'youth offending place-based initiatives'.

Mr JAENSCH - DPAC is running with this in the first year. Then there will be a take-up by DSIP longer-term as the youth justice reform time-limited initiative is concluded, and as the various streams of work are repatriated to their delivery agencies. That's the reflection there, to continue to work from 2025-26 onwards.

Ms LOVELL - There's funding allocated in the Budget: \$800,000 in 2025-26. This is on page 43 under 'Key Deliverables'. In 2026-27, there's \$700,000. There's nothing for 2027-28.

Mr JAENSCH - There's \$2.3 million in total associated with the election commitment.

Ms LOVELL - Do you know much the breakdown is that's gone to DPAC in that first year? Do we assume that that's the -

Mr JAENSCH - \$800,000 to DPAC in the first year?

Ms LOVELL - That's the \$2.3 million.

Mr JAENSCH - That's \$800,000 out of the \$2.3 million.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, \$800,000 and \$700,000 would give us \$2.3 million. That's the funding that's been allocated.

Mr JAENSCH - That's the election commitment.

Ms LOVELL - What's the 'ongoing funding' that's referenced in page 47? Is that funding that's in another line item, or is that funding that you'd expect to see in a future budget?

Mr JAENSCH - It doesn't say 'ongoing', it says 'from -

Ms LOVELL - It does, first word:

Ongoing funding will build on the Youth Justice Blueprint and will support innovative local initiatives and partnerships

Mr JAENSCH - Okay. Do you want to answer that one, please?

Ms BURGESS - I think there's a recognition that in the short term we need to be funding initiatives that we know we need right now. In the longer term we need to work through what a strategic diversionary approach is for children and young people. This is trying to balance the here and now, and making sure we don't wait, putting money into immediate programs where we've had representation that there needs to be some work urgently and importantly. It's also to strengthen the community youth justice approach at the moment, making sure that we have programs and wrap-around supports for those children who are there now.

Then there's a piece around what will the future look like? What does best practice look like? How are we going to get there? From that learning, we would then enable further funding through the government to make sure that the money is there where it's needed.

Mr JAENSCH - I think the word 'ongoing' is throwing us all. I don't quite understand what the intention was of 'ongoing funding will build on...'. I think maybe it's referring that, as we have before, we will continue to invest in rolling out the youth justice blueprint. The place-based initiative itself is a time-limited allocation, as you've seen. It will be superseded by a body of work that it informs over the first couple of years.

Ms LOVELL - Presumably there will be ongoing funding that will need to be delivered in future budgets. It's not in this current Budget, in the forward Estimates. It will need to be.

Mr JAENSCH - No, there is funding for early intervention and diversion services in the Budget over more years. There's \$15.85 million in total over four years in the Budget for early intervention and diversion services

Ms LOVELL - Is the expectation that these place-based initiatives would be rolled into that funding on an ongoing basis?

Mr JAENSCH - Some of the other initiatives funded there have a lead time in development of our early intervention and diversion framework, and the system approach to how we're going to deal with young people who commence offending, who are at risk of entering the youth justice system, and what steps we're going to take to divert them.

While we're working that up with all the partners - which include Justice, Police, Homes Tasmania in some cases, Youth Mental Health and other services, and non-government service providers - the place-based initiative is saying, we know that there are issues now, in communities like Glenorchy and Brighton. We don't want to say, 'Wait for three years while we work up all these cool responses.' Here's some money using the principles that we know, and people who know the young people. Let's do things now.

Ms LOVELL - I appreciate that it's still early days, but do you have any more information about the initiatives that this will fund? Are there initiatives that have been identified already?

Mr JAENSCH - It is more around localities. We know that Glenorchy and Brighton are communities we're having discussions with right now, where there is evidence of youth offending statistics from police. There have been local government councils and communities who have raised concerns, who want to do good work with young people, whether they're from their own municipality or if they're visiting and their behaviours are playing out there.

We've been talking with the Aboriginal Legal Service as well, and a range of other providers. They are two areas or maybe one initiative that encompasses them both, where between police and other service providers, there is a strong knowledge of the young people involved, the circumstances they find themselves in. There are the beginnings of initiatives there.

We also want to be able to test this in other regions of the state and other settings, including not just cities, but more rural centres where they're seeing concerns around youth behaviour. The reason it's called a place-based initiative is that we want to respond to the circumstances of each place, rather than take a 'jelly mould' approach to them.

Ms LOVELL - In terms of that funding being allocated to those specifics, that work is still currently underway, is it?

Mr JAENSCH - That work's still underway, yes.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, the Aboriginal Youth Justice initiative under the Commission of Inquiry deliverables - I'm specifically looking at the outline on page 47, the description, I guess we'd call it. It talks about:

Funding from 2025-26 is provided to strengthen programs currently in place and for the implementation of new programs to support Aboriginal children and young people in youth detention.

What programs are currently in place, and how will they be strengthened with this funding allocation?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that there are services provided in youth detention at the moment through the Aboriginal Education Service. The Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation also provides services that reach into Ashley, and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service also does. There are existing services. We want to build on those and introduce more, also including greater coverage of Aboriginal community organisations who have a role working with young people who are in there, who can provide throughcare and support on exiting for young people. Is there anyone who wants to add any detail to that?

Mr WOODFALL - I am happy to speak to that. One is that the school have come on board. We've funded a position in the school to allow for various things, but the significant part of that is to bring school leadership into the leadership of Ashley Youth Detention Centre. The school are leading a lot of this work. We're currently setting up a yarning circle, which was one of the custodial inspector's reports. Now we're at a point where we're waiting on the Aboriginal liaison position to be funded. It's got to a point where, out of respect for the cultural practices involved, any further implementation requires someone from the Aboriginal community to take the next step forward.

Recently, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service posted an excellent thing on their website about how the last fortnight they've been working alongside students at Ashley Youth Detention Centre - they sought permission to do this - delivering preventative legal education workshops. That was, once again, through the school. The school are leading a lot of that work. They're two examples, but the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service has been an outstanding example, our partnership with that group.

Ms LOVELL - In terms of those programs that are currently in place, will they be provided with additional funding from this? Where it talks about 'strengthen programs currently in place' - or will that be other support?

Mr JAENSCH - We've got an overall commitment in this Budget in support of Aboriginal Youth Justice of around \$1.7 million over four years. That'll include the Aboriginal Liaison Officer role that Mr Woodfall reflected on. There's also more support for families and community organisations to enhance the connections that Aboriginal children and young people have with family and community while they're in detention. Also funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations, as part of developing our Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy. I understand that there's \$700,000 allocated to that over three years as well.

Ms LOVELL - The employment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer or one FTE, whether that's split over a couple of people, do you have a timeline for the delivery of that?

Mr WOODFALL - We have a central strategy around Aboriginal education and a group that's looking at our ways of working across our whole department - looking at our whole approach for Aboriginal education and working with the Aboriginal community. We're working with that group now to say, well, does that position sit in there? We've had those negotiations and discussions, and because of things like the yarning circle, where they'll have to have a practical role at the centre, we believe they will be based at Ashley. Now that we've determined that, we will start the process now. They were the discussions that occurred. The other relevant one was the building the community. We support families and community members of the Aboriginal community through financial assistance to visit young people at Ashley.

Ms LOVELL - Presuming that the review work around the learning and development framework will need to wait for that position to be filled, will you be wanting to wait to have that person on board before you start that work, or is that already underway?

Mr WOODFALL - That's underway. We're formalising and working, building the bridge as we're walking on it, so to speak.

Ms LOVELL - Do you have a timeline for when that will be done?

Mr WOODFALL - The learning and development framework? We're negotiating the format of that in alignment with practice frameworks, learning development frameworks. I think we're certainly doing it now, and we'll be formalising it into a formal document at a later point.

Ms THOMAS - Before you move on - when we were talking about youth offending place-based initiatives, minister, as you'll know, it is music to my ears to hear that there is funding in the Budget for these initiatives. We have had a number of conversations over the last couple of years, when I was Mayor of Glenorchy, about the need for measures to address behaviour now, not waiting for the action plan from the Youth Justice Blueprint to be finalised. I appreciate that funding allocation.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for your advocacy.

Ms THOMAS - In terms of the consultation, and who is at the table now that I am not at the table in those conversations, I trust that the new mayor of Glenorchy is equally as strong an advocate as I was for this and bringing the local organisations together. Are you able to share any further detail on who is going to be potentially involved in a place-based initiative in Glenorchy, and when it's likely that a program will be finalised for delivery? I am just conscious we are already three months into the financial year.

Mr JAENSCH - As I understand, the department is meeting in these different communities where there has been a need, and a local will, to do something identified. They are working with everyone they can find who has insights into who the young people involved are. We're not necessarily applying a standard process or invite list from the discussions I've had with the team, and that we've had with people like police over the years. Once you're at a local level, the locals know a handful of individuals or families who are involved at the core - their circumstances, their connections, or who may be able to provide part of the solution. That's what we're in the process of mapping out now. It might be quite different in each community we go into, who ends up being a critical driver of the change we are looking for.

Our hope would be that we can provide some resources and coordination of services so that we can address not only what are the drivers, but who are the drivers of the antisocial behaviour and offending in those localities, and apply the best tools we have to each of them. Hopefully, for some of those young people, helping them to not end up becoming statistics in the youth justice system, but applying diversions for them that help them to not offend. Also, provide, through the community, re-engagement with education and other supports and activities for the young people who may have been influenced by those who've been leading the offending behaviour. That will be driven very much by the place. We'll learn everything we can from that and apply that to what we design as a service response for the longer term. At

this stage, the discussions are still underway to identify the dimensions of the issue and patterns of behaviour, and how best to intervene, involving schools, police, councils and others.

Ms THOMAS - One of the reasons I ask is, just on the way here I was having a phone conversation with the new Team Leader at the Salvation Army in Glenorchy, Steve Woods, who is very enthusiastic and wants to use this wonderful space that is right there in the centre of Glenorchy and underutilised in after-school hours. He is keen to open it up as a youth space, but can you help us get some funding for a youth worker? I am sure they will be involved, hopefully at the table. I know councils engage with the Salvation Army. Hopefully, this funding can assist with those sorts of resources.

It is 'youth offending' place-based initiatives, and we've talked about the need for addressing behaviour at the pointy end and providing diversionary activities and programs to support young people who are engaged in the youth justice system. Equally as important is preventing kids who are maybe on the fringes of engaging in that behaviour and providing them with other opportunities, which is where a youth space is really important. Will this funding be specifically for that small number of young people who are offending, or will it also include an element of that early intervention to prevent more kids going down that path?

Mr JAENSCH - The amount of money we've got is limited and it's time-limited. What we want to be able to do is apply a bit of a case management approach to the locality, but also some of the individuals involved as well. Certainly, it involves supports and other things for young people to do, but our money would disappear in a heartbeat if we set about just funding more of a range of services that already exist in different forms or upgrading facilities, et cetera, and not necessarily go to the core of the offending behaviour. When we've got, say, police in a situation where they're aware of young people who are involved in antisocial behaviour and offending, they're a little bit limited by the tools that are available to them. Sometimes, our community youth justice service can only really swing into action once young people have crossed a threshold into their offending. We want to bring that together and work out how we can put more tools available to both of those services and all of the other partners in that community that they rely on, to try to turn around some of those young people who are driving the behaviour.

Certainly, that needs to be complemented by more things to engage and work with the young people in that locality more broadly, but we do want to be able to focus on the drivers of the offending. We often hear that very small numbers of young people are involved. We need to be able to deal with those. We may need to do that in a way that we can focus on those small numbers of people and make a big difference to them which will have a ripple effect in the community. We don't want to create the expectation that we're going to be able to fund lots and lots of organisations to do more of the services they already provide. We just won't have the capacity for that; however, as a government and as government agencies, we do value the work that they do and there are various avenues for supporting their work and the services they provide in the community, not necessarily from this time-limited budget. But it needs to be coordinated.

Ms THOMAS - That's why I'm keen to have some more conversations with you and the team about what those funding avenues are and that's certainly what I committed to when I spoke to Steve this morning, that if there's not funding specifically in this Budget, then there may be other avenues that we can explore, such as seeking grants because the Salvation Army in Glenorchy currently doesn't receive funding for youth activities. They have a wonderful

facility there to be able to offer that, and that early intervention is critical if we are to nip this problem in the bud and stop the need for these services at the pointier end in the longer term.

Mr JAENSCH - There are lots of organisations that provide really excellent support for young people and families in these communities. I suppose where we would want to go is to work out for the young people themselves who are at risk of falling into offending what their need is. What does it look like? It could be the availability of a space or a service like that. It could be more to do with bus scheduling and routes, and their ability to access sporting facilities and things like that, which gives them another outlet and another group of people and thing to belong to.

Ms THOMAS - Certainly, the young people who I've spoken to in my six years as an elected member at council and then around the community, have said that a safe space to go and people that they trust to talk to is what has been missing in the community.

Mr JAENSCH - We won't ignore any of that.

Ms THOMAS - It's really important and I feel like I've got a little win here after a couple of years of these conversations to see this money in the Budget.

Mr JAENSCH - That's why it's there.

Ms THOMAS - I'm happy to keep hassling you about the other stuff too, and maybe in budgets forthcoming we'll see -

Mr JAENSCH - And I'm happy for you to pass on the details of particular people and organisations who you think can be part of that solution.

CHAIR - If we can just take a step back, even further back than this, do you work with your other ministers to look at prevention in a bigger sense? Sadly, a number of young people don't have safe, reliable housing. They don't have anywhere to go, not just to engage themselves in other activities, they just don't have somewhere safe. They're not getting food on their table - school lunch programs, breakfast programs and things like that help; but what do you do to try and prevent this from the outset, including the prevention of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which is an entirely preventable condition that has lifelong impact on a child, so we can't be operating in silos here. How do you interact across various departments?

Mr JAENSCH - Some of that is me interacting with me in other roles, through the involvement or the responsibilities I have for things like our under-16 youth homelessness initiatives. I also, though, do speak with my colleagues, Ms Palmer in Education and her work regarding re-engagement of young people who've fallen out of education, and with Mr Ellis regarding the work of police in these areas as well, so -

CHAIR - What about the minister for Health?

Mr JAENSCH - We're a team and we do talk to each other about all of these matters.

CHAIR - I'm thinking about going right back to try - a lot of these families are identifiable, as you've already said yourself, minister. In each of our communities, particularly

our small communities, we know which families are most at risk. I don't know if you went and saw *The Box* that Mudlark Theatre put on, but if you didn't, you should have done.

Mr JAENSCH - No, I'm familiar with -

CHAIR - That's an example of so many points where an intervention early in the life of a baby to be born could have made a major difference.

Mr JAENSCH - That's right. Well, I'll ask Ms Hurworth to provide some insights here. This is very much why, in terms of the youth justice reform priorities that we have as a government through our blueprint, which have sort of aligned strongly with the recommendations coming out from the commission of inquiry, that we've made youth justice reform a priority activity for whole of government and established a task force - I know it's somewhat of an overused term - but internally to government, an arrangement whereby the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the head of the State Service and the Secretary of DPAC, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, has created an authorising environment where we've got people from all relevant agencies who own part of the solution or part of the service response required to deliver on the youth justice reform recommendations from the commission of inquiry, that is on this now. That's why we have DPAC at the table for this discussion, where we wouldn't have last year and we probably won't next year because we'll be out of our 12 months. But to do the initial crunching of all of those cross-agency, cross-service linkages needed -

CHAIR - Otherwise you're duplicating in these areas or you're leaving gaps in others.

Mr JAENSCH - Or we're being so siloed that everyone only is activated when a young person enters their field of view, rather than seeing them coming all the way over there, which is what you were talking about. Ms Hurworth, would you like to make comment on that or have I just said it all?

Ms HURWORTH - You've said almost everything. I also just wanted to reflect on some structural changes that have been made in DPAC. Within DPAC, we've brought the Youth Justice Task Force, which is time-limited, the Keeping Children Safe team, which does the COI coordination, and the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy teams together into one team. The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is still active and it sets that whole-of-life, whole-of-spectrum approach to how we think about the wellbeing of children and young people, and that's informing how we go about doing our work in this space as well, nested in that broader understanding.

CHAIR - Minister, you say it's time-limited and I know that, but we're not going to turn this massive big ship that's been heading toward an iceberg around in a short space of time. In this sort of space, 12 months is a short space of time to avoid going back to silos.

Mr JAENSCH - My understanding is that the work involves how we get the plumbing right so that there is cooperative work information sharing and cooperation across the silos in the future. Part of this period is how we set that up to continue to work well.

CHAIR - You think that work can be achieved in 12 months?

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Mr JAENSCH - If it hasn't finished its work within 12 months, I'm sure that there is a mechanism for us to review it and extend it if needed, in whole or in part.

Ms THOMAS - Can I ask a follow up to that, please? One of the parts of my question previously was about the program specifically in Glenorchy but also you mentioned Brighton, so I'm assuming this \$800, 000 you mentioned will go across multiple municipalities?

Mr JAENSCH - It's \$2.3 million. It's \$800 000, I think, in the first 12 months.

Ms THOMAS - In the first year, yes, but acknowledging the need for programs now and that there has been some government funding I know of in Glenorchy to assist over the last two years to deliver programs -

Mr JAENSCH - The bail program? I think that was a separate source.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, yes, but also funding through the advocacy that council did for the PCYC program - that was provided following the conversations that we had. I'm not aware as to whether Glenorchy City Council has received any funding already this year to continue that or a similar program in Glenorchy, now that I'm not there.

My understanding was council was considering funding it at the time I left out of its own budget to meet the gap of providing support to children when they're not at school, and I had a conversation with the Education minister when we had her here on Tuesday. Monday, Tuesday? This week? The days are all blending into one.

CHAIR - That's right. Whatever day it is - who would know?

SECRETARY - Monday.

Ms THOMAS - The Tier 4 system and children not necessarily having anywhere to go when they're not in school, when they're doing shorter hours through that program. There is a need right now, and you mentioned that's what this funding is aimed at, this \$800 000. When will the program that is to be funded be finalised? I would hate to see again - we're three months into this financial year, and I'd hate to see that we spend 12 months developing a program, when there's a need right now.

Mr JAENSCH - The teams are engaging with the councils in the identified communities that we're talking to now. The resources that we've got are \$2.3 million, \$800,000 of which is scheduled in this financial year, acknowledging that these communities won't all come on line at the same time.

Also, we don't want to just use this money to plug gaps in existing provision. We need to be able to bring the councils, police, Education et cetera on board with this, and they'll have their own resources, arguably, that they can prioritise or budget for to add to.

What we need the dollars involved with this initiative to do is to create that focus on backtracking to the drivers and the causes of the antisocial behaviour and the offending and the individuals involved, and provide some wrap-around responses, if you like, to them, as well as the other things that are going on in those communities, which we can support, arguably, from other resources.

What we're trying to do is bridge where - at the moment, like we've been talking about these silos - where police are doing their job, the Child Safety Service and Community Youth Justice are doing theirs, Education is doing theirs, but when kids fall out of those systems but they haven't yet triggered the next system, they're lost.

