**Thursday 28 June 2018 - Estimates Committee B (Courtney)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Thursday 28 June 2018

MEMBERS

Mr Armstrong

Ms Armitage

Mr Dean

Mr Farrell

Ms Howlett

Ms Rattray (Chair)

Ms Siejka

IN ATTENDANCE

**Hon Sarah Courtney MP**, Minister for Primary Industries

**Ministerial Office**

**Mr Ashley Bastock**, Chief of Staff

**Ms Laura Richardson**, Senior Adviser

**Ms Lucy Gregg**, Senior Adviser

**Ms Megan O'Brien**, Adviser

**Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment**

**Dr John Whittington**, Secretary, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

**Ms Deidre Wilson**, Acting Deputy Secretary

**Mr Adrian Pearce**, Manager, Finance

**Ms Carole Rodger**, Director, AgriGrowth Tasmania

**Mr Stuart Fletcher**, General Manager, Land Tasmania

**Mr Tim Grant**, Valuer‑General, Land Tasmania, Office of the Valuer General

**Dr Lloyd Klumpp**, General Manager, Biosecurity Tasmania

**Ms Fionna Bourne**, General Manager, Water and Marine Resources

**Mr John King**, Director of Racing, General Manager Office of Racing Integrity

**Inland Fisheries Service**

**Mr John Diggle**, Director, Inland Fisheries Service

**CHAIR** (Ms Rattray) - On behalf of the committee I welcome you and congratulate you on your new portfolios. We look forward to the scrutiny we will undertake this morning. I will give the minister an opportunity to provide a brief overview.

**DIVISION 9**

(Department of Primary Industries and Water)

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Chair. Good morning to you and the members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to provide more detail about the portfolios of which I am very proud - Primary Industries and Water, and Racing. Although I am new to the portfolios, I have spent much time over recent months meeting farmers, fishers and industry groups representing our primary industries sector, which gives me further understanding of the value of our rural sector and communities.

I understand the dedication, perseverance, hard work and capital that our farmers, fishers and rural communities invest. With this in mind as the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, I firmly believe that the future of Tasmanian agriculture is bright.

It is our belief in the agricultural sector that has created our Government's vision to grow Tasmanian agriculture to a farm gate value of $10 billion by 2050. That comes from a belief in the quality of our produce, the potential of what we can produce and recognition of the value of our rural communities and primary producers.

We recognise they cannot achieve this alone, which is why our Government is continuing to invest in and work with farmers and agribusiness to help our primary sectors achieve their full potential - a potential that will grow our state's economy and create jobs in rural and regional communities. We are targeting our investment to assist our farmers today, but also look to opportunities and challenges of tomorrow.

That is why, in this state budget, we have invested in biosecurity, water infrastructure, supported our farmers in the dairy, fruit and vegetable sectors, as well as our winemakers, organic industries, beekeepers and woolgrowers. We also recognise the importance, however, of strong farming families and have invested in support programs and their future through continued investment in the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture.

Among our many initiatives included in the 2018-19 state Budget are -

* $2 million for truck and machinery washdown stations, partnering with farmers, agribusiness and local government to build a network of washdown stations to improve biosecurity and farm hygiene by disposing of waste, reduce the potential spread of disease and weeds and improve road safety
* $510 000 to expand Biosecurity Tasmania, collaborate with industry groups and farmers to plan for and manage post-border biosecurity risks, and support on-farm biosecurity hygiene strategies
* $480 000 to boost biosecurity on King and Flinders islands to support landholders tackle weeks, pests and other issues affecting agricultural production and other local biosecurity priorities
* $900 000 for a dairy farm extension 'grow more, milk more and make more' initiative to work with dairy farmers focusing on productivity, farm business and value-adding strategies to continue to grow production, improve farm profitability and meet processing and market demand
* $550 000 for a horticultural market and trade development initiative to work with fruit and vegetable growers and agribusiness to exploit new collaborative market and export opportunities, and drive increased trade, product value and farm productivity
* $150 000 over three years to support the Hemp Association of Tasmania with grower communications, product development, marketing and branding to support exponential growth in the hemp industry
* $230 000 to work with organic accrediting bodies and assist farmers, producers and agri-food businesses in transitioning to organic production methods with certification and market development
* $1 million to increase trade, marketing, value and sales of Tasmanian red meat to complement practical strategies to increase local livestock production and throughput
* a wine market development and tourism initiative of $600 000 to drive the value and reputation of Tasmanian wine and also help with vineyard productivity research and winery small business skills support
* an additional $595 000 for rural financial counselling services and farm mentoring delivered by Rural Business Tasmania, as well as increased funding for rural youth and Tasmanian Women in Agriculture.

This Budget also provides increased funding to the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture to support a new agricultural innovation fund for specific industry-aligned priority research programs to modernise Crown and TIA research farm assets.

We are also delivering on our commitments across our world-class wild-catch and farmed seafood sector. We are investing in today's fisheries and also looking to the future with programs that support long-term and sustainable fisheries management, which is essential to growing the economies and jobs in regional areas.

This includes -

* $150 000 to assist Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council to improve the safety of commercial fisheries and the marine farming sector
* $300 000 to extend the East Coast Rock Lobster Translocation Program, which is rebuilding rock lobster biomass to benefit both commercial and recreational fisheries
* a further $5 million to fund the ongoing development of the Fisheries Integrated Licensing And Management System, including digital licensing, real‑time transfer of fisheries data and streamlining of licence and quota management programs
* establishing a $5.1 million five-year abalone industry reinvestment fund by diverting a portion of existing royalties to support industry-led projects, to tackle long-spined sea urchins and increase abalone stock rates
* ongoing funding of $200 000 per annum for the Abalone Industry Development Fund for projects to develop new markets, economic analysis and maintain the sustainability of the abalone fishery
* $400 000 for ShellMAP industry development to work with Oysters Tasmania to improve the capacity of the oyster industry to manage market access and food safety
* $400 000 to enhance the real-time monitoring sensor network for the oyster industry

The Budget also provides further funding to IMAS.

Chair, I am looking forward to assisting the committee today and discussing more of the vibrant portfolio for which I am minister.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I hope you have left us enough questions. You have given us a lot of information.

**Mr DEAN** - I take it there is a spot in there somewhere where we can talk about the movement of the DPIPWE staff to the north of the state?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We can do that straightaway if you like.

**Mr DEAN** - Does somebody else have that in their lines?

**CHAIR** - No, you could ask that now.

**Mr DEAN** - They identified a movement of about 200 personel within this department to the north of the state. Are we looking at both Launceston and the north-west coast, or the north-west coast for a start? Have you identified premises at this stage? What will happen to the premises down here that these people are moved from? Can we be given a full appraisal of the situation and the time you want this to be completed by? Will there be any forced transfers? I would like you to cover the whole spectrum if you can.

**Ms COURTNEY** - First of all, the premise of this question relates to the fact that we understand that farmers live in regional areas. We think it is important for DPIPWE to be responsive and accessible to that sector of the community. That was the premise of my predecessor's decision. I want to be clear that there will not be any forced relocations on this policy. That is a very clear directive for the department.

**Mr DEAN** - If you can't meet your target, what does that mean?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have no reason to believe we will not achieve our expectation and meet our target. We have 100 DPIPWE positions moving over the four-year time horizon. It is going to be a staged progression. There are going to be no forced relocations and the positions will occur through staff turnover and an incentive program to support employees from the south who express interest in locating to the north and north-west. Total cost is $2.4 million over four years. That also includes necessary upgrades. It is going to be at the laboratories at Mt Pleasant and Stony Rise.

In terms of the breakdown, it will be 60 to 70 at Mt Pleasant and remainder at Stony Rise. However, that will be dependent on staff and work groups that move there. I am happy to let Dr Whittington talk some of the detail but I will answer any other questions you have for me and then I can defer to John.

**Mr DEAN** - Will there be sufficient accommodation in those places to move many personnel there? When will we see the first people in this department move to these places?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The process has started. The department has started this process. I will let Dr Whittington talk about the process and then I can talk a bit more about the infrastructure upgrades.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** The process has commenced. We have around 1500 employed within the agency. We are talking about a significant move of people north. It will have a significant impact on the economies of the north and north-west. The program is operating in two ways. One is infrastructure. We have already done an audit of our existing footprint at Stony Rise, at Prospect and Mt Pleasant, and there is money in the budget for some infrastructure upgrades. We are comfortable with our existing footprint, with some reconfiguration because some of those buildings are quite dated. We are confident of providing a contemporary accommodation footprint for people's comfort.

There has been some consultation with staff and unions around the process. As positions become vacant, the expectation is they will be advertised and filled in the north or north-west, unless there is a sound business case for them to be located in Hobart. A sound business case would be, for example, a horticulturalist in the gardens would be nonsensical to be living in Devonport, but any job that can be done from the north or north-west will be advertised there. That is the first point. All jobs will be advertised in the north unless there is a sound business case for the south.