Ms THOMAS - Yes. I understand the intent, minister, but what will this money be spent on, then? Please don't tell me it's going to be a consultant developing another plan or framework.

Mr JAENSCH - No.

Ms THOMAS - It will be a program?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm not going to pre-empt what it might be spent on in Glenorchy, which might be different to what's spent on in the northern suburbs of Launceston or in somewhere in the north-west. It has to be driven by the needs of that place to connect services and to assist young people. It could be about buying time for a youth worker from the school who has a good relationship with those young people to do some more intensive, dedicated work with them, to reconnect them with T4 programs, or it could be about calling in, say some of the capacity that we've invested in JCP use and referring some young people into a program of that sort of assertive personal development work that they do, because that's another area that we've put significant investment into. I don't want to predetermine what the money will be used for.

Ms THOMAS - That's fine. When will that be determined? How long will it take to determine that?

Mr JAENSCH - Do you have a time frame for that? You can speak to that. Thank you.

Ms HURWORTH - We're planning for the first site and the programs that community identifies is being announced in October.

Ms THOMAS - The first site?

Ms HURWORTH - The first site, yes.

Ms THOMAS - Of how many sites will there be?

Mr JAENSCH - Potentially three or four around the state.

Ms THOMAS - When will the -

Mr JAENSCH - Once you start breaking that money down, it doesn't split too many ways before it becomes insignificant. What we want to be able to do is to identify areas where there is a known and measured need, but also where there is a community that is motivated to get a board and do something about it, and where there might be already some other effort underway that we can leverage and get a better result from the would otherwise have happened.

CHAIR - Move on to Terrence.

Ms THOMAS - I'm still not clear on, sorry, still not clear on when something will be finalised in Glenorchy, but I can keep asking those questions.

CHAIR - Question time every day we sit.

Ms THOMAS - That's right.

Mr JAENSCH - But my only thing would be we're happy to keep you informed of that.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - What I don't want to do is say we're going to work with this community to map out the needs to get the connections right and then tell it when it has to do it by and what it's going to deliver. It needs to be led on the ground and that's why, when we were putting together our commitments in this area in the budget, we did invest \$3.7 million in buying a known solution from JCP to deliver and expand its range, because we know what they do is valuable and it works.

What we also have to do, though, is create some flexible resource to say that's not the solution for everyone. There might be a different set of circumstances, needs of individuals, in this community versus that one; we need some flexible money to be able to work with that. This is the place-based approach. They might interact but they might not as well, but we've got the dollars scheduled out over the years. I'm sure that we will use all of that money in that time on the ground but will be directed by the local community and in October we'll have a plan together for the first of those.

Ms THOMAS - That's great. I think we've been talking about this for quite some time. Local communities are pretty good at pretty quickly identifying what they need. I just would hate to see it-

CHAIR - We need to move on.

Ms THOMAS - Yeah, okay. On JCP youth that you mentioned, if I can continue, Chair, there is \$3.7 million over three years allocated to JCP youth to provide facilitators to increase engagement with at-risk young Tasmanians, update vehicles and support the safe house, which provides eight respite accommodation options. That's separate to this place-based -

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - offending funding, but is it for a similar purpose? Where will those programs be delivered and what steps were taken to identify - you mentioned that it's a proven product, if you like, or program - what steps were taken to ascertain that it is a proven program and award that funding?

Mr JAENSCH - JCP Youth has been providing a range of different products or services over the years. We're aware of many cases where they've been able to be successful where others haven't, including in working in partnership with our child safety and out-of-home care system when there have been young people who have left their placements and resisted the efforts of the Child Safety Service to provide them with a new placement, a new care

arrangement. Sometimes JCP Youth has been able to break that cycle a bit and offer them something a bit different. It's not necessarily going to be the solution for everywhere and everyone.

What I was wanting when we were going into this whole reform process is not for us to spend three years designing perfect systems while we still had young people caught in these situations, entering the youth justice system, and communities becoming despairing at what was happening. Part of that was to respond by saying, 'Here's something that we know works, that we've been purchasing already as government'. For many young people, that's provided a really good response. Let's get some more of that, or more capacity for that to reach across the state, to be present in more communities, to be deployed and partnered by more services that governments and NGOs also provide. That way we can at least do some more of the good stuff that we know makes a difference. They've had real success with young people exiting detention, and providing them with some support and stability to help them maintain their obligations to bail conditions or to prevent them reoffending and -

Ms THOMAS - I'm aware of the substance of the program and the benefits and values. My question is, in a market where there are a number of providers of these sorts of programs, and typically a competitive process for applying for funding for these sorts of initiatives, how would you respond to concerns by some other providers not having capacity to apply for funding, given it was an election commitment for this purpose?

Mr JAENSCH - As you've seen through this Budget, there will be significant investment now and foreshadowed for more investment in young people, intervention, early diversion, different sorts of sentencing options, and different non-detention pathways for young people who find themselves - these are all going to be services provided by other than government - NGOs of various kinds.

We're developing the frameworks to intervene earlier and to provide those referrals and connections and the wraparound services. We don't want to wait until that's all perfect before we deploy it. In an election we took the opportunity to make some decisions about getting underway with something that we know works, that's had a good track record, that there is confidence in in the sector and around the state. We can get more of that happening while we work more broadly with the sector on longer-term, systemic, systematic responses.

Ms THOMAS - In short, there will be other opportunities for other NGOs throughout the reform agenda to apply for funding, for support with the agenda?

Mr JAENSCH - To apply for funding is one thing. I would think it's more likely to respond to the request for tender to be part of a panel of providers. Then we know that when a young person reaches some threshold, we say, 'Okay, what you need is a bit of a plan. We need to be able to deal with your behaviour, the instability of your accommodation, your education, et cetera and here's what we can put in place'. We need to know who's ready to go to provide that. We need to build that capacity in the sector.

Ms THOMAS - Sure. The other part of my question was where will the JCP Youth program with the funding that's being provided be delivered?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that the intention is for it to increase its reach statewide.

Mr WOODFALL - They've been predominantly based in the north of the state. That's where a lot of the work - the minister alluded to a lot of the successes that they have had with young people. They haven't had to stretch to the south as much. They've worked in the north-west, but more with children and family cases. With this funding, they're allowing them to potentially purchase properties and employ staff so they can do statewide outreach. That's what we're currently working on with them at an operational level.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I have some questions about Ashley Youth Detention Centre. I know over the last 12 months there's been some fluctuations in young people detained at the centre and some fairly unusual numbers. Are you able to update the committee on how many young people are detained there currently, and how many have been detained over the last 12 months?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that today's number is 15, including two in detention. The remainder of them are on remand. That number was as low as 10 and 12 in the last week or so. It hasn't returned to the higher levels that we saw earlier in the year. The crux of the matter is that with the broader reform that we're talking about, particularly on the detention side with our commitment to close Ashley and to replace it with a smaller therapeutic facility, we want that facility to be built for predominantly those who are sentenced and who are 16 or over, in accordance with raising the age of criminal responsibility and detention that was recommended by the commission of inquiry recommendations that we've adopted.

Getting the numbers down is as big a challenge as getting a new building out of the ground. There's a range of initiatives that are underway now that aim to do that. This early intervention and diversion is part of it - fewer people offending in the first place, and fewer of them ending up being either remanded or detained. It is also about working with the young people who are in Ashley now to exhaust the possibility of them being granted bail and awaiting their court processes outside of detention. That's a priority.

In terms of numbers over the last year, do you have a number for -

Ms LOVELL - We could do financial year if that's what you have.

Ms BURGESS - Did you want to do total number or average people on any day?

Ms LOVELL - Total.

Ms BURGESS - We have the data here for the 2023-24 year. The distinct number was 77 in the 2023-24 financial year.

Ms LOVELL - 77 distinct young people. Do you have the data there for how many of them were detained more than once?

Ms BURGESS - I don't have on this table, but we would be able to provide that.

Mr JAENSCH - I am happy to provide that information.

Ms LOVELL - More than once, and then, people who were detained more than once, how many times they were detained, if that's possible. Of the 77 young people detained, do you have the breakdown there for young people who were sentenced and those who were on remand?

Ms BURGESS - Not in this table, but I'll look through the rest of our data.

Ms LOVELL - Also the length of time that young people on remand have spent in detention.

Mr JAENSCH - What I can provide you at the table here now is the average number of days a young person spent at Ashley Youth Detention Centre during the 2023-24 financial year was 76.3 days, nearly 11 weeks, noting that that may include more than one period in detention.

CHAIR - Are you saying it's cumulative?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm saying this is a total number of days that an individual young person - if they had been in there for a couple of different periods, and this includes remand as well as sentenced, but it characterises -

Ms LOVELL - I understand. I think averages can be helpful, but it probably doesn't give us a true picture because there's obviously quite a variation in there.

Mr JAENSCH - There is.

Ms LOVELL - It could be a couple of days; it could be a much longer period of time.

Mr JAENSCH - In terms of the time spent there you'd be aware that there's been some work done by the Tasmanian Audit Office recently. It was related to a commission of inquiry recommendation, which has confirmed that -

CHAIR - Very narrow and very limited.

Ms LOVELL - It has to do with length of sentences, but it didn't consider young people on remand, I understand, it was only those who are serving sentences, and I think that's a critical part of it.

Mr JAENSCH - It is, and there is a very wide range of timeframes that we're aware of that young people have spent in detention. There are a whole lot of variables that drive that that are outside of the control of Ashley management as well.

Ms LOVELL - I understand that. I wanted to ask you a question about whether you collect data on how many young people are held in Ashley on remand because they have nowhere else safe to be. They're not living in care or with family; they are essentially homeless and there's no other option for them. Is that data collected?

Mr JAENSCH - I think that's somewhat oversimplifying it, and I will ask someone else who's better at this than me, but I don't think there's many occasions where a young person is unable to be bailed simply because they don't have an actual address. It's more that there needs

to be a bail plan and a range of supports able to be provided to make application to a court for a court then to be satisfied that the young person has the supports that they need. It's not solely -

Ms LOVELL - Okay, I'm happy to have that data if you've got that data, because they would still be services that would typically be government-funded services.

Mr JAENSCH - Not necessarily. They could be provided in a number of different ways. I don't know what we can provide in this area because this comes down to the individual young person's legal representation and how they are making their cases. It's not necessarily a process that's controlled by the department. Do you want to speak to that at all, Mr Woodfall?

Mr WOODFALL - I'll do my best. It is complex, as you would understand. We know young people might leave - and I have to be careful to be unidentifiable - but young people may leave, say, poverty culture, or a certain culture, for one of four reasons: something painful or horrible, a specific mentor or person, or a specific talent or ability. We have taken cases to court with bail support plans which encompass all of those things, and yet, despite all of those things being in place and there being a really great case why this young person may choose another trajectory, because of the complexity, community expectations or the magnitude of what's occurred in that instance the magistrate - and I wouldn't like to be a magistrate - would say, 'No, we will not give bail'.

The decisions of the magistrates are obviously very complex and far-reaching, and if there was a different category we could put each young person in, that might be simple to get that data, but each young person has a snippet of this, a snippet of that. They are all very individual cases.

CHAIR - Sarah asked about the length of time young people have been on remand and not sentenced. Do we have that data?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm sure we would have, but I don't know if we have it at the table.

Ms LOVELL - I think that was one that you took on notice or said that you could come back with.

CHAIR - It didn't sound very clear as to whether they were going to come back.

Ms LOVELL - I had noted that you would come back with the number of young people detained over the last 12 months, split into those who had been sentenced and those on remand and the length of time, broken down.

Mr JAENSCH - In relation to the question that you asked just a moment ago, though, about young people's ability to demonstrate they have accommodation or that being a reason why they're in Ashley, there is a commission of inquiry recommendation that specifically goes to young people not being refused bail solely on the strength of them not having to find accommodation.

What that requires is a bit more of a complex system response, though, because it's not like we can book a room or accommodation for them. There needs to be the ability to have a plan around that young person and this comes back to what we were talking about before, whereby, when the offending happens, the ability to bring together a range of supports around

them, so that when the young person is presented to a court or to a JP or whatever it is, there is someone standing with them who says we know this young person and their needs. We have these things in place to keep them safe. We are making application that you can release them to our care while we wait for their matters to be dealt with. Being able to do that quickly in our community, across different parts of government and the service sector, is our aim.

There is a lot of work being done on that right now in terms of that level of case management, because that is what is going to keep young people out of detention and all of the additional complexity that creates for them and their life.

Ms LOVELL - I wanted to ask you some questions about that, because I understand it is very complex, and it can be difficult to collect distinct data on things like this. As minister, what oversight or monitoring are you doing of those to make sure that you have an idea and the government has an idea of those circumstances where we could be doing more with better supports in place or where there might be gaps to avoid instances where young people are spending time in detention where they could be supported in the community?

Mr JAENSCH - I receive regular briefings from the team that is working as part of the Youth Justice Reform Task Force that is engaged directly with the other agencies, police and others and service providers in the community to set up this new approach to case management. We are actually doing it. The numbers are quite small in any one locality. This comes down to getting the players together and getting a system of communicating and establishing a plan and case management response so that when the situation arises, we know what to do and we do not default into a custodial setting, albeit there will be circumstances where, due to the nature of the offending, of the circumstances, that is the safest place for young people to be and for the community.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, you said before that - when you were talking about the new youth justice facility - it was being designed predominantly for those who were sentenced. Is it your expectation that that will be the remand facility for young people as well, or will there be a separate facility for young people for remand?

Mr JAENSCH - We want to move away from facilities and institutions and more to a service response that is responsive to the individual young person and their needs.

Ms LOVELL - There will be instances where young people need to be held on remand at a facility, presumably. Is that likely to be at this facility, or will there be a separate facility?

Mr JAENSCH - Our intention is that the detention facility will be predominantly for those who are sentenced and where there is a therapeutic model of care that is played out for them. For young people who have been apprehended, or who are then awaiting decisions about what happens to them next, what we are trying to do first is to exhaust the capacity of a service response built around the individual needs of the young person, rather than creating another place where we put young offenders and hold them while we await the next steps. You would have seen when we first released the blueprint that we accompanied with what we notionally called a facilities plan, that referred to establishing assisted bail and supported accommodation facilities.

We view that now as what we need the service to be and how we provide it. Our first efforts are about engaging with service providers who work in this space and who in partnership

with us, might be able to invest in increasing their capacity, their range of services to provide care and support for young people as part of what they do, where they are, rather than building a new building somewhere to put these kids. We think that offers them the best chance of an individualised needs-based response rather than a default institutional response.

We will be, whether it's JCP Youth or 54 Reasons or Colony 47 or Anglicare or any number of these organisations that we know well, not many of them are in a position to provide a full service solution, but many of them provide part of it and in partnership two or three of them broke it together might be able to be quickly scrambled to respond to a young person who's been picked up by the police.

Ms LOVELL - Understanding all of that, my question was really about the new facility that's been identified with the site at Pontville. That will be the only facility I guess.

Mr JAENSCH - It's core purpose will be detention.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, but if it gets to the point that the court determines that somebody needs to be held on remand -

Mr JAENSCH - We expect that there will be a margin of that.

Ms LOVELL - Has the department or you started any conversations with the workforce at Ashley currently about any kind of transition plan for when that centre is closed and what does that include? Is there options for people to -

Mr JAENSCH - I'll answer first and then throw for any additional detail. What we're doing at is continuing to invest in the workforce in our youth justice system to move them towards therapeutic models of care as we learn more about that. We're giving the young people in the system now as much benefit as we can from a different -

Ms LOVELL - I understand that. I'm just mindful of the time. Specifically, my question was around conditions of employment and whether there'd been a discussion about what would happen with people's employment once the transition arrangements - I know in the past there's been options for people, you know, secondments to other parts of the state service. People could apply for vacancies with the understanding that that job would be held for them until the centre closes, that sort of thing. Have those industrial conversations started?

CHAIR - Rewind, some of these people live in the north.

Ms LOVELL - Yeah.

Ms BURGESS - Certainly, we've had high level conversations and we've answered questions where staff have those questions.

The staff that are permanent will work to allow them opportunities to work within the department. We're fortunate; we have a large department of DCP and we have staff that have absolute skills that will be able to translate into other roles within the department. We haven't formally started a change process yet with them, but we will do that once we have some definitive time frames.

Ms LOVELL - On those definitive timeframes, we've had this conversation a number of times and we had it recently at the commission of inquiry committee hearing. Not everyone was at that hearing and people wouldn't have had the time or, are not comfortable to review that evidence in full. Can you provide an update for us today on the new facility and particularly whether any progress has been made since that last committee of inquiry hearing?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. Work is progressing and so yes, there's been progress since our last discussion. The broader answers regarding 'as soon as possible' still apply. We did have some discussions around the time frame that the commission of inquiry report included, also some evidence that the Premier provided at the table during the scrutiny hearings as well. None of that has changed. My aim as minister is to move as quickly as possible on all fronts, both in the development of the new facility, but also in the system changes that will enable the change to a different sort of facility. Now I offer to send the right person. Could I ask Shane Gregory to come to the table to provide an any further update?

CHAIR - Into the same things that [inaudible] but the progress on the side. I know there was consultation going on with neighbours and matters relevant to the site has been a spade in the ground.

Mr JAENSCH - Shane Gregory is Associate Secretary at DPAC.

Mr GREGORY - Thank you, and through you, minister. This project, like any significant infrastructure project, has complexities and there's lots to work through. Any infrastructure project requires appropriate planning and definition of the scope, site investigations through into the design phase and delivery.

Today, work has been underway doing that site investigation, Aboriginal heritage investigations, the flora and fauna. In geo-technical investigations, the first trench of work has been done. There's some more work to do around Aboriginal Heritage because there are some identified sites. There's some supplementary work to do there. We have in place an architect doing a reference design. A project like this, we would go through and work out what the reference design or concept design is. That opens the way for moving into the procurement phase at a later date. We need to work our way through that. That work is ongoing. We're also considering how to get access to the site.

CHAIR - Off the road type of access, you mean?

Mr GREGORY - Yes, the technical considerations of where you would actually do that. That overlays with all of the other investigations - the Aboriginal heritage investigations and the flora and fauna. It's about marrying all of that together to work our way through. That work is progressing. A project of this nature, or any project, you would expect a 12-month planning and design phase, rolling into a couple of year delivery phases. That is what you would expect. That work's continuing.

Some of that's running in parallel, which again is what you do to keep things moving along. There's no spade turned in the ground yet. That would probably be a little premature, actually. We are looking through all the things you need to do to get to that point - all of those investigations, how you get access technically, what the driveway or the road in looks like, what's required in terms of getting utility services to the site, water, sewerage, power and so on.

Ms LOVELL - At the commission of inquiry hearing, it was said that it was expected it would have some utilities on the site by the end of the year. Is that still on track?

Mr GREGORY - I don't think that that's necessarily likely. We will understand what needs to be to be done. The first step is to understand what's there. The answer to that is there's no utility services there at the moment. They'll need to be sized appropriately. We will work our way through. Some of that will trigger a planning application process as well.