The second part of the policy is providing, with money in the budget, incentives to encourage staff who are currently employed in the south to move north. If somebody is doing a job in the south that could be done from the north, we will facilitate the move. We are working through now consultation with staff about how that looks. The first part has already started and the second part will be rolling out shortly. We have done the planning for the infrastructure and will commence soon.

**CHAIR** - What do you consider is an incentive? Paying for the relocation costs or an increase in salary? What sort of incentive?

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** It is not an ex gratia payment or anything like that. It is simply a fair covering of all costs associated with moving. Under the current employment arrangements, there is discretionary ability of the agency to cover costs associated with moving. It could be things like school uniforms for children, rental assistance or stamp duty. All the costs associated with picking your family up and putting them somewhere else. Those are already available, but are discretionary. What I am doing is making it quite clear that this is the package we will be putting on the table. If somebody says, 'I would really like to live in Launceston or Devonport and my job can be done from the north', we will cover those fixed costs on reimbursement with receipts.

**Mr DEAN** - What is the availability of houses for these personnel if you are moving 60 to 70 into Mount Pleasant and about 130 to Devonport?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, it is 100 all up. The commitment is 100 positions to the north.

**Mr DEAN** - I thought it was 200, so I had that wrong.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, it is 100.

**Mr DEAN** - It is 100. Have you looked at the availability of houses?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There are a number of developments in the north of the state. Legana has development with a new school. Both Legana and Hadspen have new structure plans for planning future growth.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - There is a new subdivision near Evandale.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes. It is exciting - there is quite a number of opportunities in northern Tasmania for new housing. Legana will have a new school, which is an exciting opportunity for young families moving to northern Tasmania. It is also important to recognise this will be over four years, so it is not going to be an influx of a whole lot of families at one time. The department and I will work through staff wanting to move there. Not everyone is moving, so some will be existing people in northern Tasmania. It is difficult to ascertain because, as Dr Whittington said, some of it will be incenting southern Tasmanians to move, but others will be job vacancies. These are roles now available in the north, so perhaps people who already live there who have underemployed skills within the department will move into this role, but not move locations. There will be a mix of the two.

**Mr DEAN** - There will be 100 positions currently in Hobart moving to Launceston and Devonport?

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** These are 100 positions currently not in the north or the north-west created in the north and north-west. I do not know which ones they will be. The majority of those will be positions currently in the south and as they become vacant - hypothetically a payroll clerk, currently the office is all in the south - there is no reason why that function cannot be delivered in the north and north-west.

**Mr DEAN** - Well that was the question. What section will you target to go north? Is there a special group?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I have made the decision not to target any individual job. What I have said is that any job being done in the agency, unless it cannot be done on the north and north-west, should be recruited into the north and north-west. I am absolutely determined to make this work and my modelling based on turnover says it will work if I adopt the policy.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions in regard to the overview? Seeing we have strayed into overview first up this morning. Mr Dean, then 1.1, Land Titles, Survey and Mapping Services.

**Output group 1**

**Lands Tasmania**

**1.1 Land Title, Survey and Mapping Services -**

**Mr DEAN** - Could I have more detail around the datasets? If you look at page 255, there is reference to this. It increased from 1201 in 2015-16 to 1620 in 2016-17 and back to a target of 1600 for 2017-18. What is happening in that area?

**Ms COURTNEY** - we are talking about the Number of Land Related Data Sets?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, the datasets. There is reference to that on page 255.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of that dataset, Land Tasmania expects to meet all performance targets related to Land Information System Tasmania for 2017-18. There are 1916 land-related datasets available via LIST at 31 May 2018, exceeding the target of 1600. There are now 86 land‑related datasets available under open data provisions at 31 May 2018, which exceeds the target of 75. There have been 789 million LIST web search requests as at 31 May, which exceeds the target of 650 million. There have been 1.93 million total LIST website sessions as at 31 May 2018, which is on track to meet the target of 1.95 million website sessions.

The LIST continues to expand its reach and growth, delivering more datasets. A key feature of LIST is the ability for other businesses to consume the data into their operations through the use of web services that can automate responses. Key components of LIST include LISTmap, LISTdata and the common operating platform, which is the Emergency Services version of LIST, used by Emergency Service agencies.

With regards to your question, was it a concern about the target?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, I am wondering about the drop-off in the target - the actual in 2016-17 was 1620, and in 2017-18, it is back to 1600. We then have a significant increase in 2018-19.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will let Dr Whittington answer.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** It is essentially that for LIST, the metadata we have online is growing more quickly than we had anticipated. This is a reflection of when targets are set and when they are reported. When we set the 2017-18 targets, we didn't have the end‑of‑year data for 2016-17. What we thought was an optimistic target turned out to be overachieved; the actual figures ended up being better than the future year's target. Therefore, we have readjusted the targets for 2018-19 to be more reflective of that than our ambitious target. This is one of the quirks of being successful.

**Mr DEAN** - I am also looking at the number of hits to it, the level of government, industry and public use. Do we have a breakdown of public use? Is the public use growing?

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** I ask Stuart Fletcher, General Manager, Land Tasmania to come to the table.

**Mr DEAN** - Is it an available asset to people, and how are we getting that message out to the public?

**Mr FLETCHER -** The public usage of LIST is certainly increasing as well as use within government. We are seeing a significant number of public users - for instance, we were promoting LISTmap at the recent Agfest and had significant interest from the farming community. They are using it for farm plan mapping and those types of things. They are also using it for land capability mapping. There are a lot of broader uses outside the traditional mapping and spatial imaging where the community is using the LISTmap. There is certainly from a real estate perspective - many real estate agents are using it. We are seeing its use in asset management for asset planning and things like that. There is quite a broad use across the Tasmanian community. That figure you quoted for web services usage is representative of the increase in usage over the years.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I might expand on the breadth of the usage - and we will probably talk about biosecurity a bit later - in the fruit fly response, for example, when I visited the control centres, LISTmap was being used as the base for tracking all the properties. The way that it integrates into an emergency response such as that is fascinating, and the power of it to be able to have men and women on the ground in George Town, Devonport and on Flinders Island, reporting data back into a dataset. Being able to, in a data centre, track all these things with tracking notes in real time was quite powerful. It was really impressive.

**Mr DEAN** - Looking at the number of hits, it has virtually doubled from 2015-16 to 2016-17. It is increasing incredibly quickly. To use John Whittington's situation there, you didn't expect the actual figure to be 745 million and that is why your target in 2017-18 was only 650 million, hence you have 840 million for the following year. It is growing quickly, and I think we are saying it is growing very quickly in farming and real estate. Is there a cost generation to the department?

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** One of things the Government is very committed to is open is data and making publicly available information available so that the public can benefit from that whether the public is a private business or an individual. Open data is very much a part of the way we do business, but I might pass to Stuart Fletcher.

**Mr FLETCHER** - We certainly don't charge for access to LISTmap, for instance. The Tasmanian community doesn't pay to access the information through there. There are restricted datasets available through LISTmap that are used by government agencies. Some examples of that would be fire modelling and the types of things specifically related to particular businesses. But there is a significant number of publicly related datasets available as well and more are being released.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** We do have monetisation in some areas.

**Mr FLETCHER** - There are. That is the LISTmap side of it. In terms of access to land titles information and property reports, the community pays for those. There is a statutory fee involved in Land Titles dealings, and then there are costs involved in property sales and property reports.

**Mr DEAN** - Is there an idea of the income generated in that area, minister?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Absolutely. It is outlined -

**Mr DEAN** - It is in there, is it?

**CHAIR** - It is good for the minister to know where it is, anyway.

**Mr DEAN** - It is. The secretary needs to know where to get it anyway. This is not a test, John.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** In table 10.13 is our revenue and it is lumped up though. We get revenue from all sorts of places, but you can see it in there in sale of goods and services, which includes moneys that go to the Land Titles Office.

**Ms COURTNEY** - On page 274; it doesn't break it down. Under the revenue, you can see the sales of goods and services and it has a superscript 1, the footnote. There are some other things in that but the bulk of that is the sale of the goods and services.

**CHAIR** - It is about a $2.5 million increase.

**Mr DEAN** - Is it able to keep with it the amount of work that indicates is coming into this area? Is there any backlog or is it moving fairly quickly?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will ask Stuart Fletcher to answer it more fully, but I understand the automation of it doesn't mean there are any roadblocks or bottlenecks in it.

**Mr FLETCHER** - With systems like, say, Tasmanian online dealings we are seeing increasing use of lodgement of documents through those types of systems, which basically reduces the actual physical workload of staff. The more we automate our systems, the less work - and also the more dealings we can lodge. I think in the last 12 months there was a 3.2 per cent increase in lodgements with the Land Titles Office.

**Mr DEAN** - What are the staffing numbers in this area, minister?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will get Dr Whittington to outline the staffing.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Staffing as at March 2018 in the Land Titles Survey and Mapping Services output is 82.4 FTE and evaluation services is 29.1 FTE, giving a total FTE for output group 1 of 111.5 FTE at March 2018.