CHAIR - With the utilities, is there any TasNetworks connection into the site, or is it just going past on the road?

Mr GREGORY - At the moment it's an unserviced site.

CHAIR - There's absolutely none?

Mr GREGORY - That's the piece of work, that'll be the early works package to get services into the site.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, we've talked before about time lines. I'm not pushing you because I want you to give us an arbitrary timeline. I think the example of the services on-site is another example of where you've tried to give us a bit of a time line, but it turns out it was probably not going to meet that. Nobody wants to have time lines given that we're going to continue not to meet. I think that just makes it worse for everyone. It compounds that disappointment and frustration and trauma for people. I'm not going to ask you for a timeline today. What I am going to ask you is do you have an idea of when you will be able to provide a realistic timeline that includes all of those things that Mr Gregory has outlined, that we can have some confidence in?

Mr JAENSCH - I've been thinking about this quite a bit. We end up in this conversation a lot. I don't want to appear to be evasive. What I want to be able to do is not, as you said, make an arbitrary or political timeline. What I do undertake to do is, when we get to a point where we've got a program of work and we have elements and a contract locked in, we'll share that so that people can track through it. When we have contracts for building work on the site, all the things that we know and control are in place then, and we can provide a plan, rather than what we hope for.

Ms LOVELL - I think that's what everyone wants and needs, frankly. The question is still how far away is that? I know it feels like I'm asking for a timeline for a timeline. It's still coming back to that same question. I don't want to sit here and have you say, 'We'll give you that plan'. I appreciate that, and that will be helpful, but I don't want to say, 'Okay, that's great', and then have that be three years down the track before we get that plan. We need some idea.

Mr JAENSCH - What I can say is that we will share firm time frames as and when we have them for different components of the work.

What I can also assure you of and give you some evidence of, is that we are mobilising everything we've got to get there as quickly as possible, including moving this body of work out of its own department and into Premier and Cabinet with an authorising environment that draws on the secretaries of every agency that's owns some part of this.

CHAIR - Maybe you need to work with the GBEs too, because I know how long it can take the TasNetworks to get themselves connected to anything.

Mr JAENSCH - We've got the resources of government at our disposal to get this done as an absolute priority, including that the partner of State Growth through Infrastructure Tasmania will be involved in delivering the early works in the construction phases because that's the part of government which is specialised to do that work. We're not trying to do that from DECYP's facilities team, which has already got a book full of schools and child and family learning centres to deliver, but we're going to the part of government which is specialised to do this and this is a priority project for them. As they drop out components of a confirmed work plan, we'll share that, we'll announce it and we'll report updates against it.

Ms LOVELL - I do want to say that having heard from Mr Gregory today, it does feel like there's more concrete progress that we can point to. It feels like there's more happening, which is good. I appreciate everything you've said just now, and I genuinely mean that, but with all due respect, it's still words until we see something concrete. I'm happy to leave it. I know there's nothing -

Mr JAENSCH - I'll bring the concrete as soon as we have it, before it's set.

Ms LOVELL - Maybe my message is we're not going to let this go away, minister, and I know you know that.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm the same and our secretary, our head of the State Service, is the same. Everyone is deeply committed to doing this as highest priority work.

CHAIR - Just on that, when we're dealing with some of our government businesses, some of them haven't covered themselves in glory recently in terms of delivery of projects. I wonder if Mr Gregory could tell us what sort of progress is being made with some of that. We've got TasWater, we've got TasNetworks and possibly others that can be a problem.

Mr JAENSCH - What's our exposure to them?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr GREGORY - I would start by saying in the very early stages of the project, these conversations and questions and answers quite often are very unfulfilling to the person asking the question, to be really honest.

The timeline of the project is quite complex and it has a lot of interdependencies - I'm not talking about this project, I'm talking about any project - and you need to flesh out a certain amount to understand how those time lines are impacted.

To be perfectly honest, at this stage, when we haven't actually worked out exactly where on the site the facility would be and what its draw is going to be -

CHAIR - I appreciate that.

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Mr GREGORY - I'm just painting the scene that to engage with the service authorities, you need to do that piece of work first. We could go and talk to TasNetworks and TasWater and say we'd like to talk to you about slotting this into your program, and the response will be, well, we can't really do that until we know what you're talking about and when you when you're talking about it. It's a little bit of a circular argument at the moment.

I'm not giving you a very comforting answer, I suspect, but that's the reality of where the project is at the moment. As the minister said, as we move through and tick off some of those items, it will become more concrete.

CHAIR - Let me ask a different way. Does Mr Gregory, minister, have the confidence that he can engage with the relevant ministers who have responsibility for, say, TasNetworks, to ensure that if there are delays with that, there will be some intervention by the minister? That's what's been required at a certain Devonport port.

Mr JAENSCH - We can ask Mr Gregory that. I can give you the answer, but I will draw in whatever other ministers need to bring their weight to getting things done to make sure that we get this facility out of the ground as soon as possible.

CHAIR - I just know of some of the challenges that have been had.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Mr VINCENT - We've sort of passed it a bit, but I wanted to know more about therapeutic services in detention. You did touch on it with the need for supports and needs of some of the people, but more specifically, I think you did touch on it at one stage.

CHAIR - Can I just add a little bit to that one? I'm just trying to make a comprehensive question. In terms of community services, like Community Youth Justice services, which fits into a bit of that, can you give us a fairly broad, comprehensive answer around what's happening in that space that's new?

Mr JAENSCH - Let's see if we can cover both of your areas of interest with this one. Through the reforms outlined in the Youth Justice Blueprint, we will enhance responses across the entire service system and ensure a collaborative, multidisciplinary and therapeutic approach to individual young people and their unique needs. In this Budget, there's \$6.6 million over four years to support a specific focus on enhancing therapeutic supports and case management in detention in particular, including \$3 million over four years to establish a clinical services team through the addition of five clinical service practitioners, delivering safe and high-quality therapeutic services for young people with the most complex and intensive needs.

There is funding also for a range of assessment tools, four clinical services practitioners, as well as clinical supervision to deliver those therapeutic services; funding of \$2.8 million over four years for five case management positions to establish and deliver processes and guidelines for assessment and case planning and case management of children and young people in detention, to enable that multidisciplinary therapeutic service response and address those young people's drivers of their offending behaviour; as well as, Mr Woodfall mentioned before, additional funds for an appointment of an assistant principal at Ashley School to free up the principal to have a greater role in the day-to-day management of cases and leadership of that in the centre.

The clinical services team that I've described will provide services statewide, across not only detention, the custodial environment, but also Community Youth Justice services as well.

The Director of Clinical Services has already commenced and the structure of the rest of the team is now being designed. The recruitment process for some of those other roles has already commenced as well.

There's also work underway to design a case management policy framework. This is something where we're engaging with young people as well, so that the case management and services that are provided to them make sense to them and meet their needs.

There's a range of works underway there. This is, again, part of shifting from having Ashley Youth Detention Centre as a place to hold young people, whether they're sentenced or just that there is not some other more suitable placement for them, and to keep everyone safe. The aim is that we're working with those young people on what got them there, how they're going to address those issues in their life, how they're going to meet the requirements of their bail or their release and re-enter society as safe and positive contributors as well.

This should be a place where the aim is not just to keep everyone safe while you've got them, but to bring them along, to work with them to address their demons and their history and their trauma and their health, and get them in a position where they can confidently go back out into society and society is seeing that they're young people whom it wants to be able to embrace and support as well.

That work is underway on a number of fronts. The smaller the number of young people we have in our detention settings and the more we can plan for their time, the more good work we can do with them while we have them.

Ms LOVELL - On page 61 of budget paper 2, under performance information, I want to ask about the Youth Justice community conferences held within six weeks of receipt of referral for conference. Numbers for 2023-24 are fairly low compared to previous years and, certainly, from the target. Do you know why that is so low? It's the last indicator.

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Woodfall might comment on that. While he is looking up his material, this involves coordinating a process where the young person, the victim of their crime and others involved in the process, maybe including police or other service providers, need to be coordinated to do that. That comes down to their physical availability and timing.

Ms LOVELL - Understanding all of that, I've just noticed we had 70.5 per cent in 2021-22, 2022-23 was 80.2 per cent. It has dropped down to 61.6 per cent. I understand there could be a number of different barriers, but I'm wondering if there's been work done to identify the barriers and whether there's some trends that can be addressed?

Mr JAENSCH - We will take that on notice and provide some points in response to that.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. My other question is in relation to the targets in that performance information table. Footnote 7 says:

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The targets for these measures are aspirational, which is an adjustment from previous budget papers in which projections were applied.

Why has that change been made and, in setting those aspirational targets, what are they based on?

Ms BURGESS - There was a conscious decision when we became a new department in 2022 to look at all of our performance information and targets. As part of that process, we believed we needed to set targets that were aspirational across all of our service delivery areas and against all of our measures. As part of that work, we were driving improvement, so we set a number of our targets to be aspirational, rather than be something that was easily achievable, because we want to drive our workforce to improve the situations for children and young people across the service delivery areas.

Ms LOVELL - What things are taken into consideration? They're not just a number you've said, 'That would be nice'.

Ms BURGESS - We have a team that sits within our data and system improvement area which does all the data modelling in that space. There would be a balance between a trajectory and then to aspirational. It has to be realistic, yet aspirational, so they'll plot a line of best fit and then determine what the realistic, yet aspirational target might be.

CHAIR - The time is a lot later than I thought.

Mr JAENSCH - With regard to time, just before you act on that, I have some updates to answers from earlier on.

CHAIR - You want to provide those, yes.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. I'd like to update the numbers with some more up-to-date numbers than I gave you before regarding young people on orders allocated to child safety officers and those not. I have some updates, as at the 25 September. In the north, 150 allocated to a child safety officer, 84 to other.

Ms LOVELL - That is 150 allocated and 84 service managed.

Mr JAENSCH - Total 234. North west, 88 allocated to CSO, 155 not, total 243. South, 180 allocated to a CSO, 447 not, total 627.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - The other matter that we took on notice, children, young people and staff in teams 7 and 10, team 7 currently has a practice leader, two unit coordinators, one support worker, a case aid or youth worker, up to six child safety officers-

Ms LOVELL - What does 'up to' mean? Six positions?

Mr JAENSCH - I think that that number fluctuates based on availability day to day. The information I have is up to six. And 143 children or young people allocated at team 7. Team

10 has a practice leader, unit coordinator, 1.6 FTE support workers, and 7.8 FTE child safety officers.

Ms LOVELL - Is that 'up to' as well?

Mr JAENSCH - No, it does not say that. That is for a placement of 176 children and young people, or allocation of 176. There is a note also that the teams and the children they work with are also supported by youth workers from a central team, support workers from the central team, transition to independence, workers from a central team, liaisons, court coordinators, out-of-home care staff and senior practitioners providing management support for their processes. Those teams have their own supports built around them as well.

Ms LOVELL - Can I clarify, minister, before the numbers that were given for the south and I do not think you gave us an update for the south as a whole just then, but it was 627 children and young people in care, 180 allocated to an individual worker and 447 allocated to team 7 or 10.

Mr JAENSCH - Teams and services.

Ms LOVELL - Is that 180 children allocated to an individual worker still accurate for the south, or do you have an update on -

Mr JAENSCH - No, that is the number I gave you just now, south, 180 allocated to a child safety officer.

Ms LOVELL - 447 allocated. There are more children who are not allocated to either. That does not add up, does it? Sorry, my maths not good at this time of the week. That is 319 children that have been allocated to team 7 or team 10. There's another 128 children.

Mr JAENSCH - I see the discrepancy there.

Ms LOVELL - Where are they?

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask for more information there.

CHAIR - Minister, I am just conscious of time and my stomach is rumbling clearly. I wonder if we could have a lunch break.

Have members got any other questions on the capital investment program, which is predominantly Ashley, or the youth facility and the other matter with that was the IT system, wasn't it? If we don't have any other questions on that, we won't need those people back.

We have got the line item for the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. If we're happy to go to that when we come back? Are we done with 4.2? Are we okay from our side with that? You're okay if we have an hour, 45 minutes? What would you prefer?

Mr JAENSCH - For a break? I'm in your hands. You're the boss of this one, Chair.

CHAIR - Yes, but I do like to be a little bit collaborative.

Mr JAENSCH - Look, we're here to work, so whatever suits getting the job done today. Happy with that.

CHAIR - We'll come back say about 1.50 p.m., and we'll come back to the Office of the Commissioner for Children.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay. So, I can -

CHAIR - You can let anyone who isn't relevant to these portfolios go. We won't ask any further questions. If you have information to present to us, you can still give us that in your other portfolio.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I'll do that. Can I just thank the staff who've been at the table with us today for their work and for their answers, and the other answers that will still come. Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 1.07 p.m. to 1.50 p.m.

Output Group 5 - Independent Children's and Young Persons' Review Service

5.1 Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People

CHAIR - As mentioned earlier, we'll go to output group 5.1, the Office of the Commissioner of Children and Young People. I better introduce Mr Healey

Mr JAENSCH - At the table with me is Mr Matt Healey, the acting deputy secretary, Strategy and Delivery in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

CHAIR - With regard to the budget for the office - I acknowledge it is an independent office. I noticed the forward Estimates from the budget of the previous financial year to this year and the outyears is less. I'm asking for an explanation as to why that's the case. There is no footnote to give any indication. This work in the office is very important.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm advised that the decrease in the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young people budget in 2025-26 reflects the funding profile of the time-limited funding arrangements for the Child and Youth Wellbeing initiative provided by DPAC. DPAC's 2024-25 budget includes funding for the establishment of a - that's a separate issue. There's a time-limited project, being the Child and Youth Wellbeing initiative, which reflects the decrease in funding.

Mr HEALEY - It does. For context, there is significant additional funding for the Commission for Children and Young People in the Department of Premier and Cabinet budget allocation. DPAC for this year has \$700,000 followed by \$2.47 million and \$2.475 million in the last two outyears, as significant uplift in funding for the new commission that's to be created.

CHAIR - That's an addition to this?

Mr JAENSCH - That's in addition to that. This forward Estimates projection reflects the existing Office of the Commissioner for Young People -

CHAIR - Current operations.

Mr JAENSCH - and the way it's placed at the moment, and where it's domiciled. There is provision for the new commissioner, including the new commissioner position in the DPAC budget. I understand that between them, the two allocations will merge.

Mr HEALEY - Yes, including the third one, which is the Independent Regulator in the Department of Justice. That will lead to funding in the first year of \$6.86 million this financial year, rising to almost \$8.4 million at the end of the forward Estimates, for the three combined functions.

CHAIR - I'm trying to understand how this will be represented in next year's budget. If it's one commission, will it appear in budget paper 2, volume 2? Where will we see this?

Mr HEALEY - The proposal is that this will be created as an agency in its own right. It will have a separate budget chapter. We'll be combining all of it.

CHAIR - Will it be budget paper 2, volume 2?

Mr HEALEY - Yes, it will be.

CHAIR - Where Stadiums Tasmania is, and MAST, and all those others.

Mr HEALEY - Exactly right. One of the recommendations of the commission of inquiry was that this commission wasn't funded through an agency. The scale of this is large enough so that we can create it as an agency in its own right. It will have its own budget chapter.

Mr JAENSCH - I expect that in the event that the new legislation and the commission is not in place for the beginning of next financial year, there will continue to be representation in the current homes of the components of it.

Mr HEALEY - Yes. Some decisions will need to be made how to reflect it in an interim basis in the budget. There's probably a few options for that. The Department of Justice is taking the bill through. It may be that it's consolidated temporarily in the Department of Justice whilst we create a new agency, or a decision may be made to place it somewhere else in government whilst we create the new commission. The ultimate destination is a separate agency with a separate chapter, all consolidated in one place.

CHAIR - In terms of the scrutiny of it, in budget paper 2, volume 2, this committee, with responsibility for Treasury and Finance, scrutinising the Auditor-General, for example, in this Budget. We also have MAST, Inland Fisheries, and Stadiums Tasmania and other ones in there. TasTAFE is with Committee B. That's the way they're split up. Which portfolio will it sit under? I'm trying to understand where their scrutiny will occur next year, assuming it is established, otherwise it'll probably be the same method as of now.

Mr HEALEY - I'm being a little cautious. Given that it is established as an agency in its own right, it will be overseen in terms of the act by the Attorney-General.

CHAIR - So it will be under Justice.

Mr HEALEY - Yes, but how it appears and how it's managed in budget Estimates, to be honest, I'm not entirely sure.

CHAIR - That's all right.

Mr HEALEY - Keeping in mind that the draft bill also does have it reporting directly to a joint committee of parliament, there'll be plenty of additional opportunities to consider the performance and issues associated with the commission.

CHAIR - We know that our long-serving and much highly regarded Commissioner, Leanne McLean, has retired or moved on to another job. Can you inform the committee about the recruitment process for a new commissioner?

Mr JAENSCH - Ms McLean has announced her departure from the role. Her resignation takes effect on 11 October, I believe. Her advance notice of her departure from the role enabled us to make some arrangements so that there is not a period where we don't have a commissioner. For the immediate term, Ms Isabelle Crompton, who has worked in the office and is deputy or in a -

Mr HEALEY - A director in the office.

Mr JAENSCH - A director in the office, is acting in the role up until the point where Ms McLean's resignation takes effect. I have made arrangements for the appointment of an interim Commissioner for Children and Young People under the current legislation for a period until such time as the new commission and new commissioner is in place next year.

In accordance with the commission of inquiry's recommendations regarding the processes for appointment of these independent commissioner roles in the future and as a safeguard to their independence, I have consulted with the leaders of the other major parties in the parliament, as per the commission's recommendation, on the process for recommendation of a new appointment to the Governor, and have been advised of their support. We are putting that in progress now and will have the appointment of an interim Commissioner for Children and Young People within coming weeks.

CHAIR - It's a shame. This is not a reflection on you or the commission themselves, but there are a lot of independent members in this parliament who may have interest in this area who were not engaged at all or not consulted. Nothing.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I understand. Maybe the commission of inquiry's reports around this will provide some context to their recommendation regarding how this should be handled. My understanding is that the aim is to remove any perceived partisan bias and, therefore, engaging political parties across the Chamber has been the recommendation.

CHAIR - There's nothing that prohibits you from talking to independent members, is there?

Mr JAENSCH - No.

CHAIR - Maybe you might like to think about that. Any other questions at this stage on that line item? I know that Mr Healey has other duties because he only wears about a dozen hats.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much, and I thank also Ms McKerracher, who has returned to represent DECYP for this item.

CHAIR - We'll move over to your role Minister for Community Services. We'll just stop the broadcast while we get changed.

The committee suspended from 2.09 p.m. to 2.12 p.m.

Output Group 7 - Community Partnerships and Priorities

7.2 Community Services

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, if you would like to introduce the members of your team at the table, and then I invite you to make some opening comments in relation to your Community Services portfolio.

Mr JAENSCH - I introduce at the table Mel Grey, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform, and Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director, Community Partnerships and Priorities in DPAC.