**CHAIR** - My question is on the expertise within the department. I was on the end of some of that expertise last year through the redistribution of the Legislative Council boundaries. An enormous amount of work was undertaken by the department in doing some proposals for members of parliament. Was any work undertaken for the federal system? We had a number of maps drawn up for the Legislative Council boundaries. At the same time there was the issue for the federal parliament looking at their boundaries: was any of that work undertaken in the department?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will ask Dr Whittington to answer because it the operational side of things.

**CHAIR** - If you were not living through it, minister, you probably did not realise it was going on.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I was aware of it. We had some unproposed boundary changes in Bass and there was a moment there where we almost lost Flinders. We lost Hadspen and Prospect Vale, and it is sad when you lose a bit.

**CHAIR** - I lost Lilydale. I lost half my electorate, but we will not talk about it because I might cry.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yours was slightly more dramatic than Bass.

**Mr FLETCHER** - We certainly worked on the Legislative Council boundary redistribution. I am confirming whether we had worked on the federal electoral boundary distributions.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We can seek advice and get back to you.

**CHAIR** - I ask my members to stick to questions but I want to place on the public record my appreciation for the work which was undertaken in a really timely manner. We had to provide submissions to the Redistribution Panel; we didn't have a lot of time and we were scuffling to get documents and proposals into the commission. It was very much appreciated.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you - that means a lot and we will pass it on.

**Mr DEAN** - Did it have any impact?

**CHAIR** - It had absolutely no impact whatsoever, hence we have a new member for Prosser and member for McIntyre.

**Mr DEAN** - Sorry about that. I did not mean to upset you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR** - But it was very much appreciated.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We can provide for members some further training on this map if you are new to it and want to have a better understanding of its capability. It is quite useful for members of parliament, so if you would like that, please do not hesitate to ask.

**CHAIR** - Our staff have had training but I need to order a new map of McIntyre.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The staff are very helpful. I have phoned the LIST people on many occasions and they have talked me through how to get to a certain area and it was very good.

**CHAIR** - It sounds like there is positive feedback in this area.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Our friend in mapping, Mr Andrew Gibson, who puts our maps together for us has been extremely helpful over many years, changing the maps for us and putting them together so we can see which side of the streets and which streets we have.

**CHAIR** - As local member, one of the important aspects is getting a detailed enough map to know where your boundaries are. It is no good doorknocking on the wrong side of the street.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Nothing has been too much trouble -

**CHAIR** - We appreciate it receives significant funding. There is an enormous amount of staff, but they also generate quite a lot of revenue, so well done.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Minister, Land Tasmania is undertaking the important task of digitising historical land records. Can you provide the committee with an update of progress?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Land Tasmania is the custodian of a significant volume of historic land records held in the Lands building. It is important these records are preserved, digitised and delivered in accordance with modern practices.

Land Tasmania has achieved significant progress in digitising these historical records with the first digital record set, the Registry of Deeds index book, made available online by LIST in March 2018.

Digitised records are being transferred from the Lands building to alternative storage facilities, with preference being the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, especially for records of high historical value, to ensure their permanent preservation.

Local Tasmanian businesses have won all digitisation tenders to date, representing considerable investment in the local economy. The digitisation commenced in December 2017 with all records to be available via LIST by August 2018. Land Tasmania is ensuring the accuracy of digitised records to provide the equivalent for better quality of information and paper records, so it is an important work, particularly in Tasmania. It makes it much easier for people not based in Hobart to access the information.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Is there a cost to access?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It will depend on the record. I will defer to Stuart to answer.

**Mr FLETCHER** - It will depend on the record. There will be a statutory fee for deeds that basically support read of title, and those deeds are historic records will be publicly available through LIST.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If there are no further questions, I will move to Valuation services.

**1.2 Valuation Services -**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The redevelopment to the valuation information system was to be released in 2018. Was it released? If so, I assume it is underway. Could you confirm it is on track? A Tasmanian IT company, Geometry Pty Ltd, developed the new system.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The VISTAS Redevelopment Project will replace the current ageing system with a contemporary valuation managed property valuation management system. The new system will provide an authoritative property and valuation register that underpins and supports government and all stakeholders' revenue generation and property management activities.

As you mentioned, the new system is being developed by a Tasmanian IT company, Geometry Pty Ltd, with close involvement of staff within the department. The redevelopment is a priority project for the department and funding for its development is being met from existing agency funds.

The new system is currently undergoing stringent testing to ensure its readiness for operation, which is planned for October 2018.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is behind, and planned to be released already?

**Mr FLETCHER** - We have moved the release date by two months.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I noticed the Tasmanian Government was successful in negotiations to secure Australian Government funding for the valuation and information system of the Tasmanian redevelopment initiative of $200 000 in 2018-19. Does that mean it is not being met within our own, or is that for something else?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Can I clarify that question?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Didn't we get $200 000 in 2018-19 in Australian Government funding?

**CHAIR** - From expert advice.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Within the Legislative Council.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am happy to follow that up and clarify that for you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - If you could - we have all received it.

**CHAIR** - Did we get anything from the Australian Government?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I will not answer it like that -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It states that is what it was for.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Stuart mentioned some services we provide and we retain that money and reinvest it back in our systems. The project budget for the Valuation and Information System of Tasmania redevelopment of $1.5 million has come from internal funds. I have to follow up this $200 000 because I am not entirely sure what it is.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It states here that it was for the Valuation and Information System.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Do you know where that reference came from?

**CHAIR** - We can let you know.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We all received it from within our own Legislative Council area.

**CHAIR** - We have some work done on the budget as a collective.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Interesting, maybe there is money there you don't know you have.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That would be a delight.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It would be nice, particularly $200 000. We will follow that up and let you know.

I notice in the Budget and forward Estimates, there are some slight increases of $200 000 each year. Do they reflect an increase in valuation services or maybe a rise in the cost of the valuations?

**Ms COURTNEY** - My understanding is that increase is simply the indexation on the salaries of the people working within that department or that sector.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am a bit nervous about asking any of my questions now.

**CHAIR** - Any question is a good question.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am thinking whether some of the information we have received is accurate.

**CHAIR** - It would be in the budget somewhere.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - In the latest land value adjustment factors from 1 March 2018, the primary production class for Meander Valley and Northern Midlands has an adjustment factor of 1.35, which is the highest adjustment factor of any class over the last five years. Is there any reason that is higher this year, and how was the factor determined?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will bring the Valuer‑General to the table to discuss that a bit further.

**Mr GRANT** - The factors are determined based on sales that have occurred in those areas and having regard to the level of value we had on those properties prior. It will depend on the date the previous valuation was undertaken. Meander Valley and Northern Midlands are currently under fresh valuation. It is a six-year change in values. It reflects the great increase in value of the infrastructure for water on those properties and having regard to the general level of values in those areas. That is basically it. It is based on the sales that have occurred in those areas to establish those facts.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Have the Valuation Services contractors been decided for 2018-19? Often I notice we have valuers from the mainland as opposed to from Tasmania. Where are they from? Are they a Tasmanian company or from the mainland?

**Ms COURTNEY** - One-third of valuations occur every two years, over a six-year process. For the upcoming ones, there is a tendering process. The act provides for a competitive tendering process for the services. The tender committee, which I appoint under section 9 of the act is responsible for assessing tenders and making recommendations to the minister. The tender committee awarded contracts to LG Valuation for Break O'Day, Brighton, Clarence, George Town, Meander Valley and Northern Midlands; ValueIt for Burnie, Central Coast and Circular Head; and Opteon Property Group for West Tamar.

All the contractors are Victoria-based companies that employ a mix of Tasmanian and Victorian staff to complete the valuations. The next tender is due to be released in late 2019. As part of that, a review of the tender process in consultation with LGAT is planned prior to the release of the next round of tenders. That tender process is going to be reviewed. As to whether it is local versus mainland, I expect that is something that will be looked at by the review.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Have we received tenders from Tasmanian companies?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, we didn't.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No Tasmanian companies tendered?

**Mr GRANT** - Three different companies tendered for those valuations but none of those were Tasmania-based. A couple of them use Tasmanian staff.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - And have officers within Tasmania?

**Mr GRANT** - Yes, correct.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Why do you think that Tasmanian companies don't tender? Do you check with some of the companies why they don't tender for these contracts?

**Mr GRANT** - At the previous tenders two years earlier, two Tasmanian firms expressed interest but they didn't express interest this time. I spoke with them prior to the tender process commencing.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They were not successful last time?

**Mr GRANT** - No, that is correct.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do you think it is because they don't think they have a chance of winning that they don't put in a tender?

**Mr GRANT** - No, because in fact prior to that Opteon Tasmania won tenders for the West Tamar and the George Town municipalities.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Is that a Tasmanian company or is it a Victorian company with a Tasmanian office?

**Mr GRANT** - At that time, Opteon Tasmania was a Tasmanian company. More recently it became an Australia-wide company. We have awarded the tender for West Tamar to Opteon this time. It is being managed from the Melbourne office but it uses local staff from the Launceston office to do that work as well as bringing staff in. There is a mixture of Victorian staff and Tasmanian staff.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Over the last financial year we could look at of the valuations, how many objections did we receive in that period, and how many were upheld? I think it is easier to stick to one financial year of valuations. It is probably not as great as it was in the past when -

**CHAIR** - When they used Google Maps, they never got out of their car or even left the office. That is seriously what happened.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think that was one of the main things we had previously with mainland companies that didn't have an understanding of our values.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As at 31 May 2018, the Valuer-General issued 9217 notices of valuation for supplementary valuations during 2017-18. Twenty-three objections have been received, which have resulted in eight amendments to valuations; four matters are outstanding. No re-evaluations were issued during this period. One of the KPIs for Valuer-General ending financial year is that the number of amended valuations following an objection is less than 2 per cent of the total number of valuations. This year there were amendments made to 0.09 per cent. Well within 2 per cent KPI.

**CHAIR** - Through the tender process, is there reference to on-the-ground checks to assess valuation? In the past, there was criticism that Google Maps was used and nobody ever left the office, hence valuations never truly reflected the assessed properties. Does this expressly talk about that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There is going to be a review and consultation with LGAT. I will ask the Valuer-General to answer that specific question.

**Mr GRANT -** The contractual evaluation requirements in the tender the firm signs require them to make the minimum of a drive-by inspection of residential properties and a full inspection of commercial, industrial and rural properties. They are required to go onto those properties to assess any changes in the buildings and to assess a fair valuation of that property. Yes, for residential properties, they are required to do a drive past the property and not a walk through for every property.

**CHAIR** - It would be impossible to walk over every property, so they would use Google Maps.

**Mr GRANT -** They are required to drive onto the property and look at the property. If it is required to go further, they would. Yes, they do use all the mapping facilities we have in the system to assist them in doing that work. They are required to go onto those properties and assess, certainly in respect of building and water developments on those properties.

**CHAIR** - There have been some significantly overvalued properties in the past and far too much was borrowed against them, then the banks foreclosed and they are part of the banking royal commission as we speak. That also happened in Tasmania. We need to keep an eye on how the valuations are done.

**Mr FARRELL** - Following on from the comments about valuations. When looking at putting a price on a property, different valuation companies often consult with local real estate agents to look at previous sales. Real estate agents look at potential value, or value from a purchaser's point of view whereas you probably look from the other direction. How do you reach the middle ground in property valuation?'

**Mr GRANT -** That is the key issue with valuation. In private or statutory valuations, we have to support our valuations with sales of properties. While an agent may be able to provide an indicative figure of what he thinks you can sell it for, as a valuer we are required to be able to support the valuation to the court level, if it is required. We have the benefit in a fresh valuation program - for instance the West Tamar Council area is being revalued, the statutory date for those valuations is 1 July 2018. The work is not completed until early January to February next year and the valuers have to have assessed the value for that one point in time, which is 1 July this year. They have the benefit of more sales coming in after that date to assist them. They have to be able to support the valuation at that time. The valuations can look at potential, but are not forecast due to the future. It is a particular point in time and the point in time for these fresh valuations is 1 July 2018. They have the benefit of more sales coming in after that date to assist them.

**Mr FARRELL** - What is the situation if you value a piece of property for compulsory acquisition for a government building and the owner of the property states they had plans to build a nursing home on the block, which would have produced a certain amount of income? Is this a process that goes straight to the courts or can it be negotiated?

**Mr GRANT** - When the government is acquiring property, my office undertakes valuations for that purpose and the dispossessed owner can get a private valuation undertaken for the purpose. There is then a discussion between the valuers if there is a dispute in relation to the values. Yes, the process is there if we cannot get agreement at that level. It can go on to court and the issues you raised are used as evidence and can certainly have an impact on the property value, and we have to have that regard. It is how much regard is had as against the potential of the property, but they are particularly contentious matters that can go on to court action.

**Mr FARRELL** - Yes. Having been on the Public Works Committee, it often comes up in general discussion. Thank you.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** The important point is there is a dispute resolution mechanism where the Valuer-General can be on one side of the dispute, but in the end there is a dispute resolution system through the courts.

**Mr DEAN** - A building in Hobart is going to have a valuation put on it: how does the valuation process will take place? What is the process of determining the proper market value of the Treasury building?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Broadly, it will be a matter for the Treasurer or the Minister for State Growth regarding the process, so I am not going to comment on that.

If there is a time a valuation needs to be done, the Valuer-General would undertake this. I will let the Valuer-General describe what he would do in those circumstances.

**Mr DEAN** - Has the Valuer-General been asked to do an assessment of the valuation of the property? There is considerable discussion and a figure has been thrown around.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Valuer-General has assessed it for asset purposes only as a normal course of the Government having an understanding of its suite of properties. It has not been valued specifically at the request for some kind of sale mechanism.

**Mr DEAN** - I understand, but if we could get further detail?

**Ms COURTNEY** - If there was a time when a valuation needs to be done, the Valuer-General can outline the process they would go by, should that happen.

**Mr DEAN** - I would appreciate an indication of the asset valuation that has already been done.

**Mr GRANT** - Thank you, Mr Dean. In respect of the asset valuation, we are still in the process of completing that.

**Mr DEAN** - There must be a current valuation of that building? You are redoing that. There must be an asset value of the building now in place.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I do not have the figure on me now, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - Can we get that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is something we can get.

**Mr GRANT** - As with any valuation, when we are required to provide it, we would have regard to the general level of market sales evidence in the area. For the particular class of property you are referring to it is very difficult to assess those parameters, but my office has access to other information from the mainland states in looking what is happening there.

It is no different to any other form of valuation; it is having regard to the size of the property, the area, the location, and what can be done with it, then a decision is made as to what it is worth based on that information. That is the same process to any valuation. This one is a bit more difficult with the heritage restrictions and the implications of the heritage on that class of property.

**Mr DEAN -** A heritage‑listed property has an impact.

**CHAIR** - So no burgundy awnings, potentially. A wise man once told me the value of something is only what someone is prepared to pay for it, minister.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Indeed, I completely agree.

**Mr DEAN** - That is on notice about that current asset valuation.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - We have a little more information. On page 239 of the budget papers - we are just checking whether it was $200 000 as an exact amount that was referred to before. Dr Whittington might be able to advise us further. It was in note 1 -

The Tasmanian Government was successful in negotiations to secure Australian Government funding for this initiative.

We are still checking whether it was the $200 000. The advice received was that it came wholly from within the department.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I will have to take that on notice. To be honest, I can't explain that so we will have to come back to you on that.

**CHAIR -** We have a number of stars on this committee, minister, and they are increasing by the day. We will have that question on notice.

**Output group 2**

**Primary Industries**

**2.1 AgriGrowth Tasmania -**

**Ms COURTNEY** - I invite Carole Rodger, Director of AgriGrowth Tasmania to the table.

**CHAIR** - Welcome. We will delve straight into questions. In the budget papers, there are 20‑plus election commitments provided for under this area, so there is a significant increase in budget. How many of those 20‑plus initiatives are already in place and are only receiving additional funding? Do you have that information? It is nothing new that Rural Youth Tasmania receives funding but it is under election commitments, so is it the increased funding that is the election commitment?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With Rural Youth, for example, the funding provided historically was over a certain time frame, and it is my understanding it had expired. I can't recall what the commitment was specifically for Rural Youth, but it was a finite commitment. This is new money committed over the time frame that is articulated. There are some completely new initiatives - I'm looking at some of the fisheries ones - but some of them are extensions of existing programs. For example, the East Coast Rock Lobster Translocation Project already existed but had a finite amount of money allocated to it and so we have provided more money. All the money in the key deliverables statement - all the initiatives we have outlined - is new money. Some of it is to existing programs where there wasn't any money committed further, such as Rural Youth, and some of them are new initiatives.

**CHAIR** - One I am very interested in, given that I travel such a lot on our roads - particularly the rural roads - is the Weed Action Fund. How is that going to be delivered, considering that weeds are a problem on farms, on road verges and particularly in our parks and those kinds of areas?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Weed Action Fund is a $5 million commitment.

**CHAIR** - Over four years?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We are going to do this through the creation of a new role called the weed advocate, which is in the process of being created at the moment. This role, in my mind, will be for somebody who can work with the existing DPIPWE weed and invasive species experts. We already have that capacity within Biosecurity Tasmania. We are going to identify projects and priorities to allow groups in the community and farmers to use the money where it will be most effective. We understand that managing weeds is a shared responsibility across the entire community and we have landholders who have clear responsibility. We have local government that has responsibility as well.

**CHAIR** - Government?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, obviously, with the funding we have within Biosecurity Tasmania and the weed officers we already have. It is going to work with farmers, Landcare organisations, community organisations and local NRM groups. In my neck of the woods I have been on ragwort raids with Tamar NRM. There will be opportunities for local groups to get funding to be able to implement strategies that make a difference in their local areas. This dovetails nicely into the increased funding we have for Landcare Tasmania. We have doubled the money for Landcare Tasmania as a body, and we have also created grants funding for Landcare Tasmania so the groups can apply. We understand that for these NRM issues, it is the value of the community and the farmers on the ground that make a big difference. You would know in your area the local NRM groups that do a great job. That is something where we are keen to bolster existing capacity within our community, and to back the people in our community who are delivering things. They know their local landscapes and that is where this money is going. I am keen to make sure, with the $5 million over five years for the Weed Action Fund as well as Landcare and extra funding for NRM, that we see outcomes in the community. This is about real outcomes in the community to tackle weeds.