If I may make an overarching or opening statement, the Tasmanian Government is supporting the community sector to deliver essential services needed to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. A vital component of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is supporting stronger communities. This in part is achieved through a well-resourced community services industry which can work towards meeting the needs of Tasmanians in their local communities.

The 2024-25 Budget drives the delivery of our plan, developing stronger communities and enhancing our regions. The 2024-25 Budget addresses the needs of Tasmanians here and now, as well as supporting longer-term structural improvements, including the development and release of some significant strategies and action plans by 30 June 2025.

These include a refreshed and extended Carers Action Plan which was released in August this year, an older Tasmanians action plan, a food relief to food resilience strategy, a volunteering strategy, an LGBTIQ+ framework and action plan, and a multicultural action plan. We know that many Tasmanians are experiencing vulnerability through cost of living pressures. This budget eases hip pocket pressure through energy bill relief payments, half-price bus fares, and healthy lunches in schools.

We are providing the no-interest loan scheme in Tasmania with \$2.1 million over three years to deliver up to 2,000 more interest free loans a year for Tasmanians on low incomes, and \$500,000 a year for the next four years to extend the Energy Saver subsidy.

We are investing \$9.1 million to deliver food relief and develop food resilience for Tasmanians, including \$1 million to continue all increased emergency food relief funding for 2024-25, \$5 million for capital upgrades, including \$2.5 million towards cold storage upgrades for Loaves and Fishes Tasmania, \$120 000 over the next two years for each of our food vans, Gran's Van in the north-west, Mission Beat in the north, and Loui's vans in the south, \$75 000

for a vehicle for Eat Well Tasmania, and \$200 000 to develop a new whole-of-government food relief to food resilience strategy.

The important food relief to food resilience strategy will be developed in partnership with major emergency food relief providers including Loaves and Fishes and Foodbank, the Tasmanian Food Security Coalition, our agricultural industry, our charities and social enterprises, Neighbourhood Houses, Eat Well and School Food Matters, transport and logistics stakeholders, as well as the hospitality sector. It will be completed in time for the 2025-26 Budget.

We are investing \$18 million in our Neighbourhood Houses to continue delivering outcomes for local communities across Tasmania. This includes \$50 000 a year in additional operational funding for each house for the next three years, \$6 million in new capital funding over the next three years, the continuation and expansion of the place-based Community Connector Program, with a total of \$6.6 million over four years, and \$150 000 in 2024-25 for the put in the hub community garden initiative at the Warrane Mornington Neighbourhood Centre.

I'd like to thank our Neighbourhood Houses for supporting Tasmanians affected by the recent extreme weather events. I visited a number of houses at the height of the relief effort and witnessed the work being done - providing hot meals, a warm refuge and a place to come together and recharge batteries in more ways than one.

We are also investing \$2.1 million to support the 71 Men's Sheds across the state, as a place to meet, to share, and to connect. This includes \$200 000 a year for the Tasmanian Men's Sheds Association for the next two years, \$175 000 a year for the next two years in competitive grants programs, \$1 million for capital investment and one-off funding for the Dorset, Lilydale, Sorell and Westbury Men's Sheds.

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

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

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

We're building our ongoing support to our multicultural communities by providing over \$2.1 million over the next two years, including \$500,000 to support social connection and a sense of belonging for migrant and refugee people and their communities with \$200,000 for an

inclusive grants program, \$400,000 over two years for a new grant program for multicultural small businesses with up to \$5000 to help finance projects that build capacity and new skills, \$175,000 a year for the next two years to the Multicultural Council of Tasmania to assist implementation of the Multicultural Action Plan, \$80,000 over two years to establish a new multicultural small community festival grants program, and \$75,000 a year for the next two years to the Moonah Multicultural Hub. Additionally, we're also committed to funding the Festa Italia festival, the Estia Greek street festival, the Chinese Lunar New Year Festival, and the annual Diwali Festival. There is \$50,000 over two years for a multicultural liaison role within the Mersey-Leven region.

Importantly, our government is aware of the importance of indexation for the community sector organisations and that's why we've announced for the first time the indexation rate for their funding for the next four years. The indexation rate will be 3.5 per cent in 2024-25 and then 3 per cent for the remaining three years. This rate is above Treasury's CPI forecast level and in line with public sector wages across the period, which were increased to factor in additional cost-of-living pressures for people on lower incomes.

This commitment to indexation will invest an additional \$25.97 million into the community services sector over the next four years. The indexation will uplift the base each year, which ensures real growth in funding to community service organisations. This provides certainty for indexed funding agreements and supports longer-term planning. Following the 2024-25 Budget passing, indexation is being provided at 3.5 per cent, consistent with our election commitment. Grant deeds and funding agreements will be backdated to 1 July 2024, if required.

In 2023, our government committed to longer-term funding agreements by the end of 2024. Longer-term agreements, where appropriate, will provide certainty for organisations and assist with recruitment and retention of staff. We'll also be implementing an outcomes framework that will link to the new Tasmanian wellbeing framework currently under development. This outcomes framework will be developed in partnership with the community services industry.

Certainty of indexation over the next four years and entering into longer-term funding agreements supports organisations to plan for the future and manage recruitment and retention of staff. With the development of an outcomes framework, we will look at the current reporting requirements and what can be simplified and consolidated to reduce administrative burden and cost on both community sector organisations and Tasmanian government agencies. This Budget supports Tasmanians when they need it, while at the same time helping to develop strong communities and enhancing our regions through longer-term strategic action.

CHAIR - It's good to know that the community sector has been listened to.

Mr JAENSCH - It is.

CHAIR - In particular with regard to the indexation. On the longer-term funding agreements, what is longer term?

Mr JAENSCH - Five years is our aim with those - that's what the sector has been asking for. We think that, in particular, needs to include a mechanism for how one contract or agreement ends and another one starts so that we get away from this issue of not only repeated

short-term fixed grants with lots of reporting and acquittals costs associated with doing that, but also the uncertainty when it comes to staff whom you can't guarantee employment for. Six to 12 months out they start looking around and it's a very unsettled time for the sector. If we can introduce longer-term agreements that are based more on the outcomes that we're getting for the dollars invested and a process whereby the procurement of the next grant or agreement starts before the last one has finished so that there is some carry-over -

CHAIR - It might be a four or something like that.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. Then we can strike a balance there where there's some continuity for the sector and for the people who work in it. We need to do some more work through Treasury's processes so that we can manage these funding terms that might go beyond forward Estimates.

CHAIR - Election!

Mr JAENSCH - Forward Estimates, I'm thinking, given this committee's purpose. But there's sense in it; it's, in its way, a reduction of red tape as well for the sector - less handling, fewer transactions.

CHAIR - More funds to deliver services.

Mr JAENSCH - That's of benefit to not only the sector but also the people at the government end, who do spend a lot of time reading acquittals reports on short-term grants.

Ms LOVELL - You said the commitment was to move on to longer-term funding agreements by the end of 2024. Will all of the funding agreements be delivered, and will they all be five years?

Mr JAENSCH - We are working right now on the model for doing that and things like the Treasury arrangements for being able to deliver these new longer-term arrangements. We also recognise that of the 400 or more different types of agreements that we have with different types of community providers, we may need a number of different mechanisms for achieving this. Some of them are also reaching the end of their agreement, some have just begun. So, my aim would be that, by the end of this year, we've got those models in place and we can be talking with the sector, and that by the end of the financial year we have moved those who can move on to a longer-term agreement into those arrangements.

Ms LOVELL - I appreciate you weren't the minister at the time, but I heard that last year the commitment was that as funding agreements ended, they would be moved on to a longer-term five-year agreement. I guess the question is, have any of those funding agreements expired in that last 18 months and have they rolled on to five-year agreements?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Gray to refer to what's happened so far. I would like to see, if our aim is to increase certainty and continuity for people who we have had a relationship with for a long time and we intend to keep going, that we shouldn't necessarily wait till the end of existing agreements and then have another period of uncertainty and change. I would like to think that we could make that transition within the life of current agreements, but I'll continue to take advice from the department about the legal and accounting aspects of doing that. Ms Gray may be able to speak to that.

Ms GRAY - Yes, as the minister said, we're working on the model. The funding agreements go across multiple agencies so it is a complicated task, but one that we're undertaking it with a view to streamlining it where possible. We have been working closely with the community sector for quite some years now to be able to amalgamate funding agreements where we can to make it easier for small organisations.

There may be some at the moment that have come up and are on a longer-term, more sustainable footing, but largely they are still all waiting for the model and the guidelines and the criteria, which we are co-designing with the sector before we roll that out.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, you mentioned the outcomes framework. Can you provide an update on progress on that?

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask Ms Gray to speak to the detailed progress, but the intent of that is that we have a better picture of what it is that we think we are buying with public funds from the sector, and that should marry with the mechanism of entering into more of a service agreement model rather than a line-by-line, small grant model, which has a lot of administration associated with it.

Equally, we want to be able to provide scope and incentive for our community services sector to be innovative and to collaborate in what they deliver. Rather than just having a competitive grant process for delivery of something like food relief services for the state, or an area of the state, we might take an approach where we work out what it is and agree on what it is that we want to achieve with our investment, and then we will be able to let contracts that enable someone to specialise in being able to oversee a portion of the state, and subcontract and partner with a range of different sorts of organisations to make sure we are not just delivering relief where someone has a business model to do it, but that we are ensuring that we are getting the food relief to the ground where it is needed and without food deserts in Tasmania.

That is the purpose, as I understand it, of the outcomes framework, but I will ask Ms Gray to fill in any gaps.

Ms LOVELL - It is more on the timelines and delivery that I was questioning.

Ms GRAY - DPAC is leading the work on the whole-of-government outcomes framework for funded providers. The outcomes framework will provide a guide for purchasing for outcomes. As the member would be aware, purchasing for outcomes has been something that this state has been striving to do for a number of years, as early as in the Department of Health and Human Services, so it is very exciting looking at population-level outcomes with individual government agencies and defining program-level outcomes for funded providers.

The framework will support a whole-of-government, whole-of-community sector approach to service delivery, ensuring that funded services that are interacting with government have consistent expectations that uphold the rights of Tasmanians, but also, importantly, in the context of the commission of inquiry, any safeguarding obligations as well.

It is going to be complemented by a whole-of-government quality and safeguarding framework for funded providers as well that will recognise an agencies' existing approaches to

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quality and safeguarding, and support the delivery of enhancements to make that even stronger. This is to align with one of the priority areas identified in the Change for Children's Strategy, the 10-year strategy for upholding the rights of children by preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse in response to the commission of inquiry.

We expect the outcomes framework to be developed over the next 12 months. Importantly, there is an opportunity for this work to also link with the whole-of-population wellbeing framework that the Department of Premier and Cabinet is also leading.

CHAIR - Minister, does that framework include an evaluation of the programs? There are a lot of them, at 400-odd, I think you said.

Mr JAENSCH - Agreements. I think that's about right.

CHAIR - There was a number in that vicinity that you gave us. I'm sure that the vast majority are clearly showing a positive outcome, but if we don't evaluate them for outcomes, not just whether they've spent money, how do we know?

Mr JAENSCH - That's very much the purpose of the framework. We know what we're going out to buy, and we have to be able to measure whether we got that or not. We perhaps need to spend less effort on trying to determine how the service providers achieve that - treating the industry as a mature industry and giving it some incentive to be innovative, to partner and collaborate in how they can best deliver the outcomes that we've agreed on. That evaluation will be important -

CHAIR - I'm asking how you ensure that the outcomes you've agreed on are delivered. Where are the outcome measures?

Mr JAENSCH - That'll be built into the model. I'm happy for Ms Gray to speak to that.

Ms GRAY - With all of the existing grant deeds, having this framework in place is not to say that some of them don't already have outcome measures and key performance indicators in their existing grant deeds. One of the KPIs for this area is actually the number of meetings held with funding recipients -

CHAIR - That's not an outcome. That's an output.

Ms GRAY - Yes, but in those meetings, discussion of outcomes that have been achieved as a result of the administration of the public funding is part of the conversations that are had in those meetings.

CHAIR - In looking at the budget, which is not insignificant and for an area that is desperately needed, how can we be assured that the outcomes are being delivered? Because that's just an output measure. It's not an outcome measure, and I get a bit tired of counting outputs.

Mr JAENSCH - At the end of the day, in making decisions on the use of public funds, I need to know what it is that we're setting out to achieve or what problem we're aiming to solve. I will need to be seeing in the acquittals that come to me the extent to which that's been

achieved. There will need to be measures built into these agreements and they should be consistent with things that everyone can see in our outcomes framework.

CHAIR - So the outcomes framework will describe the outcomes for each program or each service? I'm trying to understand. It's easy to make a headline thing, 'Yes, we've looked at outcomes', but I say this, minister, because you might have been Minister for Education at the time. The Public Accounts Committee had a follow up on an Auditor-General's report to see what had been done in response to recommendations. There was program after program after program that was put in place, which is, I'm sure, all very helpful, but if you don't measure the outcomes of those, you could be just throwing good money after bad.

Mr JAENSCH - That's right. That's why an outcomes framework, which is about what we achieved rather than counting what we did, is the way that we need to go.

CHAIR - That's what it will look like?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

CHAIR - This will be published on the website?

Mr JAENSCH - Where will it be available?

Ms GRAY - I'm sure we will make that transparent to Tasmanians, because the outcomes framework will begin with population-level outcomes that then the service-level outcomes are geared towards shifting or changing. At least at that really high level of the population-level outcomes and how they link to the whole-of-population wellbeing framework that the Department of Premier and Cabinet is also leading, we'll be able to see a line of sight between the two and see how our service-level outcomes are working towards achieving those population-level outcomes.

CHAIR - Minister, when we come back, what's the timeframe for this to be finalised?

Mr JAENSCH - It will be 12 months from the Budget, so this time next year.

CHAIR - Next year's Budget is only nine months away, so I can't reasonably expect to see new performance information in the budget papers, but the year after that - and I'll still be here -

Mr JAENSCH - I know. You'll be here forever.

CHAIR - I would hope that we'd see different performance measures in the budget papers as well as in the annual report of the department. I know there are different ones that appear in the annual reports, but this is not particularly helpful, because even when you look under the next line item, we have the numbers of cards issued.

Mr JAENSCH - It doesn't indicate outcomes. What we'll need to do is factor in - and this is probably a job to take away. We will need to telegraph that well in advance with groups like this who rely on being able to compare year-on-year like terms to determine our performance year on year. As we change the measures, we'll have to reset that and make sure

that everyone can clearly see it so that it doesn't interrupt a series for you. It will, but so you can see what the intention is.

CHAIR - It will. We see this happen anyway with new measures put in. I've been banging on about this outcome measures for a long time, and the Coordinator-General's office hasn't listened at all.

Mr JAENSCH - It's obviously been getting through. We're delivering. You'll have to stick around for a little bit longer to see it all coming to fruition.

Ms THOMAS - I have some follow-up questions on the indexation that you talked about. You explained the rate over the next four years, and I understand this was an election commitment that the community services sector has somewhat welcomed, but there are still some concerns in terms of a gap in funding for services compared to the actual costs of wages and operations arising from what some consider to be an inadequate level of indexation that has persisted over many years. The compounding effect that is now being realised or felt is made worse by current pressures of inflation and wage increases.

The question is how was this level of indexation for community services, which includes housing and homelessness services, calculated? Were those things taken into account in terms of the impact of not matching the rate of inflation in past years and the increasing costs of compliance with child safety legislation, higher insurance costs and wage costs, and all of those sorts of things? What was the formula used to come to those figures?

Mr JAENSCH - It's a relatively simple formula, and again, I wasn't the minister in the time leading up to the budget, where I understand there had been a fair body of work undertaken with the sector to understand their cost structures and their wishes regarding future indexation arrangements. That went to the drivers of cost increases, which are different in different parts of the sector depending on how the organisations are structured, but also their need for certainty and the ability to plan for the future.

As I understand it, the policy announced at the election was informed by that work. It aimed to provide that four-year future certainty by saying, 'Here is the locked in indexation rate'. To be very clear, unlike the previous adjustments year on year to funding, the indexation is proper indexation in that it compounds year on year, so with the 3.5 per cent that applies in this financial year, the growth is then the base rate for the calculation of next year's 3 per cent and the 3 per cent after that, et cetera. It puts the sector on a growth trajectory, and the quantum that was chosen was chosen to be set just above Treasury's CPI forecast levels, and it had reference also to public sector wages growth that was projected and used. There was some benchmarking effectively against those two areas.

I know that there's some more sophisticated modelling that some in the sector have proposed that we should be using, and we will always keep an eye on it to make sure that our funding and what we expect to get from it is a reasonable ask.

What I'm hoping is that the sector and the public that's funding it will see that our announcement will result in nearly \$26 million additional funding going into the sector that the sector can bank on now rather than waiting each year for a top-up payment that was never guaranteed. By moving to the longer-term funding agreements and reducing some of the

transaction costs associated with the procurement and the acquittal, we can actually lose them a couple of percentage points of cost.

Some organisations have told me is almost as important, particularly organisations that are not big enough to have their own in-house accounting and legal and other things, and they have to get audits done and all those sorts of things to satisfy their requirements. If we can reduce the number of those costs and free them up by streamlining, that will also add value for them.

Ms LOVELL - You said the rate of indexation was chosen to be just above the Treasury's forecast CPI levels and the trajectory of growth, given that that's built into the the core funding for organisations, which is all positive stuff and something that the sector has been advocating for for a long time. However, CPI is really only one element of increasing costs, and my concern, and I know the concern of some in the sector, is that there are other things that will increase at a greater rate. It only puts them on a trajectory of growth if it's enough to cover their increasing costs, and a number of organisations have increasing costs associated with the new safeguarding measures they need to implement. There's a whole range of costs that are associated.

Were those things taken into account in landing on that figure? What other work is being done with the sector to ensure that they're able to meet those new obligations that have been imposed on them - necessarily, don't get me wrong, but have been imposed on them - by the government and by parliament and that have resulted in an increase in costs for them that they need to now meet?

Mr JAENSCH - We need to stay in close contact with them regarding the realities of their operating environment, not only on cost of delivery, but also on things like workforce development as well. They're all continuing challenges that they face in the market, like we do in government as well. We'll keep working with them on understanding the needs and the diversity of circumstances that those organisations face.

For example, there's a big difference between an organisation that is a Tasmanian arm of a national body with a big back-of-house support structure behind it, versus a local incorporated body with a volunteer board who has to buy in all of their services from outside. We need to understand the needs of lots of different groups. To that point, I think we've got to a position where we said, 'Well, we need to do something to provide certainty and a reasonable level of actual compounding indexation for the sector so that they have something to plan for while we continue to work on all all of these other variables that affect them'. It may be something you never actually get perfect, but we need to have certainty so that they can continue to trade in the meantime.

Ms LOVELL - It is certainly is better than it was.

Mr VINCENT - Minister, there'd be no reason, though - that's baseline funding basically for normal day-to-day costs. If there's an occurrence or an immediate need, is there still the ability to apply for something different if something else pops up?