**CHAIR** - Can individual landowners apply, or does it have to be under a Landcare group?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The process is still being distilled at the moment. We are in the process of recruiting the weed advocate, who effectively will help coordinate and guide this project. We are working through the detail of how it will roll out at the moment. We acknowledge it is not just about weeds in public areas. We understand that invasive species are a big challenge for farmers as well. I acknowledge the great work that farmers do in so many Landcare projects on their farms in regeneration, management around creeks et cetera.

**CHAIR** - If you are not going to allow individual landowners, who may not belong to a local group, access to some funds to buy the necessary spray, they might not be in a position to do something. It is enormously expensive. Have you ever bought a bottle of Roundup?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes. Part of it is to invest with farmers, Landcare and community organisations. I can't articulate the mechanism, but farmers are clearly identified as key stakeholders. We will be investing strategically to be able to make it most effective. Farmers do a brilliant job at the forefront of pest and weed management and it is expensive. The weed advocate will look at ways and mechanisms to engage with and assist the farming community. We know the huge economic impact it has on farms.

**CHAIR** - It certainly does. With the two additional AgriGrowth liaison officers, are we going back to the old extension officers who were well received in our communities in the past, but were put out of business under a different colour of government? Is that the intention of the funding for AgriGrowth liaison officers?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am not going to comment on what was there in the past. For these new roles, I will ask John to expand further. They are going to be in northern Tasmania, so cover the north and north-west. Only a few weeks ago we started recruiting for these two new roles. Advertisements have been run in northern Tasmania and these staff will be able to be strategic, accessible and responsive.

**CHAIR** - Is there already one in the south, if they are only being placed in the north? I am mindful of my southern cousins needing the same opportunity as the northern people.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I will hand it to Carole, but we are not going into competition with the good private services provided by those companies of the advisers.

**CHAIR** - They are called consultants now; you can charge more when you are a consultant.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - We are not competing, but providing a more accessible way for primary producers to work with Government.

**Ms RODGER** - It is not a traditional extension as we operated in the past.

**CHAIR** - But similar?

**Ms RODGER** - Not exactly. They are two brand-new roles, an addition to the current AgriGrowth team and today we are interviewing in the north. They will be placed either at Stoney Rise or Prospect, and will manage like a one-stop shop - they will be easy entry point for the farming and rural communities to interact with the department and access the information services that support industry development across the AgriGrowth industries. It is more an information facilitation provision function rather than going out onsite and giving you specific advice about what to grow where or agronomic practices.

**CHAIR** - If it is such a vital role, why isn't there one for the southern part, given we now have the irrigation in the more southern part of our community? When you drive along the Midland Highway, it is green, lush and growing. There are lots of activities we have not seen in the past.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will ask Carole to expand further, but as with our move of DPIPWE staff to the north, this is not a comment on the south or around the north versus south. We are placing more capacity, as we recognise the value of agriculture across the north and north-west of Tasmania. It is not a reflection on the south of the state. It is more a recognition we are seeing the value in the north. I will let Carole comment.

**Ms RODGER -** They will function as a statewide service, but will be located where there is considerable agricultural activity. There will referrals to the most appropriate services and contact points. It could be they come down to AgriGrowth policy people in the south and visit someone in the Huon Valley. It is very much about statewide facilitating easy access, and to get information quickly and simply through a direct contact point.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The creation of these positions and location was advocated by the TFGA and both my predecessor and I are really keen to do. We want to listen to stakeholders and what they want delivered by their government.

**CHAIR** - It will be interesting to follow up in our communities next year to see what they have been able to achieve.

**Mr ARMSTRONG -** Minister, the year before last the Legislative Council had an inquiry into deer and the Government gave a strong response in reply. What is the Government doing regarding recommendations made by the committee?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government is delivering on its plan to better manage Tasmania's wild fallow deer population. This Budget included an additional $150 000 to undertake a statewide census of the deer population as part of the comprehensive response to last year's Legislative Council inquiry.

We have a clear recognition that management of wild deer is an important issue and involves many stakeholders. This is why we are taking a sensible, balanced and measured approach. We established the new Game Service Tasmania within DPIPWE - it is now complete - and the establishment of the new Tasmanian game council is well advanced. Game Services Tasmania is a specialist unit to help landholders, farmers, hunters and other stakeholders effectively manage deer and issues relating to game and browsing animals.

The Tasmanian game council will be the peak body, providing advice to me on delivering contemporary and effective quality deer management in Tasmania, hunting and game management, browsing animal management and deer farming matters. Methodology for the census, for which we have the funding committed, will be developed in consultation with the new game council with farmers, hunters. This census will provide benchmark data and help inform future quality deer management strategies and monitoring programs.

Our strategy is to ensure we have sustainable management. We understand there is a range of stakeholders. We have listened and will continue to listen, and I am looking forward to the new council being formed and receiving clear advice.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - One of the main issues is we do not know how many deer are in Tasmania.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The deer census will be really useful, because it means we can use science and fact in how we look at managing deer population.

**Mr DEAN** - I would like to thank you, minister, and the department very much for meeting at short notice with Dr Clive Marks. We are talking about the deer questions and about wildlife population monitoring. The position Dr Clive Marks came here with, and this has been done in conjunction with the Monash University, and there is a great team of experts involved in this current project. It is interesting one of the slides says, 'You cannot manage what you do not measure' and that comes up with the deer. The program they are working through is very technical - it is scientific and I don't profess to understand it fully at this stage - and very exciting, to say the least.

I am not sure how much you have been advised of it at this stage in relation to this program, minister, but where could the department go with this? Are they interested in talking further to identify with this program and what it can or should be able to return to our state or place?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Thank you for organising the meeting. Deidre Wilson accomplished that and Deidre -

**Mr DEAN** - She wasn't well at the time either.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Deidre is one of the acting deputy secretaries in the agency at the moment. She came back and reported very strongly on the meeting. There is a lot of potential in this area for the use of new technologies for wildlife surveying. I don't want to make a commitment here of anything in particular, but we are excited by the opportunities provided by the new technologies. This is using remote detection capacity for animals using eyeshine and all sorts of things. This is what that program is looking at.

We will be designing a census for deer, as the minister has outlined, and we have to work out how to do that. With the sorts of technologies that group is looking at - and others, as we are discussing this broadly - we need to think about how to link all those up to get a statewide deer census. As you would know, Mr Dean, one of the hardest things is to measure cryptic wildlife in our environment. It is a huge area, particularly for things that move around at night. Using these sorts of technologies is certainly the way of the future.

**Mr DEAN** - I am not sure if feral cats fit into this part. I suspect they do.

**CHAIR** - I would have thought Biosecurity.

**Ms COURTNEY** - It is Biosecurity.

**Mr DEAN** - All right, we will leave it for then.

I want to raise an issue in relation to the Cressy Research Station that I think fits in here. This information comes from another party, not those involved. I think the accuracy of it is reasonable and I will put it to the department. A number of questions will come out of this. I understand from advice I have received that Tasglobal seeds had a contracted position in relation to the Cressy Research Station. It was a 5+5+5 contract in the first place, and I think they had only used seven years of that 5+5+5 position when some issues arose. As a result of that, Upper Murray Seeds - I think it is Burlington Berries - wanted to take over the Cressy Research Station. There was negotiation between Tasglobal seeds and this group for Tasglobal seeds to retain a part of it, if they could negotiate a position with the Government for that change to occur. I think the position was that Upper Murray Seeds would move a lot of its plant and whatever else to Cressy Research Station. I understand the Government would not accept that position. I understand the Government originally went to tender and Tasglobal seeds won the contract. This time they didn't go to tender. Why didn't the Government go to tender? I understand the Government's position is to have open processes in relation to all these matters so there are no hidden issues. Why is that the case? What is the new deal? I understand Burlington wanted the houses as well as a part of this deal et cetera. I understand the Government advised Tasglobal seeds that if they wanted a deal, they needed to go to the new owners and deal with them. Why did no tendering process occur? Why was Tasglobal seeds pushed out of something they wanted to be involved in and continue with? They were operating well, I understand.

**Ms COURTNEY** - My understanding - and I will refer to my departmental staff for further details - is that a sublease, not a new lease, was provided. However, as to the process for that, I will ask John Whittington to provide the detail and correct me if I am wrong.

**Ms RODGER -** I can provide some information on that, Mr Dean. You are correct: there was an open expression-of-interest process when the lease was initially assigned and Tasglobal seeds was a successful applicant at that time.

If my memory serves me correctly, in early 2017 Tasglobal seeds approached the state Government seeking approval to vary its current lease arrangements, to allow it to reassign or enter into an arrangement with Upper Murray Seeds whereby Upper Murray Seeds would take the majority of the Cressy Research Station, and Tasglobal seeds would retain access to work a smaller component of that piece of land. That was quite within the terms of the existing lease and under the terms of the act. The arrangement being requested was within the same terms of the original lease. Tasglobal seeds had a lease and the second lot of five years would have been up in November 2019. The arrangement put into place was that the Tasglobal seeds lease was reassigned to the Upper Murray Seeds' head lessee under the same terms and conditions, taking it up to November 2024, which was the full term. At the same time - as they were enacted concurrently - there was a sublease arrangement between Upper Murray Seeds and Tasglobal seeds to allow it to keep operating the portion of the facility it was looking for. Does that answer your question?

**Mr DEAN** - I will need to look at the answer on *Hansard* and check that against the advice I have. As I understand the situation, the Tasglobal seeds contract was concluded. As a result of the change we are now seeing with the new operators, Upper Murray Seeds, the contract of Tasglobal seeds was closed off. My advice is not from Tasglobal seeds, it is from another source ‑ and it is that they had to release their contract and were told by government personnel - and I can get those details - that they would then need to negotiate with the new owners, Upper Murray Seeds, if they wanted to continue with part use of that property. If that is right, that it is a new contract for Upper Murray Seeds, why did the department not go to an open tender process?

**Ms RODGER** - My understanding is that the reassignment was a variation of the existing lease, and it was at Tasglobal seeds' request.

**CHAIR** - So effectively Tasglobal seeds shouldn't have been pushed out?

**Ms RODGER** - But they haven't been. To the best of my knowledge, they haven't been pushed out. Tasglobal seeds entered into this arrangement entirely voluntarily and at its request. I am not sure I understand the detail.

**Mr DEAN** - I have to be careful here. I will probably have to go to Tasglobal seeds because I wouldn't want to jeopardise its position with the Government in any way with adverse information -

**CHAIR** - The member and I may take the opportunity to ask the minister if we could follow up this matter at a later time.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am more than happy to sit down at a later time to have a full briefing and get the detail for you.

**CHAIR** - We were particularly interested in the tender process.

**Mr DEAN** - If we look at AgriGrowth, it is going to be a $10 billion industry by 2050. How are we progressing towards that figure?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Each year we produce a snapshot. There is a bit of a time lag while we get the data and have it verified. It is an ambitious target, but I am confident we can achieve it. I have two copies of it and you can have one, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you. What do you see as the real growth industries to target in agriculture?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have amazing farmers across Tasmania who are doing innovative things. The whole purpose of the suite of election commitments and commitments we have now delivered in this Budget is about supporting that growth and supporting the men and women who are farming. A couple of things will be significant broadly for the entire industry. One of them is Tranche 3 irrigation, and the Government has committed $70 million towards that. I can go into Tranche 3 a bit later if you like.

We are looking to significantly increase water capacity. As the Chair mentioned, when you drive down the Midland Highway, you see the changes. We have also made significant investment in the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies and our research farms because we are seeing technology driving productivity.

One of the first things I did as a new minister was to join the Water for Profit program, which is a great collaboration between industry and research, looking at ways we can increase productivity on-farm and precision agriculture. What we are doing with technology is exciting. As for the actual industries that are going to help drive this growth, I see it as being quite broad. If we look at the budget commitments across industry development - and I outlined some of those in my opening statement - we are going across the board with funding for red meat, dairy, wine, fruit and vegetables, organics, hemp and wool. It is not about picking a winner; it is about backing our men and women and what they are doing on the farm; backing emerging technologies and emerging industries; and backing our strong traditional industries. That is not including the fact we have an enormously valuable wild‑catch and farmed seafood industry as well. It is ambitious, but we have a comprehensive suite of measures that cover a range of areas to help drive productivity, to help back these men and women.

I am also excited about the time line. We have to back the next generation, so we have a new loan scheme for young farmers. If you are young farmer, it is hard to get your foot in the door. The loan scheme will help a young farmer buy, say, a share in a dairy farm, to be able to take that first step. It is very tricky to get funding when you are a young farmer.

We have significant investment in our research farms as well: $7 million plus $5 million for Freer Farm will see significant capacity to be able to help people learn.

We are seeing some of the most confident farmers in Australia. I think about two weeks ago a Rabobank survey clearly articulated that farming confidence in Tasmania has hit an 18-month high. I see my role, and I see the role of the amazing people within DPIPWE, as helping to support what we are doing and what they do. The commentary in the Rabobank survey said it was not surprising local farmer sentiment was trending higher than on the mainland, given the state's comparatively favourable seasonal conditions and the price outlook for its major commodities.

In saying that, we recognise that farming can be tough and there are often headwinds we are not able to predict, such as droughts, floods and changing commodity prices, but we have a well‑diversified sector. We have a government that is clearly backing primary industries and the contribution they make to our economy and the vibrancy of regional areas. I am feeling very confident about our future and the way we are going to keep listening and working hard to support our agriculture.

**Mr DEAN -** Thank you for that. Currently, we have fisheries and fish farming and all of these things, but at this stage do you see anything out of the ordinary as an emerging industry we would tap into?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It is hard to identify. If I had a crystal ball, it would be nice, but that is why, as well as those traditional industries, we are investing in some of the newer industries, such as organics. As we know, that can produce price premiums and therefore we get higher value stocks. The hemp industry is only small but is going gangbusters. We are seeing demand for new products coming out. Without a crystal ball I can't tell you how it will look, but I have an expectation that our growth will be predicated on a range of sectors.

**Mr DEAN** - The preservation of our clean, green, fresh image is critical.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Indeed.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions? Obviously there are dozens and dozens of questions in this area, and with the significant election commitment investment by this Government, we will see what has been delivered during the scrutiny next year. Because so many of these projects are new, there is nothing to scrutinise as yet. There will be some happy people in the farming community.

**2.2 Marine Resources -**

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - My electorate is the home to many of the salmon farms in Tasmania. The Marine Farming Planning Review Panel assesses new potential salmon farms. Can you tell me what is happening with the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel, where it is actually assessing and what it is looking at?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Planning for marine farming is conducted under the Marine Farming Planning Act 1995. The Marine Farming Planning Review Panel is an expertise-based panel established by the act with nine independent members. The role of the panel is to make recommendations to the minister in respect of draft plans and draft amendments. The act provides for the preparation and amendment of marine farming development plans, which set out areas in which marine farming may occur, the amount of area that may be leased and management controls relevant to marine farming in that area.

The functions of the panel include consideration of draft plans and draft amendments, environmental impact statements and comments on draft plans and draft amendments. The panel may, if it chooses, conduct hearings and seek expert advice.

In 2017-18, the panel held seven formal meetings, conducted three public hearings and undertook a field visit of proposed development sites in Storm Bay. The three hearings relating to Storm Bay planning proposals were advertised by public notice, on the internet and directly advised people and organisations that made a representation. The progress made has an important role in a system that is well understood and allows for representation and for due process to occur when we are looking at marine farming

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - We have many people moving to Tasmania from interstate. I have had some inquiries from recreational fishers, telling me they are told people can fish here for virtually free. The recreational fishers are worried we might be looking at further licensing of our fishing area. Has the Government looked at increasing licenses for recreational fishing, such as flathead?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have a policy of not charging for rod fishing. We have a role in inland fisheries and a significant investment in supporting recreational fishing in Tasmania. In this Budget we are committing $620 000 to the Tasmanian Association of Recreational Fishing, because it plays a really important role in advocating for recreational fishers around Tasmania.

A range of other initiatives, while not being directly delivered by my portfolio area, are also contained in the Budget. They include supporting reefs, supporting jetty access and upgraded facilities, and supporting a one-stop shop to promote and support recreational fishing and boating across Tasmania. Funding is allocated to volunteer marine rescue units, ensuring there is ongoing coverage. We have a really strong commitment to support recreational fishers and have no intention of introducing a rod-and-line licence. One of the great parts of being Tasmanian is the ability to go fishing.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Is the money allocated to TARFish, the $620 000 over four years, earmarked for certain things? What is the money allocated for?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The grant deeds are developed in consultation with the department to help represent the interests of recreational fishers and to provide clear representation and a single coherent voice. It allows decision-making mechanisms to have representation from recreational fishers and open engagement and communication. This provides better policy outcomes from a government perspective, but also allows communication of information for fishers around Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - A couple of years ago there was some community concern around the operations of TARFish and representation. As minister, are you aware everything is working well with TARFish?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am not aware of the concerns you raised from the past. I have met with TARFish on a number of occasions. TARFish sit on my RegFact and my office has a good working relationship with it.

**CHAIR** - I am sure you would have heard, minister, and so would I.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Would you have a breakdown on how much the Government receives a year in recreational fishing licences?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We do not have recreational fishing licences for -

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - I am talking about abalone, crayfish, netting.