Mr JAENSCH - Absolutely, and we'd anticipate that there will also still be grant programs and immediate needs or opportunities that are fixed-time things, which would be funded on top of that for these organisations.

Mr VINCENT - I welcome the comments you made earlier on about looking at not just funding existing operations and looking at the outcomes and outputs because you can have a series of different organisations doing all the best of intentions and sometimes the administration cost can wear down. So I guess that's part of what you're looking at there, is it -

Mr JAENSCH - That's right. Yes.

Mr VINCENT - to bundle or bring together or mature some of those operations.

Mr JAENSCH - I've worked in this sector and I know that sometimes you finish acquitting one grant and you're applying for the next one, and you're judging how much work you put into bidding for money that you might not get, because it costs.

CHAIR - Hopefully you're doing some of that work before you're acquitting.

Mr JAENSCH - Sorry?

CHAIR - Hopefully you're doing some of that work before you're acquitting it because depending on how many acquittals there are, I suppose.

Mr JAENSCH - It just seems to be a continuous cycle for a lot of them.

CHAIR - Yes, it is.

Mr JAENSCH - What we sometimes find is that we've got David and Goliath situations where little organisations spend a lot of resources writing a grant application and there's a corporate sort of version of them over here that's also in the same bidding war. Now what might be better is if we structure it in such a way that we say we're going to let a head contract for this, so we need someone who's got a statewide overview or distribution system or whatever and the ability to subcontract with local players in lots of places who know their patch really well to deliver the services. That might be a better way because you encourage organisations to partner-up, each one of them specialising in what they do, rather than having organisations competing with each other and burning up a lot of resources for no outcome.

Mr VINCENT - We certainly saw that when Jobs Tasmania was formed, about the huge number of different funding pools coming back into a decent amount and maximising what you were actually doing.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, getting some critical mass.

Mr VINCENT - I'd welcome that.

Ms THOMAS - Does the department do any analysis of the financials of the funding recipients in community services?

Ms GRAY - Through you minister, as the member has just commented, yes, we certainly do.

Ms THOMAS - Can you tell us how many have indicated or what this analysis showed last financial year in terms of how many reported a deficit budget? Or recorded a deficit budget, I should say.

Ms GRAY - Just to provide some context, in 2023-24, this is just the community grants, not the whole sort of grants to the community services sector, community grants facilitated 574 grant payments to 441 grant recipients valued at almost \$60 million. Correct me if I'm wrong, it's not an audit that's done across all of them, but it's done as required and not on a systemic and annual basis where a report is produced, but it's done through the normal oversight of granting and the administration of the individual grants, and the acquitting of the milestone payment before the next payment is made. Providing financial reports is part of that process.

Ms THOMAS - I'm interested in the level of scrutiny that's done, not necessarily from a checking up on them point of view, but from a point of view of getting some sort of indication from a systems and policy level as to the health of the community services sector overall and whether the level of government funding that's provided is commensurate with need or what the makeup of the financial position of the sector is.

Generally speaking, where the other revenue sources are in order to help inform policy decisions on the level of support that's provided or needed and what some of the implications could be if we are seeing a high number of them that are reporting deficit budgets and there is real risk to outcomes that government is trying to achieve through providing this significant funding to the community services sector and the valuable services that it provides. We ought to be aware of the level of risk to the organisations.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm happy for the department to take that away as an issue, perhaps not to bring a response, but to take into its own processes for protecting the government as a purchaser or a partner with those organisations. The other part of this is covered in our partnership with TasCOSS and the sector in the industry development plan for the sector. We have a partnership there where I co-chair a rolling program of work which is about where the sector is going and what it needs to thrive and to meet demand. The focus over the last couple of years when I haven't been in this chair has been around workforce development for the sector and there's been a body of work done there that's now informing things like training and development within the sector. Governance and financial viability and sustainability of the sector is similarly an area that we need to invest in.

As you would have heard from our discussions this morning in the area of out of home care, in the keeping people safe, keeping kids out of the youth justice system, our delivery of policy more and more depends on there being a capable, stable set of non-government service providers out there to do this work. Our model is built on that being there. We need to invest in not only how much money we provide but also the governance and integrity of that whole system. Otherwise we would need to start building new parts of government to do that work instead, which is not our plan. I agree with you that we need to have an eye on the health of the sector and ensure that the way that we engage with it doesn't put it at risk or doesn't extend it beyond its capabilities.

CHAIR - Just on that, Bec asked about whether you look at the financial performance of these, and you do, but in terms any of those organisations that are looking at deficit budgets, mainly because costs have increased and their funding hasn't, all those sorts of things, what's the response then from the department?

Mr JAENSCH - As an operational contracting thing as opposed to a strategic thing? I will ask the department to respond.

Ms GRAY - Through you, minister, we usually find out pretty quickly if an organisation that we've been funding is trending because we're in constant contact with those organisations. In my experience, all effort is made, especially if the cessation of that service or program is going to impact vulnerable Tasmanians or create a service delivery deficit in Tasmania. Every effort is made to understand what the issue is, work with the organisation and then work through the department and up through the minister if necessary, to do anything that's possible to assist the viability of that organisation.

CHAIR - Minister, as you said earlier, a lot of these organisations have volunteer boards and volunteer staff as well as some paid staff who are often doing these things out of the goodness of their heart and they lack the corporate governance skills required. What support is there for members of boards and the key staff to be upskilled in good corporate governance?

Mr JAENSCH - Well, there's a point there where we don't run those businesses. We can make certain requirements of them. We can also understand their vulnerabilities and put safeguards in place where we need to. I'm aware of situations, for example over the last few years where we've had some critical dependence on the performance of some services and contracts, we've had organisations that have been in difficulty, we've had people from our government departments who have sat down and worked through with them, some business planning and some risk mitigation, et cetera, and been in there. Now, that's partly about helping those businesses, it's also though about helping the Tasmanians that we're paying them to provide services for.

In a different set of circumstances, there are other issues that come up from time to time, for example for organisations dealing with vulnerable people and children being appropriately insured and we're facing a situation right around the country where insurers are getting out of the market of insuring organisations that have a long history of service, say of providing care for children. Every time there is a redress scheme or a class action or something like that, based on historic failures to keep kids safe, that sector's ability to gain insurance is diminished -

Ms LOVELL - I feel like insurers are getting out a lot of industries. It's any kind of risk.

Mr JAENSCH - Insurers are getting out of a lot of industries. We need to consider as a government, not only how do we respond to that where it affects our service providers being in or getting out of that line of business. We also need to think about the children and the carers who they're associated with and what would we do in the situation where that organisation no longer existed. Setting up that sort of contingency planning is the sort of thing that happens from time to time as well. That all comes down to the relationship we have with those organisations, which is typically decades of working together.

Ms GRAY - Through you, minister. The minister mentioned the TasCOSS community sector industry plan and the work that's gone on under that. It has really been quite amazing. One pillar of that plan is a Training and Leading for Impact program and it's a partnership with the University of Tasmania, the Gamechangers in Governance program, and it aims to increase industry governance capacity. It's fine-tuned to industry needs. Stream one began delivery in October 2023, stream two of the program - shaping an effective board - commenced on

3 March 2024 and ran until mid-April 2024. Participation in Gamechanges in Governance has exceeded expectations and received really positive sector feedback. Importantly, some of the funding was used to enable people to participate in the program and funding to backfill the time that they're away from their job.

The other one the minister mentioned was the Work with Purpose campaign. This is quite a beautiful campaign that has postcards and a photographic exhibition. It tells stories about people working in the community sector to encourage more people to take up roles in the community sector. Really, the Gamechangers in Governance is one of the main ways that we've been growing those board skills.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. I want to come back to the analysis of the financials again. I'm wondering, minister, I appreciate your suggestion that it's something that the department can look into, is it something that information that might be able to be provided for the 2023-24 financial year in terms of how many of the peak-funded organisations, the bigger ones, the bigger turnovers, had deficit budgets and what other analysis is done or may be done, if we come back this time in 9 to 10 months' time maybe. It won't be that far away, we'll be back here again.

What sort of information will be able to be provided in terms of debt-to-equity ratios and liquidity? What sort of analysis is done? Some years ago, when I worked at Sport and Recreation, we provided relatively small grants, comparatively, to state sporting organisations and we would do significant analysis, looking at the debt to equity ratios and liquidity of organisations we were funding through that program. I wonder if that could be taken on?

Mr JAENSCH - Two considerations there, then I'll ask Ms Gray to respond to you. We have some obligations under Treasury's instructions regarding probity, but it's - we have due diligence around our contracting processes, so there's that aspect of it.

The other consideration around reporting is that we also need to be conscious that sometimes, well, in all these cases, we have a range of different organisations in Tasmania, but we're a relatively small market. We need to be conscious that, if we are characterising the financial health of any organisation, it's not our information or our business. We wouldn't want to advertise the financial risk of any organisation that we aren't part of.

I don't know where we stand in terms of being able to report on anything on the public record about a breakdown of the viability of organisations in the sector or their financial performance - that might be -

Ms THOMAS - Anyone could work out those ratios by looking at their publicly available finances, so it's not -

Mr JAENSCH - For the same reason, if we put up any sort of assessment, people might be able to join dots and work out who it is that we're talking about and we'd need to be very careful about how we did that. As for our fiduciary duties in contracting, can you comment on that?

Ms GRAY - To provide members with comfort, we completed annual organisation checks that review annual financial reports from each organisation that's funded more than \$100,000 per annum, and that's in alignment with the Treasurer's instructions.

There are DPAC issued grants across community services and small, medium, and large grants. To undertake this work on a whole-of-government basis would take some time.

Ms THOMAS - That's not what I'm suggesting or asking. I'm talking about the major community service organisations that are funded in this line item. Do you understand what I'm asking?

Ms LOVELL - The issue is not so much around due diligence, it's around whether there's any analysis and identification of how the sector is coping. Is the sector coping with the demand and balancing that with the level of funding and support they're receiving from the government or perhaps from elsewhere? Or, are they all struggling? Are their financials so tight or beyond being tightened into that deficit kind of area because they're not able to meet the demand for the service that they're providing. What analysis is there of that?

Ms THOMAS - Is what we're asking of them reasonable?

Ms LOVELL - Yes, and is there a way you could look at reporting that in a way that's not identifying anyone? You could even do it as a kind of global reporting without getting into specifics about this organisation or that organisation, just generally is the sector, as a sector, able to cope with the demand and the level of funding that its receiving.

Mr JAENSCH - We need to be in touch with the capacity and the stresses on the sector that we depend on to partner with, no question about that. At one level that's something we can do through our business interactions with them. In particular, by using an outcomes-based approach that says, 'Here's what we want to achieve, who's got capability to do it, what are the costs and the risks of doing it that way, et cetera,' then working through that through our procurement process.

Certainly, we need to pick up on any sector-wide trends. That's what we've been doing with Workforce, we've talked about governance and the industry plan approach. If there is a financial vulnerability angle to that, yes, we need to pick it up. The sector is also diverse in its business structures and what market forces or conditions it's exposed to, and they're quite different from each other. I don't know how a snapshot approach would capture all of that granularity.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, and, no doubt, there are differences, but I suppose the point is that, if there was a trend that could be identified, consideration is given to that.

Mr JAENSCH - That's right, yes.

Ms THOMAS - It's also providing some level of - we hear this anecdotally, from some particular organisations, so where's the evidence?

Ms LOVELL - Gives us an evidence base -

Ms THOMAS - Yes, that's right.

Ms GRAY - That is a piece of work that I would consider. The TasCOSS Community Services Industry Plan is designed to be a 10-year plan to provide advice and to prioritise what's

important across the community sector. It has an advisory council that comprises people from the sector, the vice chancellor of the University of Tasmania, the CEO of TasTAFE, TasCOSS, representatives from government agencies, LGAT, the minister. This could be a piece of work.

We're at a point, in those 10 years, where we're looking at a review of the operations of the industry plan and how it's going. Given the pressures that members are identifying, that sustainability issue is something that we could work with the advisory council on prioritising.

I would say also through the work of the commission of inquiry, workforce is one of the key priority areas in that sector and there's a lot of collaborative work underway in looking at systems change and working differently, so that we can have a sustainable, viable workforce in those community sector services.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, we've talked a lot about funding arrangements and the importance of security and sustainability in those. I note that there's a number of these, but an example is the funding commitment to Neighbourhood Houses and there's a couple of different ones, but specifically - well, really there are two examples - the funding for the uplift, the top-up, or however you phrase it - the extra \$50,000 a year to Neighbourhood Houses has been in place for a number of years now. It's been committed to for another three years, so, that's six years of essentially top-up funding.

At what point do you say, 'We're not going to top it up, we're going to make this part of our core funding'? That's now six years where those centres have relied on that funding, it's integrated now in their budget. I don't think you could find a single centre that could say to you, 'Yes, we can find \$50,000 to cut'. Why don't you commit to ongoing core funding rather than these top-ups?

Mr JAENSCH - They're the sort of matters that we need to take into account when we're moving to new longer-term funding agreements. We need to work out how, on one level, we move from repeated short-term grants for the main funding of the thing and work out what is a time-limited project and what is just something we expect.

Ms LOVELL - Top-ups too, because it's not even just their core funding, it's a top-up on top of that.

Mr JAENSCH - The top-up question should be relieved by having proper compounding indexation so that there will be a growth effectively in the base, which alleviates - that means that one-off funding can be limited to one-off delivery of things that come and go, and that there's more built into the base.

Ms LOVELL - I'm not a mathematician, I'm far from it and I could be really wrong and about to make a fool of myself here, but I'd be really surprised if 3 per cent indexation was the equivalent of \$50,000 of their funding.

Mr JAENSCH - Depends what you start with.

Ms LOVELL - Well, that's right. What is their core funding? What do they receive? Can you outline that for us? What Neighbourhood Houses' core funding is per centre, per house?

Mr JAENSCH - Someone could bring that number to the table.

Ms LOVELL - I could be wrong, I don't know.

CHAIR - You need to find out what the core funding is.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, that's right. I'd be surprised if it was enough that 3 per cent was \$50,000.

Mr JAENSCH - The \$50,000 increase was, as I understand it, part of a response to things like COVID where there were greater pressures on our Neighbourhood Houses for those least able, most vulnerable, to navigate a lot of new rules and circumstances all by themselves.

Ms LOVELL - It was, but it's become pretty critical pretty quickly, especially after six years. It's fairly well integrated now.

Mr JAENSCH - It's not six years yet.

Ms LOVELL - It will be.

Mr JAENSCH - We're in the third of years and then there's projected out years. But, I agree with you. There are also other organisations where we have funded them their base funding and, each year, also given them money for running an annual week of celebrations, an awareness campaign, or something like that, which might be considered now to be part of their business as usual.

I think that the move to a new model and period of funding gives us the opportunity to - and, you're not a mathematician, I'm not an accountant - but I expect that under our *Financial Management Act* and our accounting principles that there is a point where, if you keep funding a thing as a one-off year on year, again and again, then, effectively, you need to make that a longer term thing in terms of how you procure it and account for it. The same applies for functions that organisations have been performing as an extra forever, maybe they should be considered as part of their base. I'm open to those things and, if that helps to streamline, declutter and reduce the transaction costs of supporting them, that's well and good.

What I think we need to do on the other side of that though, is have fewer and more distinctly one-off type funding opportunities, so that everything doesn't end up becoming funding forever to do new things. We need to be more distinct between what a core expectation of delivery is, based on the outcomes framework, and what is a point-in-time thing, where you happen to be the right organisation to deliver something, and that becomes a different sort of transaction.

CHAIR - What's the core funding?

Ms LOVELL - I think Mel might have an answer for you.

Ms GRAY - The core base funding including indexation for 2023-24 is \$8,926,868.

Mr JAENSCH - Not per Neighbourhood House.

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Ms GRAY - No, that's all 34. Then there's a variety of election commitments or, as the minister was saying, one-off things.

Ms LOVELL - If we said roughly \$8.9 million divided by 34 -

Ms GRAY - That's not including the uplift.

Ms LOVELL - No, that's their base funding. Divided by 34, is about \$261,000 so \$262,000 per house. So, 3 per cent of that is \$7860. It's a long way from \$50,000.

Mr JAENSCH - Someone will read the *Hansard* and correct it.

Ms LOVELL - They will, yes. I think I've made my point. That being, that when you have those uplifts in funding that are there for an extended period of time, I'm pleased to hear you say at some point they need to become part of their core funding, which is -

Mr JAENSCH - We need to decide if they do or not. We have to make a conscious decision about it rather than have a default arrangement.

Ms LOVELL - Than just keep letting it - yes. Having said that, I encourage you to make that part of their base funding because I would hate to think they're going to lose any of that.

CHAIR - How many Neighbourhood Houses are there?

Mr JAENSCH - Thirty-four.

Ms GRAY - The overall figure of funding, through you, minister, for that financial year was \$12,559,368, including the uplift and some other items.

Ms LOVELL - The Community Connector Program and things like that. Thank you. I can go on, unless someone else would like to.

Mr VINCENT - I have one on Neighbourhood Houses. With the no-interest loans, are they still being administered or handed out through the Neighbourhood Houses network?

Mr JAENSCH - Neighbourhood Houses are part of it, but they're not all of it.

Ms LOVELL - You need to get your office onto it, Kerry.

Mr JAENSCH - Neighbourhood Houses, or the majority of them have the ability to assist people with making application, understanding their eligibility. They're an agent for it. There are many other charities and organisations and NILS Direct can also handle those applications.

Mr VINCENT - When you mentioned the NILS, is there an increase in that amount?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Mr VINCENT - Neighbourhood Houses do seem to be an effective way of getting that money out and about.

Mr JAENSCH - Very much so. They tend to be places where there are other services available to the same people who'll be eligible for NILS' no interest loans. NILS has been doing a fantastic job for a number of years. They are signing up 4000 to 5000 grants of up to \$2000 per applicant each year. We know that they're really hitting a market. There's a lot more demand as people are getting to know about it, but also as things like cost of living pressures grow. People have been starting to become more wary appropriately of other -

Ms LOVELL - Payday lenders.

Mr JAENSCH - Short-term lenders. Exactly.

Ms LOVELL - Predatory payday lenders.

Mr JAENSCH - Quite predatory.

Mr VINCENT - Are we seeing an increase in defaults on the no-interest loans or anything like that?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that the No Interest Loan Scheme has about a 97 per cent rate.

Ms LOVELL - They do such good work.

Mr JAENSCH - Because it's doing such a good job, we're putting an additional \$2.1 million in that will support up to 2000 additional loans per year under NILS. Again, this is not a welfare thing, it's not charity, it's micro-financing

Mr VINCENT - A hand-up, rather than a handout.

Mr JAENSCH - Exactly. People pay it back. A majority of them do and meet their obligations - that 97 per cent or more of loans are fully repaid.

NILS has also reported that of the people who they've assisted - their surveying, I'm not quite sure how they measure this - 92 per cent of people who've accessed a loan through NILS don't go back to that other predatory lending. They keep themselves a little bit out of grief with racking up debt with big interest rates associated with it.