**CHAIR** - We will probably need to be all sitting down for this answer; it's a lot.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We can take on notice and provide it. We do not have it with us.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Oysters and the Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome recovery measures received $255 000 last year for three years. How is the situation going? Two officers were assisting the industry. Could we have an update?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Across the fishing industry we have made a number of commitments. I understand the oyster industry has had some really challenging times with POMS. I had the opportunity to meet with the industry group a couple of times and be up in St Helens tasting some of the lovely oysters at one of the Seafood Industry Council events.

Biosecurity Tasmania is continuing to work with the oyster industry to contain POMS. During the 2017-18 summer season infection and associated oyster mortalities were again seen. We had an infection detected for the first time at Port Cygnet. Surveillance testing has confirmed oyster farmers in the north of Tasmania remain free from POMS, which is good news. Significant impacts have been experienced by Tasmanian oyster hatcheries due to closures or limitations.

Following the detection of POMS, federal and state funding assistance was provided to leaseholders in the infected areas. The industry assistance package included an amount of $4500 per hectare of lease area to assist with clean-up expenses.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Was that the POMS Recovery Concessional Loan Scheme or something different?

**Ms COURTNEY** - This was to assist with the clean-up expenses.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - As opposed to loss?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Further assistance has been provided to leaseholders in the form of an annual licence levy and fee relief, the provision of funding for POMS officers to assist the industry recover and the purchase of testing equipment for the Analytical Services Tasmania laboratory.

The initial funding package provided by the federal government has now been exhausted and the state has met the additional costs associated with clean-up activities. This additional funding expenditure amounted to $315 000 and was provided by a request for additional funding in 2016. Our election commitment is to support the oyster industry with a number of policies that will directly benefit it; these will be developed in collaboration with Oysters Tasmania. We are supporting them with testing, to make sure they can once again be a vibrant industry.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - This is administered by the Department of State Growth, but I wonder if you can answer - the $5 million POMS Recovery Concessional Loan Scheme and applications up until 1 May 2018: how much has been approved under the scheme?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is a State Growth one, I am sorry, Rosemary.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That is all right. It was worth asking. Thank you.

**Mr ARMSTRONG** - Minister, a few years ago the Pacific seastar was a real issue in the Huon Channel estuaries. Is there any ongoing information about what has happened with that? I know when I was mayor of the Huon Valley there was a real issue with it. I cannot remember who the minister was, it might have been minister Kons, he came down and they were cleaning out the scallop beds. Is there any further information regarding the Pacific seastar now?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I introduce Dr Lloyd Klumpp to the table.

**CHAIR** - Welcome. A bit earlier than we thought.

**Ms COURTNEY** - He will be able to provide a little bit more detail.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Not much more detail. We have recently seen some high mortalities in Pacific seastars reported to us by the general public. We have had officers collect samples and run diagnostics on those at the moment. We have also sent some of those samples to other laboratories interstate in order to see if we can determine why those mortalities are happening. We are not that concerned about the Pacific seastars dying but it will be nice for us to understand why and know the implications of that. At the moment we do not.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - These are the sorts of things when you put a new species into a new environment, populations can rise and fall for all sorts of reasons. This is good right now but we do not understand why.

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, we talked over a long time about salmon farming, fish farming moving more out of the oceans onto the land, and so on. Is that progressing at all? Have we seen any move towards that? Any interest in doing that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will get Dr Whittington to talk about it in more detail. It is important to recognise in terms of the industry more broadly that the Government is committed to a strong salmon industry. Last year my predecessor released a sustainable growth plan for the salmon industry. Since becoming minister I have had positive dialogue with all the participants within the salmon industry. We are working to implement those because we recognise the importance of the industry economically. In regional areas of Tassie it creates a lot of jobs. I did not know the extent to which you have upstream and downstream companies as well, but in terms of the actual onshore farming I will ask Dr Whittington to discuss it further.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - RASers or recirculated aquaculture systems are a new form - or they are advancing as a technology. Each of the three companies that operate in Tasmania have part of the life cycle on land, and that is the egg through the smolt stage of the life cycle. Those are more and more moving to recirculated self-contained systems quite sophisticated technology is involved in managing water quality in those systems.

What is happening in Tasmania is that the companies are growing their smolt to larger sizes and building facilities to allow their smolt to grow to larger sizes before they put them to sea. That has a number of benefits. It results in healthier fish but also it means that the time at sea can be reduced. If you put a smolt to sea that is twice as large as a smaller one the period at sea reduces, so that is a more efficient use of our marine space. I would imagine, and I am now speculating, but over the coming years we will see larger and larger fish being put to sea. Around 400 grams or 500 grams now is a very large fish to put to sea. That might get larger over time but it also requires enormous amounts of space an energy once you do these large fish in a RAS so there is a point at where it is not economic.

There are a few around the world for end‑to‑end production systems but they would have to speak for themselves about how cost-effective they are. In the Tasmanian context, we will be growing fish larger before they go to sea but I cannot see, in my lifetime, it substituting at sea.

**Mr DEAN -** I have a number of questions on the scallop fisheries and the closing off of a number of the scallop fishery areas. Is it over-fishing or is there some other reasons for the drop-off in the quantity of scallops in those areas? What does it mean for the future?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It is not about over-fishing. The nature of the biology of scallops means the fishery can be unpredictable in terms of availability and harvestable stocks. Industry surveys of state waters, conducted in April and May last year, did not locate any suitable candidate scallop beds which might be opened under the harbour strategy rules in the near future. As a consequence of that, the Scallop Fisherman's Association was of the opinion there will be little prospect of a viable commercial season in state waters in the next two years. I have now approved, following consultation with the Scallop Fisherman's Association and the broader industry, a request for the Tasmanian Scallop Fishery to remain closed for commercial fishing for this year and next year.

**Mr DEAN** - Is that across the board, all commercial fishing in our waters is closed?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It is across state waters. Scallops will still be available from the Central Bass Strait Scallop Fishery which is managed by the Commonwealth and harvested by Tasmanian scallop fishers some time in June and July this year, when it opens.

**Mr DEAN** - The reason I asked is that the media do not always get it right, and mostly they are right. I thought they said there were only certain beds in Tasmanian water that would be closed this year. The position that all Tasmanian waters will be closed for scallop fishing?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, it is all Tasmanian waters but the Tasmanian fishers can still access Commonwealth waters.

**CHAIR** - They going to have to go a bit further afield, minister. They are probably going to cost a little more.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The recreation fishery will be open in state waters. The commercial will be closed.

**Mr DEAN** - Right, that is commercial only. It is time to get on top of that. That is for two years. At the end of that two year period it will be reassessed for the following season?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, it will be surveyed in early to mid-2020 to determine if there is suitable, harvestable scallop beds to warrant opening it.

**Mr DEAN** - Right. I do not think anything further can be added to that.

**Ms COURTNEY** - This is Fionna Bourne, the General Manager of Water and Marine Resources.

**Mr DEAN** - What does that mean in relation to the Tasmanian commercial scallop fishers? They are going to move out into Commonwealth waters and my guess is there is going to be a heavier use of those waters and those fishing areas. What is the control there? The Commonwealth has some control and what does that mean for our commercial scallop fishers in Tasmania?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Commonwealth waters is a matter for the Commonwealth, so I cannot comment on that. I am pleased we have a proactive cohort of fishers in Tasmania and it was great to see this was an initiative from the Scallop Fishers Association of Tasmania. We are going to support them. The Scallop Fishers Association requested some fee relief during this closed period and I have now approved that part of their annual licence fee will be waived for each of the two years of the closure which amounts to a 44 per cent reduction in the annual licence fees payable.

**Mr DEAN** - Which means how much in money?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I would think it is significant, and also where a proposal to peg some of the fees collected in line with catch limits is being actively reviewed. We are currently working with Treasury to develop a sliding scale for calculating licence fees payable for the commercial sector with the aim of having this mechanism in place for the potential reopening in the event of that survey in 2020 being favourable. It is my understanding that a lot of the fishers are both Tasmanian and Commonwealth licence holders and a lot of the scallops will still come back to Tasmania for processing.

**Mr DEAN** - Can we have a money value, minister, if there is one?

**CHAIR** - I will move to Mr Farrell while we are getting that information. We can come back and get that answer.

**Mr FARRELL** - Minister, with recent reports that there are different fish moving into southern waters with the sea warming, what funding is there to look at the impact that that may have on our commercial fisheries, and if the research is being done, who is doing that research?

**Ms COURTNEY** - This Budget also includes additional funding for IMAS. IMAS, as you would understand, does a significant amount of research, both in current fisheries that exist and researching them but also looking at future fisheries. We are increasing our understanding very rapidly of various fisheries and the changes in climatic condition that can impact these.

**CHAIR** - It's $700 000 over the forward Estimates but nothing in this year's Budget, is that right?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The total investment into IMAS over the forward Estimates is $14 million over five years. That is the total investment.

**CHAIR** - There is a bit in the last year then.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Budget that is there is the additional funding, so there is additional funding that is outlined in the Budget papers on top of the funding that is already going to IMAS. So we are providing additional funding.