Mr VINCENT - Impressive number, too.

Mr JAENSCH - We're very proud of the work that NILS does. They have 105 service delivery partners across the state, 34 of whom are Neighbourhood Houses. There's a whole heap of others. They do not just assist people with those cash loans for those unplanned, immediate, urgent expenses like car repairs or replacing your fridge or freezer. They also offer a product in the energy saver subsidy line, which is designed in particular to help people who do need to replace a fridge or a freezer or a washing machine might be the other one, at short notice.

Ms LOVELL - A heat pump.

Mr JAENSCH - This is designed to help them be able to choose to buy the most energy-efficient one they can. The subsidy scheme works by covering 50 per cent of the purchase price of an energy efficiency appliance within a certain set of criteria. Then a loan is taken out for the other half. With a minimal, if any, cash outlay up-front, you can bring home a more efficient appliance that solves your problem and saves you energy and your power bill from day one. Those sorts of things are pretty important investments for people who would not otherwise be able to make it if their capacity meant that they were buying the cheapest one, which is possibly, the least efficient at the same time. We've added \$2 million to their capacity to do that. That's \$500 a year for four years, I think. That's significantly increasing that. They've had upwards of a thousand of those loan components each year.

Mr VINCENT - I might suggest that that's 7 per cent, I think, that might default, or less than that.

Mr JAENSCH - It is 3 per cent.

Mr VINCENT - It might be the avenue for some other financial services to get to them before they get into deeper trouble.

Mr JAENSCH - Exactly. NILS is amazing, and the Neighbourhood Houses do a fantastic job signing people up, as do all their other agents around the state.

CHAIR - Regarding the Men's Shed's funding, you touched on that in your opening comments. There are two areas, the Men's Shed Capital Investment Program and the Men's Shed Grants Program. How do Men's Sheds actually access this? For what purposes?

Mr JAENSCH - The grants program I believe is \$175,000 a year for each of two years. That's for tools and equipment and some of their wellbeing programs and things to enable that. We're working with Men's Sheds Tasmania [Tasmanian Men's Shed Association?] to settle the criteria for that and promote it to all the sheds. Anyone who's listening from our network of Men's Sheds should be dusting off their -

CHAIR - Tools?

Mr JAENSCH - Their wishlists. Every one of them knows exactly what they need next. There's been a lot of investment over recent years in things like dust extraction equipment for their woodworking. Most of the sheds that have got woodworking as part of what they do, and that seems to be most of them, have now got some form of dust extraction.

CHAIR - Has that one been under the capital improvement program?

Mr JAENSCH - No, I don't think it's been capital improvement, it's been more in the tools and equipment side of things - workshop upgrades, toilet box, et cetera. Is that capital or is that tools? I think we've separated it now so that there's a difference. There's a million-dollar capital improvement program, and there's \$175[,000?] by two years for tools and equipment. That's to separate it out so you haven't got a \$50,000 project competing with a \$5000 project to get things up and going.

They do a fantastic job. We've also been able to support the Men's Shed organisation to extend its executive officer and support in the regions as well so that there's that coordination

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available to them through the work of Wendy Kennedy. What was the second position that was going to be supported with the extra funding we're giving them? Not an executive officer, but there was another role in there as well.

They do a fantastic job. You visit the men's sheds as well. There's rarely a men's shed I go to where someone doesn't take me aside and tell me that if it wasn't for the men's sheds, they or someone in their group might not be around anymore. Men don't typically talk about that stuff very much, but if you can give them a place to go and not talk about that together, it tends to work.

CHAIR - They'll talk shoulder to shoulder and not face to face.

Mr JAENSCH - The Regional Coordinator is the other position that's been created with the extra dollars that we're sending their way.

Mr VINCENT - I hope you bought a coffee table.

Mr JAENSCH - I would have that many coffee tables, I can tell you. I've got lots of pens too.

CHAIR - The Lilydale one you mentioned, is that a new shed? Is that why it's separately listed?

Mr JAENSCH - No, I don't think it's a new shed. It's \$30,000 as a further contribution to the Lilydale shed, but I don't know if I've got the detail. Yes, I do. The story there is that in 2021 the government committed \$70,000 to the Lions Club of Lilydale for the establishment and construction of a new men's shed at Lilydale. The club has not been able to secure the location it needed to construct a new shed and is working with the Launceston City Council to identify some options, including co-location, and is reviewing crown land sites in the area and working towards it. This is part of them being able to make do in the meantime given that they haven't been able to -

CHAIR - Is the money provided to establish it in 2021 still sitting in a bucket somewhere?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have the background on what the status of the existing money is.

CHAIR - Are we giving them another \$30,000, did you say? Apparently, the costs have gone up. Unlike the stadium, where they won't.

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have any more detail on that one by itself at the table with me.

CHAIR - I know some men's sheds do have a bit of trouble finding a suitable venue. It's not always that easy.

Mr JAENSCH - Some of them make do and add bits, and I've never met one that isn't bursting at the seams. They've always got ambitious plans, and I fully understand that because no-one has ever invented a big enough shed.

CHAIR - My brother's would go close, I think. Mind you, he's probably got it chockers by now.

Ms THOMAS - Can I ask a clarifying question on the line item? Just to be clear in my mind, is the funding for men's sheds included in 7.2 or 7.3 on page 290 of the budget papers?

CHAIR - I think some of it appears in both, doesn't it?

Mr JAENSCH - No, I think 7.3.

Ms THOMAS - When we're talking about community services, who does that include compared to community development organisations?

Mr JAENSCH - Someone's going to have to explain to you the way that these were divvied up. Who's that going to be?

Ms GRAY - I might have to bring Ingrid the table, but I'll give it a go. It is a bit of a legacy issue in terms of where works are apportioned in departments, but largely the community services are more service-related items, and they sat within various iterations of machineries of government in disability and community services. They are things like the Gambling Support Program, the Community Support Levy, the family support program and Neighbourhood Houses, as we've been talking about. The community services are more the policy and small grants area. That's policies, action plans and frameworks, which are sometimes accompanied by small grants programs. We are looking at these output groups, though. I acknowledge it is a little confusing.

Ms THOMAS -Yes, because it says on page 281 under 7.3 Men's Sheds. Even the TasCOSS funding is there. The reason I ask is because under 7.3 there's a significant increase in the funding in 2024-25 compared to last financial year, and in the forward Estimates. I imagine that's -

CHAIR - I think we're roaming across both, actually, because the minister is too.

Ms THOMAS - So that huge jump reflects the election commitments?

Mr JAENSCH - I would say so, yes. Where there there has been, for historical reasons, an allocation of certain activities to 7.2 and 7.3, for the purposes of accounting for election commitments for community organisations and outcomes, they needed to be put somewhere, and this was the best fit. It was decided by Treasury to list a lot of these, so you'll see a spike for this year for those projects.

Ms THOMAS - Somewhat concerningly, it then drops down to \$6 million by 2027-28, and if that is where some of the funding for some of the community service organisations that we have been talking about sits, then that's going to be problematic.

Mr JAENSCH - Most of the election commitments will be projects or one-offs. There are also a number of commitments that have been made to organisations for a couple of years, but in my opening statement I went through a number of new strategic planning processes that will be underway. For a number of organisations, as opposed to projects, there's been funding provided for two years while we finalise the new five-year plan for volunteering and carers and

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the multicultural action plan for LGBTQIA+, et cetera. That will inform the budgets next year and the year after, so that by the time we come to the end of this two years' funding, we have another forward program of work to look forward to and plan for.

Ms THOMAS - That makes sense, Chair, but we've heard this in relation to a number of outputs across the week, which is concerning if we really are to be back onto a pathway to surplus, when the pathway to surplus -

CHAIR - Is by reduced funding.

Ms THOMAS - That's right, and it's not realistic because what we're hearing is, 'We're going to do this plan and we're going to review this, and then there'll be more funding added in', so that forward Estimate will change.

CHAIR - There are lots of things that probably aren't included that will be, like the Devonport berth, for example. Millions of dollars that are not in there, but which have to be spent if you want -

Mr JAENSCH - Get the men's shed to work on it.

CHAIR - There's an idea.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm sure they'd have some opinions.

CHAIR - I'm sure a lot of them do. Minister, I'm not sure this one fits here, but I was wondering what the heading 'Support for the King Island Community' relates to exactly. It's unclear.

Mr JAENSCH - The reference there?

CHAIR - It's on page 263. 'Funding is provided over four years to support continuation and expansion of service and activities'. That could be anything. Lots of things go on over there.

Mr JAENSCH - I think this may be the Phoenix House investment. Phoenix House, as you know, is an incredible King Island thing. I don't think that the funding for it is bracketed neatly with the neighbourhood houses, but it behaves like one.

CHAIR - This has been an ongoing problem.

Mr JAENSCH - It has, and it's had ongoing support, but it's been in a slightly different column to the commitment for neighbourhood houses generally, albeit we sort of celebrate Phoenix House as a close cousin of the neighbourhood house network.

CHAIR - They get \$74,000 a year - no indexation for them.

Mr JAENSCH - Base funding of \$166,292.

CHAIR - And that will be indexed?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll get some advice on that. I don't quite know.

Ms GRAY - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, that will receive the same indexation.

CHAIR - The \$74,000 on page 254 refers to this. Is that for particular projects or an uplift to their funding? They deliver a lot of services.

Mr JAENSCH - I understand it is an expansion of services and activities in the King Island community. It's to support the things that they've been doing that have been stretching them a bit, and bringing them to be more in line with houses like those in Zeehan and Rosebery, which are servicing small and remote communities. The needs in every one of them will be quite unique because of where they are and what they're doing.

When I visit King Island next, I'll obviously be stopping in with Pheonix House. I'll be interested in their take on what we might need to consider in support in the community, not just in terms of the activities and food, et cetera, but in terms of the wellbeing of the community facing a potential closure of the cheese factory. Things like that can have an effect on the wellbeing of the community, and that gets felt.

CHAIR - It is already is having an impact on the wellbeing because the uncertainty is not good.

Mr JAENSCH - It is. It is felt by people who use services like Phoenix House, and so we will stand by to work with them as part of the response to whatever happens next. There is change coming for that dairy. We hope that there will be a new buyer and a new operator, and we will be able to roll through with that. Either way, the community is going to need us to have its back and make sure that they can make that change because, in a little community like that, you know nobody is not affected.

CHAIR - When you take people out of there, you take them out of the footy club and you take them out of the school. You take them out of everything.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, right. Everyone has four jobs and everyone is affected.

CHAIR - Yes, that is right. There are three footy teams. They need three to have a competition, but they have to share players.

Mr JAENSCH - They do. It's a remarkable thing.

CHAIR - They have a really nice little ground in Currie. It's a beautiful ground.

Mr JAENSCH - And they lend each other players.

CHAIR - They do. Yes, you've got to make up a team somehow. Anyway, I am sure Sally Haneveer will be really pleased to have that confirmed because I know it has been an ongoing challenge for them.

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Ms LOVELL - Minister, just on the budget efficiency dividend, similar to what we talked about it this morning. Have you got the proportion for the amount of the efficiency dividend for DPAC that you have been asked to find and contribute?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that the Premier gave evidence to the committee earlier in the week regarding DPAC's budget efficiencies and savings strategy so that is on the record for DPAC. We're part of that.

Ms LOVELL - Is there an amount that has been sought or is being sought from community services in particular?

Mr JAENSCH - I am advised that no, that has not been broken out separately. The savings requirement will be met through the process, or the project, as described by the Premier earlier in the week.

CHAIR - Minister, this is a question we have asked in other output groups. Where we have a great number of things being done under one line item, could you provide a breakdown - this is for 7.2 - of the \$22-million figure in terms of what that spits out into the various components across that division?

Mr JAENSCH - The output supports and promotes the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians by developing and delivering responsive and sustainable specialist services and supports that are free and accessible to Tasmanian communities when they need them. This includes community grants and programs that aim to support Tasmanians and address cost-of-living. Programs and services include neighbourhood houses -

CHAIR - We have got that. I am actually looking for a dollar amount. If you look at the overheads, we did it in the previous portfolio. I want the separate components that make up that total figure of \$22 million.

Mr JAENSCH - If the mathematicians amongst us want to keep a tally, the output expense budget is \$25.8 million for 2024-25, which is a \$3 million increase from 2023-24. It includes the following in new budget funding for 2024-25 and the forward Estimates: the Community Connector program at \$6.6 million; the community sector organisations indexation, an increase of \$4.5 million ending in 2027-28, noting that this is the indexation for DPAC contracted organisations, not across government because when we talk about indexation for community service organisations, DPAC is just one of the organisations that contracts them. The other budgeting for the indexation amount will occur in the Health budget and all the others as well.

There is the energy subsidy saver of \$2 million; Food Resilience Strategy, \$200 000; Neighbourhood Houses, \$5.1 million ending in 2026-27; Neighbourhood Houses capital improvement program, \$6 million - and we must be getting close.

CHAIR - Just to clarify for members, that's on the output group expense summary. The figure I quoted was from the revenue from appropriation. That's all right, I understand the difference. Are you saying that this entire figure is made up of grants and the services that are being delivered? There's no corporate overheads, there's no staff in your department who are paid under this line item - is that correct? Otherwise, I think we've missed the point a little bit.

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Mr JAENSCH - Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary of DPAC, joining us at the table.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - What I have in the output, so for 7.2 Community Services, I have a breakdown of staffing, administrative expenses and grants expenses -

CHAIR - That's what I'm after, yes.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There is staffing of 11 FTE; this is just for 2024-25 - I don't have it for the other years - of \$1.538 million, admin expenses of \$756 000, and then I've got - apologies, I've got a list of grants and their dollar figures, but I don't think you want that -

CHAIR - Is that what the minister gave us, was it?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I think the minister was giving figures over more than 2024-25. It might have been through a few years.

Mr JAENSCH - And you've also got some in there that aren't ours, like family violence. There are other ones in there.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS -Yes. I've got the entire output for Community Services.

CHAIR - Do grants make up the rest of it?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Yes, which then gets to total revenue from appropriation of \$21.98 million, and then I've got output 7.3 -

CHAIR - Yes, that'd be great, thank you.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Community Development, FTE of 16 and a budget of \$2.899 million. Then the rest is grant funding to total \$28.499 million appropriation.

CHAIR - I appreciate that - that's exactly what I was looking for, minister.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Ms Forrest asked me those questions before, minister.

CHAIR - She's always prepared. You'll be on it next year, in May.

Mr JAENSCH - Absolutely, I'm all over it now.

Mr MORGAN-WICKS - I'll pre-prepare the minister next time.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms THOMAS - Can I ask a question?

CHAIR - Yes, and then we'll go on to 7.3.

Ms THOMAS - I just wanted to ask something the minister said about the different departments funding community organisations. Does that commitment to longer-term funding agreements for community organisations expand across departments?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, that's the intention. The transition will be slightly different depending on who's doing the contracting and buying, but the principle applies across the board, and some of those organisations will have agreements with more than one part of government, so we need to be consistent in how we do it.

Ms THOMAS - Like councils. I raised that with the Minister for Local Government yesterday.

Mr JAENSCH - There you go.

Ms THOMAS - Yea, it can be frustrating for councils to have five different agreements with five different departments.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I can't say that that's all going to be fixed in one in one move.

Ms THOMAS - No, I understand the complexities. Thank you.

Output Group 7 - Community Partnerships and Priorities

7.3 Community Development - Policy Advice and Ongoing Community Development

CHAIR - Minister, we'll move to 7.3. I know we've sort of roamed across both.

This is the policy advice area. You mentioned in your opening comments the development of a number of strategies or plans. There was the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan, Older Tasmanians Action Plan, the LGBTIQ+ Framework and Action Plan, and the Tasmanian Multicultural Action Plan. I assume this line item funds the work that's required.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

CHAIR - We don't like plans just to sit on the shelf. I'm sure it's not the intention, but what's your role in delivering on these plans? They all would seem to sit under your area, so how is that funded and managed?

Mr JAENSCH - The funding and the amounts provided for that are as I read in my overview statement. In some cases, we're providing the funds to the organisation to undertake that work.

CHAIR - Like COTA, for example, with the older persons work.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. In some cases, the department is undertaking the work in partnership with a peak body or organisation as well. The arrangement is a slightly different one from the other, but what's important is that this will set what the priorities are for our strategic investment and our funding agreements with those peak bodies and what we invest in over the coming years. That's where it won't sit on the shelf, and you've noted earlier on that in some cases we've provided less than four years' funding for these organisations pending the outcome of these plans, which will then drive what we fund next. That's how we perhaps guarantee that there'll be action based on an up-to date assessment of where those sectors are, what their needs are and where they're going next.

CHAIR - Can I just clarify then, the four plans I mentioned and you mentioned, have they all been completed?

Mr JAENSCH - No. The Carers Action Plan has. For the Older Tasmanians Action Plan, Food Relief to Resilience, Volunteering Strategy, LGBTIQ+, Multicultural Action Plan, the aim is that they will all be delivered by 30 June 2025.

CHAIR - They're works in progress at the moment.

Mr JAENSCH - They're works in progress and some of them are at a quite early stage, while others are well underway.

CHAIR - The funding that relates to those sits in the current Budget for the work to be done in developing the plan, and then anything that flows out from that will be future funded?

Mr JAENSCH - That's right.

CHAIR - Right. Okay. I think we've covered Men's Sheds and other bits. Minister, we're doing well for time. I think we've got Aboriginal Affairs.

You probably don't need these people to assist you any further. You might like to -

Mr JAENSCH - Some of them might decide to stick around.

CHAIR - Some of them might stay, some might leave.

Mr JAENSCH - I thank Mel and Bec in this capacity for their assistance at the table, and the support team who put the information together as well. If you want to wind this one up, then we'll change folders at least and bring in the other teams.

CHAIR - Sure. Okay. Thanks.

The committee suspended from 3.51 p.m. to 4.08 p.m.

Output Group 7 - Community Partnerships and Priorities

7.8 Aboriginal Affairs

CHAIR - Thanks, minister, welcome back. We were just discussing that we're moving on to your portfolio of Aboriginal Affairs. It is a bit sad that it's the end of the day when everyone's feeling a bit tired, but it's equally important and we place equal importance on all your portfolio areas. We'll just make that point.

As I'm sure you will acknowledge the Aboriginal community and pay respects to the elders, past and present and note that sovereignty was never ceded. I'd like to invite you to introduce the members of your team at the table and also invite you to make an opening statement with regard to this portfolio.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to introduce again for the record, Mellissa Gray, Deputy Secretary of Policy and Reform; Caroline Spotswood, director of

Aboriginal partnerships; and Steve Gall, Director of Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania at the table. Welcome back, Steve.

I too acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners and continuing custodians of the land that we're gathering on today. I'd like to also acknowledge Aboriginal people with us here at the table today and thank them for their work and pay my respects to elders and ancestors also.

I'm very pleased and proud to be here today in my capacity as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I'll give you a quick update, if I may, on key matters from the portfolio that feature in our Budget. We've continued to consult with and receive feedback from Tasmanian Aboriginal people, informing the drafting of new, stronger Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection legislation and our amendments to the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995*. Discussions and feedback to date have indicated positive support for many themes and key issues proposed in both pieces of legislation, but many matters are also very complex and have required further discussions with Tasmanian Aboriginal people and other stakeholders to ensure all those views are heard and properly responded to.

My commitment, as always, is to listen carefully to all views and introduce legislation that is effective, balanced, robust, safe and fair. We intend to release a draft exposure bill for the new Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage protection act for further consultation next month as part of our second 100-day plan ahead of its introduction to Parliament. I'm pleased to note other measures to support this new act included in the 2024-25 state Budget, including funding for a new Aboriginal Heritage Register and an Aboriginal heritage consultants training program.

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

Our Aboriginal Advisory Group, appointed by our government to progress advice on a pathway to Treaty and Truth-Telling, continues to meet regularly and I thank them for their commitment to date. We are not setting a firm timeframe or predetermined outcome for their advice on this critical matter. These matters will be determined by the group itself to ensure the process is truly Aboriginal-led and I look forward to receiving their advice regarding the next phase of this work.

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

CHAIR - Thanks, minister. I'll open the questions and hopefully we've got the gist of it now, the breakdown of the funding for 2024-25, and we can do both, 7.8 and 7.9, if you wish it.

Mr JAENSCH - Based on our previous discussions, I understand that Mel has the breakdown of the format that you're seeking, Chair, so I'll let her do that now.

Ms GRAY - Through you, minister. Staffing, 7.8. Staffing \$1.289 million, and then there is some funding for \$100,000 for the Aboriginal Advisory Group for Truth Telling and Treaty and \$600,000 for Closing the Gap. Total revenue from appropriation \$1.989 million. For Output Group 7.9, staffing \$2.086 million, some Aboriginal Heritage Council costs of \$102,000, some administration costs \$394,000 and then new initiatives as outlined by the minister are \$150,000 Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, \$500,000 Aboriginal Heritage Consultants Training Program and \$300,000 Aboriginal Heritage Register. Total revenue from appropriation is \$3.532 million.

Mr HARRISS - Minister, you touched on the Aboriginal Advisory Board. Noting that the \$100,000 is only a one-off this year, can you give some indication about the work they're doing at the moment, which is I agree pretty important stuff, but also if that goes past that time as in with that funding allocation?

Mr JAENSCH - We are currently receiving the first tranche of advice from the Aboriginal Advisory Group on their concepts and issues associated with our Pathway to Truth Telling and Treaty based on their discussions, visits and interviews with people from other jurisdictions and people across Tasmania as well. We've yet to receive that in a formal version and to process it in full. We expect that there will be some further stages of work arising from that, so we've made a provision for them to be able to continue as the advisory group and to be able to fund our next phase of work associated with their advice to us. We don't have the full detail of that from them yet or a or a work plan, so there's a provision in the Budget to support them to continue and to fund some additional work. We'll take our lead from them, that'll inform what goes into our next budget cycles, which will be upon us shortly after this.

CHAIR - After we wrap this up, you'll be on to the next one.

Mr JAENSCH - We're very grateful for the work that they've put in to that. It's not a simple task. There's a responsibility with it that I know that the members of that group carry heavily. They are providing advice to us on how we, together with Aboriginal people, might approach the next stages of this. They're very keen to ensure that done the right way and that they've learned from the experience of people in other states and territories where there have been some false starts as well so that we can maybe get it more right the first time when we when we embark on these next steps.

CHAIR - Are you able to tell us who is on the group that's working on that?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. We have Nick Cameron, Rodney Dillion, Dave Gough and Maxine Roughly are the current members of the Aboriginal Advisory group.

Mr HARRISS - The *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995*, I know you mentioned a little bit about that. What current work going on around that? That was discussed about coming to parliament last year wasn't it, so where does that sit at the moment?

Mr JAENSCH - There has been a draft of the proposed amendments out for public comment. We've received feedback on that. It's raised a number of issues that we are still working through. We've also set ourselves a target of having our draft legislation on cultural heritage protection out for consideration this year. The two projects do involve some of the

same staff, both within our own departments as well as in the drafting area for legislation. We're needing to step and stage this through.

The other thing that's happened in the meantime has been that the cycle for the new Aboriginal Land Council election process has proceeded during this year. As that was falling in a period while we were also considering this legislation, we've not pushed the new legislation out while the process is underway. We had originally hoped, you may be aware, to defer this election so that there'd be clear air for consideration of the amendments. We were unsuccessful in our bid to do that. The election has proceeded. We've been working on the feedback we've received so far from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on the proposed amendments. We'll be bringing those back for consideration over coming months.

Mr HARRISS - The \$600,000 allocation for the Closing the Gap coordination and capacity building - essentially what does that fund? That's only a year. That's only in this Budget as well, isn't it?

Mr JAENSCH - It is. You'd be aware that previously we developed the first Tasmanian implementation plan for Closing the Gap. Off the back of that, we also had two rounds of funding for the Closing the Gap capacity building initiative. A total of \$5.3 million went out from that. Many of those projects are still underway and operating around the state, with various Aboriginal community-controlled organisations involved in the delivery of them. We're also in the final stages of building our second implementation plan for Closing the Gap for Tasmania.

The \$600,000 is about continuing that work to finalise the implementation plan and to develop responses to it with Aboriginal people involved in that process. The \$600,000 will help that process to happen. What we do anticipate is that the second implementation plan will then inform our next couple of budgets, so that there are new resources to come on board to deliver the next stages of it.

What we have to recognise is also that across our Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, some of them have limited capacity to be managing the last project, contributing to the plan for the next one, and developing another project at the same time. We have to pace ourselves a little bit so that we're not overwhelming people, particularly while we're consulting them on legislation and involving them in lots of other - the involvement and participation engagement very good. There are, particularly for smaller organisations, only so many days in the week for their key people to keep their communities across all of that detail. We have to stage this through.

The \$600,000 for Closing the Gap this year is to continue. The involvement of our peak partner, other Aboriginal organisations, who we need to have fully engaged in the process of finalising the implementation plan, and then planning what we do with it to implement its key directions and inform future budgets.

Mr HARRISS - You anticipate in the forward Estimates more allocation of funding, yes?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I anticipate that future budgets will include more Closing the Gap initiatives, capacity building initiatives, and initiatives driven by Aboriginal people, informed by our next implementation plan.

Mr HARRISS - On Closing the Gap, how is the government tracking on targets?

Mr JAENSCH - It's more a question of how is Tasmania tracking and what I'm going to reach for is the document that shows the latest dashboard from the Productivity Commission's work. This gives the most up-to-date report on performance against that. There's a summary version of that.

As at March 2024, current Tasmanian performance data indicate improvement in Tasmania on eight targets - and that's more than eight. No change on Target 15, which is about increased land and sea rights and interests. We're unable to assess progress on five targets because of lack of data or the data can't be reported by the ABS because it's a very small sample size. Typically, we're talking about numbers less than 10 or even 5, and there's a risk of identifying people by reporting small numbers. That's not done. That covers areas like domestic and family violence, suicide rates, et cetera.

Sorry, that's right, more work to do, my apologies I was misreading that dot point. There are three targets where we're not making progress and there's a lot more work to do, including:

- Target 9 appropriately sized housing;
- Target 10 adult incarceration;
- Target 12 over-representation in out-of-home care

We had some discussions earlier today about our youth justice and out-of-home care reforms and the recommendations from the commission of inquiry. There are dedicated resources built into those addressing Aboriginal over-representation in both systems and specific strategies and partnerships with Aboriginal organisations to address that specifically. Rather than inside the overall reform effort, there are dedicated Aboriginal strategies being developed right now as well.

Mr HARRISS - Do we have enough funding, budget-wise, for the targets that we're not meeting?

Mr JAENSCH - There will be more work done as part of the implementation plan and our responses in future budgets. What I can indicate is that where these Closing the Gap targets - particularly around youth justice, out-of-home care, et cetera - align strongly with priorities from the commission of inquiry, our Youth Justice Blueprint, and our out-of-home care reforms, we've been very conscious of making sure that all of those strategies look at our Closing the Gap obligations, as well as the commission of inquiry recommendations. I think that they're areas where we have more than just the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio budget working for us; we have significant, probably unprecedented, investment happening through DPAC, DECYP, and other areas of our Budget as well.

Maybe you want to comment on the national policy partnerships as well.

Ms GRAY - We have significant governance and collaborative work underway across agencies and also with the Aboriginal community controlled sector. We have a joint monthly meeting with deputy secretary level people from each government agency and with the Coalition of Peaks partner. This is to talk about priorities, to talk about the next implementation plan, but it is also part of driving the national policy partnership.

Under closing the gap, there are five national policy partnerships. Justice, which was established in April 2021; early childhood care and development, and social and emotional wellbeing, both established in August 2022; and languages, and housing, which were both established in December 2022. There's significant work underway in all agencies to align effort and reform to address the closing the gap targets.

Mr HARRISS - Minister, last month there was a camp out on the front lawns about the Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty. Have you or the premier had any further meetings following on from that?

Mr JAENSCH - The premier met with the delegation who were on the lawns on that final day of their camp. I understand he's had a further meeting today with a group including members from that delegation. He is also meeting with the TRACA (Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Communities Alliance) organisation next week in Launceston with me. The premier and I also have an undertaking to meet with the Aboriginal Advisory Group for an update on their work soon.

Mr HARRISS - Thank you.

CHAIR - Just in case Dean has already talked about this. The training funds, which are actually under 7.9, the \$500,000, that's for Aboriginal heritage training, is that right?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

CHAIR - If I can just ask, is that for existing Aboriginal heritage officers or new?

Mr JAENSCH - New.

CHAIR - How many do we have, and how many are we looking to train?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd like to ask Steve to help us unpack this story. We have increasing demand and development in Tasmania for Aboriginal heritage assessment. We're encouraging everyone to undertake that as early as possible in the planning process for new developments, so that, unlike in the estimates process, we're considering Aboriginal heritage matters early. Planning for them and around them.

CHAIR - Like what's been done at the Brighton site - or Pontville, wherever it is.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, exactly. Doing it first and making it a feature of what we do on the site. To be able to turn those around quickly and have good quality we need people, and we don't have enough practitioners in the field. We need more and we need them to have up-to-date skills and experience. Steve, could you speak to the numbers of those and what the intentions are?

Mr GALL - First, ya pulingina. Hello and welcome. Yes, through the Minister. There are currently 11 Aboriginal heritage officers listed on our website. Most of them were trained in the early 90s. The average age of the active six on that list is in their 60s. Some in their late 60s. We have a diminishing-

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CHAIR - Age comes with great wisdom in those areas.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, they're just peaking is what he's saying.

CHAIR - They've got years left.

Mr GALL - Yes. It's just physically going out into the remote areas is a bit of a challenge. We do have a diminishing number actively working in this space. The demand for Aboriginal heritage services has increased significantly over the last few years and that's a good thing. That's because we've raised awareness in the state. People are very much aware of the requirement to meet the Aboriginal heritage requirements when they're developing or have projects, and that demand has already increased significantly. With pending legislation, we need to address this now to make sure we have enough Aboriginal people set up to successfully engage in this process and to help manage and be a part of the management of their heritage. With that - sorry I've lost my place

CHAIR - I was asking how many are current and how many new ones are being trained.

Mr GALL - We have 11 who are current, but only about six of those are operating. The others are not actively working in this space. We haven't scoped out the project to that sort of level of detail yet, based on the funding and the time that's now on us for providing this training. It depends on the model we use. We will scope that out through the machinery of government when we move into NRE 1 November. There's a couple of different models that we can apply here. If we want greater numbers, there's a lot of Aboriginal people already working as rangers in [inaudible] Trowunna Ranges, - There's a lot of opportunities to upskill those officers already engaged.

It is our intention to train as many people that are already in the system, as in out in the community, operating this space; to upskill them in the Aboriginal heritage component.

CHAIR - A couple of follow-ups if I might minister on that. Of the 11 current, you said it was about 6 actively working at the moment. Do they get updated training? Do they need that?

Mr GALL - There hasn't been any professional development training offered since the 1990s that I'm aware of and that has created an issue.

CHAIR - Hence my question.

Mr GALL - We will have discussions with the existing heritage officers and see if they want to participate or take some opportunities out of this. Absolutely. We're not leaving anyone behind. That's part of that scoping. This will be addressed and scoped out with the Aboriginal Heritage Council, we'll take their advice on how we manage that part of the process.

CHAIR - I'm not suggesting Aboriginal heritage has changed, I'm just saying it's always good to be updated with your skills and knowledge.

Mr GALL - Absolutely.

Mr JAENSCH - And even changes in the legislation that would require some continuing PD for people who are operating under that statutory framework.

CHAIR - One would think that would be an important part of respecting those people too. The new people that are trained up, they could be current employees of say Parks or somewhere like that. Will there also be a separate recruitment drive to encourage people who perhaps aren't working in the department. They may be working somewhere else perhaps, but not in the government sphere, to be trained?

Mr JAENSCH - This is one of those areas that that Steve's going to be navigating through, but we're not seeing these as being necessarily 'all or any' as government employees. They may be people who are consultants in their own right or who are working as part of an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation.

Mr GALL - There's an opportunity to get people from community involved in the process. We possibly won't get consultants out of people that are comfortable working in the state service.

CHAIR - No reflection on those people - joking.

Mr GALL - We do have trainees within Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania at the moment and they've done four-year training courses and a couple of those people will be coming up to their time, or they may go out as consultants or find other employment opportunities. The intent here is to build that sector up, so we will be going out to community organisations and going out as broadly as we can to get a level of uptake from people who would want to move into a new career path.

CHAIR - How long does the training take or are you still developing the training program?

Mr JAENSCH - The funding commitment was based on a notional two-year period for development of the skills. A lot of it depends on which model is chosen and what people arrive with already in terms of their skills space.

Mr GALL - There are a couple of models we can look at here, whether or not we go down the TAFE pathway or whether we look at specific courses provided by universities on mainland. There are some really good short courses in that are having Aboriginal people to place -

CHAIR - What about UTAS, they have an Aboriginal program, no?

Mr GALL - UTAS is lacking at the national level. It's usually La Trobe and universities that provide specific heritage training.

One of the models is that we can actually get them to short courses. We can get them out with consultant archaeologists and that, so they're actually getting field experience. They can also do placements within Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania so they understand the information that we require to make registrations, and the thought processes around the deliberations of the council, the minister and that in relation to permits and management of Aboriginal culture

heritage. They have that really good understanding of what the state needs to navigate through the heritage assessment permitting process.

We haven't finalised that. We'll be mapping this out early November. Two years would be sufficient. It depends on the model. That will sort of dictate as well how many people we will be able to train, whether or not we're bringing them in, paying salaries, whether we're paying the organisations that are housing them to help them facilitate accessing the training and things like that. There's a couple of different rules; we just don't have the final design at this point.

CHAIR - I am probably more in 7.9 with some of these questions again. Regarding the Aboriginal heritage assessments that are required, you talked, minister, well both of you, about the increase in demand for that. What's the average turnaround time for an Aboriginal assessment? I note that some are in quite remote locations. This could lead to why you're wanting to train more, obviously.

Mr GALL - It varies on the complexity of the development, the scale of that, and also the cultural values that may be encroached on. Many of the assessments we're seeing now are under the major projects legislation. They're multi-year assessments, just by the nature of the scale of those projects. For the average projects, the assessment itself is usually managed by the proponent. The proponent is provided with advice from the department on the need for an assessment to be undertaken. Then it's up to the developer, the proponent to engage consultants to undertake that work. It's a negotiation and it's between the consultants and the developer.

If you're looking at multiple assessments, it can take longer. If you're talking about wind farms, for instance, you may do initial assessments which will just inform the planning. Then they'll have to go back and do micro-sighting, all that sort of stuff. You have simple developments which could take three months from assessment to whether there's a requirement for a permit to be issued, to major projects which can take years.

CHAIR - I assume these are all done on a cost recovery basis?

Mr GALL - Cost recovery for the department, we're talking about?

CHAIR - Yes. The proponent, particularly the private proponent, would pay for this service?

Mr GALL - Yes.

CHAIR - On a full cost recovery basis?

Mr GALL - There is no cost recovery from the department. It's a free service that Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania provides.

Mr JAENSCH - But the developer would engage their own consultants, their own archaeological consultants to design their response. There's a difference between helping people to identify their responsibilities and then working on how to meet them.

CHAIR - What's the gender split of the current Aboriginal heritage officers?

Mr JAENSCH - Men and women.

Mr GALL - There's one female Aboriginal heritage officer.

CHAIR - Out of all of them, of the six that are currently active?

Mr GALL - No, they're all male.

CHAIR - In terms of gender equality, we use the work to ensure that there is a program to try to attract Aboriginal women to participate in this.

Mr JAENSCH - I would think that it would be ideal that we had diversity in our workforce of Aboriginal heritage offices across gender, but also geographically. I'm sure there is also room for specialisation within the field. There will be more or less complex cases. We are going to need to draw on different skill sets for that.

In an ideal world, there will be enough people able to cover all of the circumstances that would arise from large complex projects, very challenging material which might require more experience through to things that are procedural or repetitive, basic stuff as well. Within that, there should be opportunities for career progression for people as well, and to be mentored by more experienced operators.

Mr GALL - I think one of the important things to note here is that this is the first training package. I would hope that we can continue that. I think that's where we can start putting a little bit of finesse around what we are doing, and providing different levels of consultants. I see this on a regular basis, average people that just want to do the field work component, they don't want to be doing management plans, they don't want to be invested in the writing side of it, but they are brilliant in the field and they have a lot of cultural knowledge to share.

Having different levels allows for people to do that sort of level of work up to where you have Aboriginal heritage officers or Aboriginal heritage consultants drafting management plans, working for local government, things like that. There is a whole bunch of different products that they would be able to -

Mr JAENSCH - With a continuous training process like this, hopefully more people who are working in the industry as the consultants and advisers to developers, all of that leads to Aboriginal heritage being thought of earlier and incorporated into planning for development, rather than being discovered once you have got all your other permits and you have spent all your money and you are absolutely committed to the path of no return and then Aboriginal heritage becomes a reason why you have to stop.

That is not where we want Aboriginal heritage to be. It needs to be considered up front. Out of respect for the heritage itself, but also - we were talking before about our development of the new youth justice facility. We are aware, through our early stage planning, that there is Aboriginal heritage on that site. We see that as something that we might, with appropriate advice and with a lot of respect, incorporate it into the how we present that site to people who work and spend time there -

CHAIR - It makes sense to do that, minister, when we do have, sadly, a disproportionately high level of Aboriginal -

Mr JAENSCH - Aboriginal young people may be involved in that. This is something we need to take the advice of Aboriginal people on.

CHAIR - And how to do it.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. I would like us to be able to best practise with that. This is something we can honour as part of occupying that land, and have its story woven into the place-based aspects of what we are doing there. I think that would be my ambition. However, it is not my heritage to present. I need to be guided by those who are the owners of it to make sure that we get that right and that we follow their wishes. It's interesting stuff though.

CHAIR - How many staff are actually in the Aboriginal Heritage Office, or as part of the office?

Mr GALL - We normally have around about 24 FTE. We do have some vacancies at the moment.

CHAIR - How many vacancies?

MR GALL - Five at the moment, and also with maternity leave, so it does fluctuate.

CHAIR - What is the head count? I am sure some of them may not be on full-time.

Mr GALL - That's right. It's about 24.

CHAIR - That's 24 FTE?

Mr GALL - The head count is 24; the FTE -

Ms GRAY - It's 18.

CHAIR - Do you have a gender split on the head count?

Mr GALL - Working out of my head, the majority is probably female. It has been historically.

Mr JAENSCH - We're aiming for balance.

Mr GALL - It has historically been that way for a few years, and that hasn't been an issue for us in a way, I guess.

CHAIR - Going back to the 11 current heritage assessment officers, those who aren't actively working at the moment, have you directly tried to engage with them to say 'Come back, help us out', particularly with the demand? Some of them may be unwell or they may be on maternity leave, whatever.

Mr JAENSCH - Not the older man.

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CHAIR - No, probably not the older man, perhaps not. But they could be unwell. I don't know.

Mr GALL - Yes. That will be part of the process of scoping out the new project. We haven't done that to date. I'm very much aware of where most of the heritage jobs are at, as far as some are doing other studies and have moved on to different career paths and things like that, but we don't take them off the list. They need to let us know if they want to come off the list. There are other activities that they're pursuing and some live on Cape Barren Island and they only wanted to work within their own locality - things like that. There's a whole bunch of reasons why some aren't particularly active.

CHAIR - So they might not be called upon. There may not be something to look at that time on Cape Barren, for example, or Flinders.

Mr GALL - Yes, that's correct, and these are commercial operators so they have to work with archaeological firms and win the job; it is a competitive market.

Mr JAENSCH - There's a register that they're listed on, so when people need to engage the services of an officer -

Mr GALL - That's correct. We have archaeological firms that are working in Tasmania and we have a list of heritage officers; we provide all that to the proponents.

CHAIR - Is that visible on the website? Is it visible as to where they are geographically in the state?

Mr GALL - No, it isn't because people move. That would require us to be on the ball and track them. We haven't got into that space, but we do have up-to-date -

CHAIR - Are they spread around the state then, generally?

Mr GALL - Absolutely, yes.

CHAIR - They are.

Mr VINCENT - Minister, can I just ask about ongoing work and funding for the TWWHA?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, definitely. As you know, we are fortunate enough to have an immense area of Tasmania in our World Heritage Area, ironically because of its wilderness values, which would seem to indicate an absence of human influence over time. But in actual fact, we understand that the TWWHA has been very much shaped by human presence for more than 40,000 years, so we recognise and respect the importance of managing the TWWHA in a way that's respectful of both its natural and its cultural heritage values. In the most recent federal budget, there was ongoing funding for management of the trial of \$5.1 million per year out to 2027-28 and that figure is matched by the state government, as it has been for many years now. Of that funding, \$1.08 million is allocated annually to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania to deliver a suite of Aboriginal cultural heritage values projects, which are all about strengthening the understanding and improving the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the TWWHA.

The government, through AHT, engages with Aboriginal people across the state on these Aboriginal cultural heritage values project in the TWWHA and is currently delivering a suite of projects guided by the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan and the detailed plan for a comprehensive cultural assessment of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The following projects are currently being delivered: first, identifying at-risk cultural heritage sites and landscapes within the TWWHA and determining best ongoing management actions for them; the Assistant Aboriginal Heritage Advisors Program, which provides employment for Aboriginal people in Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and training in cultural heritage management; Aboriginal community access visits, which supports Aboriginal people to visit sites within the TWWHA; and the Highlands to the Lakes and Southern Lacuna projects, which aim to improve our understanding of the management and use and occupation of these particular areas in the TWWHA by Aboriginal people and ongoing conservation of those areas. These are in addition to projects that are ongoing or completed already, including ongoing work to improve our understanding of rock markings in the TWWHA and natural and human risks to those sites.

Further, the Healthy Country Plan developed for the Recherche Bay with Aboriginal people from the SETAC and Karadi Aboriginal organisations; implementing best-practice Aboriginal cultural values management processes and procedures into Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and Parks and Wildlife Service Aboriginal cultural heritage management; Aboriginal cultural and heritage awareness training for state government staff, and online cultural heritage awareness training developed and available to the public via the AHT website; the development of a guide for interpretation and presentation of Aboriginal cultural values; facilitating opportunities for Aboriginal people to attend national indigenous fire workshops as well because so much of the landscape there has been shaped by 40,000 years of use of fire and when we seek to preserve and manage that landscape and don't use fire in a purposeful way, we are changing it, so the question is, what is it that we're preserving?

CHAIR - And maybe risking it.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Mr VINCENT - Risking everything in it too.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, exactly.

Stabilisation of a hut depression site on the south-west coast of Tasmania is another project there.

There are more projects scheduled and planned to deliver within the new funding period, and this is clearly a very important area of work of Steve's team, for Parks, for Aboriginal people, for all Tasmanians who value the values of the TWWHA.

Mr VINCENT - Although it's called a wilderness, as you touched on, there's a fair bit of human -

Mr JAENSCH - Absolutely.

Mr VINCENT - intervention or contact or appreciation.

Mr JAENSCH - It's one of the World Heritage values of the place.

CHAIR - It's Aboriginal heritage.

Mr JAENSCH - It's one of the seven -

Mr VINCENT - Amazing how many programs are there.

Mr JAENSCH - It's incredible.

CHAIR - That's what makes it one of the most highly scoring, if you like, areas because it has an Aboriginal heritage, along with all the other heritage values.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, that's right. There's this wilderness thing which doesn't sit quite with that.

Mr VINCENT - That's our perception.

Mr JAENSCH - It is, yes, but that's okay for that to change. We learn as we go.

Mr VINCENT - As long as it's balanced.

CHAIR - I imagine when the Aboriginal people were utilising that area 40,000 years ago - they still are, but all those years ago, it was probably quite rugged then too. I don't know, I wasn't here obviously.

Mr JAENSCH - Probably more rugged than now.

CHAIR - Possibly. I know the full assessment hasn't been done, but is it expected that most of the heritage will be around the coastal areas or is it right through? Is that the expectation?

Mr GALL - There is a large amount of heritage on the coastal margins, but certainly on the hinterlands and the cave-dwelling sites and things like that. It's all the way through.

The challenge for us is that it is remote and visibility to identify materials is difficult, and it will never be done in my lifetime because it's just such a large property with so many values to be explored and understood. There are different types of sites internal to the property as well.

CHAIR - Can you use drones or something like that to actually make an initial assessment?

Mr GALL - We do. We use LiDAR, we use a whole bunch of technologies. We actually use non-invasive techniques to understand the ochre on sites and things like that. There is a whole use of technology. We have been using drones. In fact, that's part of our at-risk project, through which we're mapping erosion over time. We've set up monitoring programs for changes over long periods of time. Hopefully we'll be able to understand what's happening there and be able to provide some management advice to the Parks service to better look after those values.

We also use Lidar. We find the use of drones - that's a really good point - saves us man hours. We look for different features and then do target surveys after that, so it's a good point.

CHAIR - The \$300,000 to establish the Aboriginal Heritage Register - I assume that'll be housed in your department, minister, or where will that be housed? I assume it's an electronic register, not a physical register.

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Gall has alluded to some changes in the next couple of months in terms of where different functions sit within government. One of those is for - I was going to say repatriation, but it's probably not the right word - the AHT function to be hosted back in NRE Tasmania. They would still be reporting to me as minister, but working alongside other parts of government that are delivering policy and services in the area of land, land management, information management systems and those sorts of things. Meanwhile DPAC will retain the policy development areas and the cross-government components of the broader Aboriginal affairs portfolio. That's underway as we speak.

CHAIR - I hope it's clear in the budget papers who scrutinises what, minister. It has been a bit of trouble with the Coordinator-General's Office.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, noted. We'll definitely take account of how we report on Aboriginal affairs matters at one table.

CHAIR - Because part sits in DPAC and part sits in NRE.

Mr JAENSCH - We did okay this morning with Youth Justice and a couple of other areas where we have some big responsibilities; we just need to be able to navigate everybody so that we don't lose things. I'd ask Mr Gall if he could speak to the register - what's proposed there and how that'll work, and what it will also link better with in the planning and approvals processes as well.

Mr GALL - The Aboriginal Heritage Register has been around since the 1980s. It's an old system that has been changed over time. We had the Tassie system, you probably recall, back in the day. The current register was developed just over 10 years ago. A bit of context about what the register is: it is an information system that stores over 13,500 Aboriginal heritage sites. It stores over 2000 archaeological reports and images. It is a mapping system so we can have a look at site distribution in the World Heritage Area or across Tasmania.

CHAIR - Does it link with the list?

Mr GALL - It does, but that's mainly for the emergency management system. We have a cropped layer of the list, and there's a live feed into that. The problem for the system at the moment is that it is at end of life. It is based on an old technology and is considered, certainly by NRE, as a critical risk. It has been housed in NRE. Even when we moved to DPAC, the system was maintained by NRE because of the fragile nature of that system.

We've been aware of it and we've been working towards a new system. With that in mind, we have identified a system to replace it and we're currently doing that. There was a system developed for the Victorian government over 10 years ago called ACHRIS, which is the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Records and Information System. That has been developed over the last 10 years and it's used by Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. I understand New

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South Wales is looking at it. Currently we are working with COBRA, which is the company that developed that system, and we're actually developing that for Tasmania now. We're hoping to have that system up and running by the second quarter of next year.

CHAIR - It doesn't seem like a lot of money to develop a system like that, minister.

Mr GALL - What, \$300,000?

CHAIR - That was only one year of funding. Funding in the out years?

Mr JAENSCH - There will be probably licensing fees that will be recurrent after that.

CHAIR - So this is just the initial scoping work.

Mr GALL - We already received \$200,000 back in 2022-23, so we've had money to progress this. The \$300,000 now gives us the money to - it's an off-the-shelf system so it doesn't have to be created from the ground up.

CHAIR - But it does attract licensing fees and things like that.

Mr GALL - Yes, and it meets around 80 per cent of what we need now. They're working with COBRA at the moment. The team are to sort out that other 20 per cent of functionality for Tasmania. There is a service-level agreement that's in place for the next few years, so there will be an annual fee.

Mr JAENSCH - One of the benefits of that is that it will enable some direct linking to other online planning and development processes. When we talk about planning schemes online - the PlanBuild platform and other things that people are going to work out, 'I want this to do this development in this area; what do I need to think about?', up pop a number of triggers there that say, 'You need to be looking at the possibility of Aboriginal heritage in your area. Here's how you go about it'. That's how the early flagging works as part of an automated system, when we're linked into it.

Mr GALL - The system that we have at the moment has some functionality, but it's not reliable. When it breaks down, we have some issues with those leakages. So for Dial Before You Dig and so forth, we have a property search function under the new system that will be even better. One of the other areas that is probably worth noting is that there will be accessibility for Aboriginal people to give information about their heritage. So there'll be visibility, and there'll be an ability for consultants to be able to enter data online rather than paper things. There will be a whole bunch of efficiencies for this. AHT will move more into the quality assurance space rather than doing all the paperwork behind it. Consultants will be able to do a lot of that work themselves.

CHAIR - Minister, does it cost much to shift it over into DPAC, particularly if we're going to shift it back?

Mr JAENSCH - I think the register work has stayed in NRE. The team has moved across with different email addresses and things like that, but -

CHAIR - It doesn't cost too much.

Mr JAENSCH - No, I don't think so.

CHAIR - It wasn't a significant cost for the parts that did shift across.

Mr GALL - No part shifted across. It was maintained within NRE.

Mr JAENSCH - It's just that the AHT team -

Mr GALL - We had a different way of accessing the information, that's all.

Mr JAENSCH - I don't think it affects anybody in the real world.

CHAIR - No, just different letterhead, and the cost I suppose for the new letterhead.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. There will be different entries in things like budget papers, like you were saying, so we'll need to make sure we're navigating. I didn't want that to come as a surprise to you for next time.

CHAIR - We're not surprised by anything. The Aboriginal Land Council funding - that was \$150,000 -

Mr JAENSCH - That's additional to their year-on-year based funding.

CHAIR - What's their base funding?

Mr JAENSCH - It's \$314,000.

CHAIR - Is this because of increasing costs in something? What was the need for the additional funding?

Mr JAENSCH - There's been additional funding provided on top of their base funding for the last few years, since about 2021. Each year there's been some additional dollars provided to support their administrative and regulatory roles as the land council. There has also been a specific request that they made to meet some financial and legislative obligations arising from some audit processes, and we've provided an extra grant to do that. Some of those activities continue, so we've provided this supplementary amount of \$150 million to cover those additional costs.

This is a little bit like some of the discussion we were having before about community organisations, although this is a separate statutory body, where base funding plus recurrent top-up needs to be, perhaps, rethought. When the *Aboriginal Lands Act* amendments come through, that'll change some other aspects of the operation of the Aboriginal Land Council in terms of governance, reporting and communication and other things. Our intention would be to do, when that occurs, a full review of the resourcing requirements for the Aboriginal Land Council so it can continue to do its work under the legislation, hopefully with a larger portfolio of property to manage and more active land return processes to oversee as well.

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What we're providing at the moment is a one-year continuation of the top-up funding on top of their base, with a view that, in the not-too-distant future, we'll review their overall resourcing requirements in line with the amendments to the act.

CHAIR - Some of the governance issues you mentioned - where they needing training support and things like that to understand their roles, or are new requirements placed on them?

Mr JAENSCH - More to the point, the identification of a requirement for a chief financial officer or equivalent services to be able to assist the organisation to track and report things -

CHAIR - Probably a lot of these community organisations -

Mr JAENSCH - Well, it's not a community organisation so much -

CHAIR - No, but it's a similar arrangement to what you were talking about.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, it is. It's subject to audit processes, and it needs to maintain a high level of accounting capability. That's what the bulk of the new money has been around.

CHAIR - How many people work within the council?

Mr JAENSCH - The Aboriginal Land Council?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - We don't track that directly as a government activity because they are an elected independent statutory body. I don't have detail of that here with me today.

CHAIR - Are you able to provide it? It's in their annual report, I would imagine.

Mr JAENSCH - I think it could be drawn from their annual reporting.

CHAIR - Do they provide a separate annual report, or does it appear as part of Premier and Cabinet's annual report?

Mr JAENSCH - No, it doesn't appear as part of Premier and Cabinet. It's a separate thing because they have their own legislation -

CHAIR - I don't recall seeing their annual report come through parliament. Is it tabled in parliament?

Mr JAENSCH - No, it's not. They present statements to the auditor.

CHAIR - Are they required to publish those on the ACNC or a body like that?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't know that detail.

CHAIR - I'm wondering about the visibility of it.

Mr JAENSCH - This is one of the matters that's been raised in the context of the *Aboriginal Lands Act* review and the proposed amendments, which will place some more requirements on the visibility and accountability of the Aboriginal Land Council to Aboriginal people, in particular, but through public processes as well. You'll be able to see some of that reflected in the draft amendments that have been published.

CHAIR - This is one of the things that sometimes Aboriginal people have raised with me - that there's no visibility; it's very hard to see.

Mr JAENSCH - Again, we want the Aboriginal Land Council to be clear and strong in its role, accountable to Aboriginal people and reflective of Tasmania's Aboriginal population in what it does. Should these amendments pass the parliament, what we'll do is seek to reset the resourcing -

CHAIR - Based on that.

Mr JAENSCH - so that they're able to deliver an updated governance and accountability model as well.

CHAIR - Minister, because you've answered our questions so well, I'll let you have an early minute. That means we get one too, which is very nice. Thank you for your time today, minister, and for the support from your team.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Chair. Before you close, I'd like to thank the members of our team who are at the table today for their support today and also their preparation of the materials and the work that that represents. Thanks to all of them, and to those who aren't at the table as well, and their support, and my office.

I also have some answers to questions taken earlier. I'll allow the team to - if they want to pack up, that will be alright. Let me just look at these one by one. A question was asked earlier in youth justice examination. The question was asked, how many young people detained provided by sentence stand on remand? How many are detained more than once and how many times and the length of time on remand?

Ms LOVELL - If that's in a format that could be tabled, that might make it easier for you, minister. Or you can read it. Whatever's easiest.

Mr JAENSCH - What I would like to do for those numbers, detained, remand, et cetera, is to provide that to the committee in a written form rather than tabling what I've got in my hand, which wasn't prepared for that purpose. If you're happy to do that?

CHAIR - We'll write to you with that.

Mr JAENSCH - Second is a question, why has the Youth Justice Community conferences held within six weeks, blah blah blah, number dropped in 2023-24 to 61.6, and what are we doing to improve it?

My response is, Community Youth Justice aims to hold a community conference within six weeks of the file being received from Tasmania Police. The total number of community conferences has increased from 91 in 2022-23 to 146 in 2023-24 across the state.

The complexity of conferences has also increased. Police referrals are increasingly related to groups of co-offenders who may have committed multiple offences. This substantially increases the preparation time, as all young people and their families need to be interviewed. The time to contact all parties can be lengthy, including the young person and all victims, particularly if the young person is not residing at home or their location is unknown.

A letter introducing the facilitator and providing their phone number is now sent to young people and their guardians. The process is showing some improvement in communication and contact. Tasmania Police are required to attend conferences and Community Youth Justice is required to factor this into planning and scheduling times.

There has been an increase in referrals for conferences. Currently there are 19 pending cases which are allocated across three facilitators. Facilitators communicate when there is a need for an extension to be provided. Recently, a procurement process has been completed to increase the number of facilitators available for community conferences, family group conferences and compulsory education conciliation. We are increasing the capacity of the system to deal with a larger number of more complex community conferences.

Third, an answer to a question regarding children who are awaiting allocation and are not in teams 7 and 10. Children who have come through the advice and referral line are allocated in child safety response teams and will move into case management for the first time. Those temporarily allocated to practice leaders from general case management teams while their worker is on leave or awaiting appointment of a new worker, and where the primary child safety officer has flagged the child as requiring reallocation. This addresses the discrepancy in numbers of young people allocated to teams 7 and 10 versus numbers of young people in the southern region.

Ms LOVELL - Can I clarify to make sure I've understood that properly? There were 128 children who we didn't know where they were allocated. You've just said that they are either waiting for allocation on referral from advice and referral line, they've been allocated to a practice leader, or they've been identified as needing re-allocation from a child safety officer to another one?

Mr JAENSCH - There are three circumstances that were in that response.

CHAIR - We'll write to you with the one or more outstanding ones that we have.

Mr JAENSCH - That one's better than me trying to draw you a table.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, I'm very happy to do that. Then you have time to look at it properly and make sure it's all there.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, minister. I appreciate your time.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you all very much and thank you for your questions and your interest.

The committee adjourned at 5.19 p.m.