There are a number of current projects that IMAS is doing:

* there is the Future Oysters CRCP, which is advanced understanding of POMS to guide farm management decisions of Tasmania;
* there is a future oyster CRCP which is the reliability of hatchery production of POMS resistant oysters. Future oysters CRCP is the species diversification to provide alternatives for commercial production.
* there is a project on improving post harvest survivability of southern rock lobster in changing environments, which goes to your question;
* there is a rock lobster culture system, the cutting edge of aquaculture, understanding the stock recruitment relationship to reverse a decline in southern rock lobster, and rebuilding southern rock lobster stocks on the east coast of Tasmania informing options of management; and
* improved risk management of paralytic shellfish toxins in southern rock lobsters.

There are many more that I am more than happy to run through. It is pretty diverse. One thing, as with TIA, is IMAS, as you could see from the beginning particularly around oysters, is responsive to industry to making sure that the funding and the commitment Government makes into research is helping industry to either address challenges or to increase productivity in the future.

**Mr FARRELL** - Thank you, and I imagine there is some overlap with environment as well. That is always where it separates.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Absolutely. We have the answer for the previous question.

**Mr WHITTINGTON** - Tasmanian scallop licence holders would normally have paid $366 534 fully licensing in 2018. With the 44 per cent reduction, which is a reduction of $160 200 they will be paying $206 334 this year. That licence fee includes the industry levy, which is passed through to the industry.

**CHAIR** - That will be forgone as well.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - No, that is not forgone. The bits that are forgone are the research component and the money that would otherwise been retained in consolidated revenue by the Tasmanian Government.

**CHAIR** - There will be less work for officers on the ground when there are no scallops coming into our areas.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - The reduction of 44 per cent is significant for the industry, but we will still need to manage the fishery for reopening, so there will be some work for Government in ensuring that we can reopen. A 44 per cent reduction amounts to a reduction of $160 200.

**Mr DEAN** - There is additional funding here in this area for abalone fisheries. Is that expanding? Where are we going with abalone and how many farmers do we have in this state in relation to abalone at this time?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government is investing in the world's largest sustainable abalone resource, which supports around 800 jobs in Tasmania. We are working with the abalone industry. We will establish the Abalone Industry Reinvestment Fund and divert 2 per cent of the current royalties at a cost of $5.1 million. This fund will seek to support and increase the sustainability and productivity of the abalone fishery both biologically and economically, and support projects to reduce the population of the long‑spined sea urchins on the east coast and projects to increase stock levels, such as larval seeding.

We are also going to maintain funding to the Abalone Industry Development Trust Fund with $200 000 annually for four years, which will enable the wild abalone industry to develop new market opportunities and increase the value of its catch.

In your question you had another specific data?

**Mr DEAN** - My question was how many abalone farmers are we looking at in the state? What is the intensity of this program and farming in this state?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the number of abalone licences?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, the number of abalone licences and operations currently?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - There are two parts to your question. One is there is the wild catch, which is by far the larger part of the industry, which is quite a controlled fishery, so the quota are held by quota holders. Then there is a much smaller aquaculture of farmed abalone industry. We split the two because they are quite different industries.

**Mr DEAN** - Sorry, I should have done that.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I might ask Fionna if she has the data.

**Ms BOURNE** - As John said the number of abalone farms is quite small. From memory there are approximately four to five of them. Their -

**Mr DEAN** - What do you mean 'approximately four to five'; wouldn't we know the numbers?

**Ms BOURNE** - Off the top of my head, I am sorry, I cannot remember whether it is four or five. It is a small number of an industry that is wanting to grow. Its value for the current 2017 calendar year was $4 million. In comparison to the wild capture fisheries, a significantly smaller industry but it is looking to grow.

**Mr DEAN** - And the wild fisheries, where is that going? What is the position with our indigenous people and what are the rights there? There has been a bit in the press about that of late. Are they required to be licensed the same as anybody else?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will get Fionna, in a moment, to talk about the indigenous licences. It is something that has been in the news a lot recently. As with all stakeholders we will continue to work with representatives. In terms of the actual conditions around indigenous licensing, I will ask John to expand on that.

**Mr WHITTINGTON -** The Living Marine Resources Management Acts and associated rules exempt Tasmanian Aboriginal people to need licences to undertake certain Aboriginal cultural activities involving the use of sea and its recourses such as taking shellfish, starfish, rock lobster and giant crab. The act also provides for permits to be issued for Aboriginal cultural and ceremonial activities that would otherwise be in contravention of the act. It also allows Aboriginal communities to harvest seafood for traditional Aboriginal cultural events such as family events where seafood is collected and consumed by the family or the community. It is something that Aboriginal people have been engaged in as a matter of cultural tradition for 40 000 years.

**Mr DEAN** - But it is not for retail?

**Mr WHITTINGTON -** No, so tourism venture under our current rules would require a permit and it would need to be taken out of the existing quota. That happens now that there are Aboriginal people who are within the fisheries and they can use the normal rules that everybody else operates to. That is the current status.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, I will suspend the hearing so that we can have a morning tea break.

**The committee suspended from 11.12 a.m. to 11.27 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - Welcome back.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Before we move on to the next question, could I add to an answer we gave Mr Dean earlier about the abalone farming licences? There are currently seven licensed operators, five of which are operational, so they have an operating facility, and two that are non‑operational. Furthermore, Dr Whittington also has something further to add to the question about the resourcing used for the federal electoral redistribution we were talking about -

**CHAIR** - The $200 000?

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** No. This was the role my agency played in assisting with the federal electoral redistribution. This follows on from those questions. The Surveyor-General was on the Statutory Redistribution Committee and the federal government's AEC staff undertook the actual modelling. Land Tasmania made draft boundaries available via the LIST - we hosted the maps - and Land Tasmania has drafted CPR plans to support that process.

**CHAIR** - Not surprised they were that involved.

**Mr DEAN** - Can I ask a question on the abalone licences? The two non-operational licences - what does that mean? Does it mean the people or companies that might have those licences intend to operate in the future or do they simply have the licences for some other reason? I am not sure what the position would be.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will ask Ms Bourne to answer that if she has information regarding the two licensed ones that aren't operational.

**Ms BOURNE -** The two licence holders being non-operational means they have applied for and have the authorisation to farm - they have paid the relevant licence fees - but at this stage they have not developed the farm in any active way. They are maintaining their licence by renewing it every year and paying -

**Mr DEAN** - How much are they?

**Ms BOURNE** - Sorry, I can't tell you off the top of my head. They continue to pay the licence fees and will develop the farm when commercial operations suit the producer.

**Mr DEAN** - Can you take that question on notice about how much the licences are? I would have thought that would be a reasonable amount.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am happy to take that on notice.

**2.3 Supervision of Poppy and Hemp Crops -**

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, you made some comment on the hemp industry and that it is a growing industry - no pun intended. Can we have some update on exactly where it is headed and how it has been taken up? You might be able to cover the sale of hemp products and where it is going. I take it that there is not a lot of processing of it in this state. Also, what is the future of it in food? There has been a bit in the press about that of late.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Tasmania has led the way in positive regulation in support of growing industrial hemp and has also advocated for hemp in food internationally. In 2017-18, the number of active licensed growers of industrial hemp increased by 60 per cent compared to the previous year.

This growth has been attributed primarily to changes to the Australian and New Zealand Food Standards Code in 2017, which allowed food produced from low‑THC hemp to be sold legally in Australia and New Zealand. We are expecting to see more growth next year.

The Government has provided $150 000 over three years to support the Hemp Association of Tasmania with grower communications, product development, marketing and branding, and to support further growth in the hemp industry.

As at 15 May 2018, licences for industrial hemp totalled 16 buy-and-sell licences, four research licences and 58 licences to grow, where 35 of the 58 were active in 2017-18.

The number of hectares committed is growing substantially. In 2015-16, it was 105.5 hectares; in 2016-17, it was 288 hectares; and in 2017-18, it was 464 hectares.

I have had some great engagement with the Hemp Association of Tasmania, learning about their plans. It is an exciting industry.

**Mr DEAN** - It is great to see it moving forward.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Particularly it is worth noting the work of my predecessor, along with Michael Ferguson, in the advocacy work they did to get the changes to food safety in 2017. Jeremy Rockliff actively led and advocated for this for a number of years. I congratulate him for the work he did to help create and grow this new industry for Tasmania.

**Mr DEAN** - Is any downstream processing occurring here? If not, where it is being sold to? Where are the markets?

**Ms COURTNEY -** In the past year we have seen increased private investment in the Tasmanian industry and that can be attributed to the decisions we have talked about. We have included two dehulling facilities, increased drying and grading infrastructure, an oil processing facility, as well as funds for crop research. I am not sure whether Carole Rodger would like to expand on that further -

**Mr DEAN** - Tell me a bit about dehulling; could you explain that to me?

**Ms RODGER** - Dehulling removes the outer husk and seed and makes it non-viable so it can't then be used to produce another plant, which is part of the process for turning it into a food item, or for oil production. There are a few local processors - I am sorry I do not have the exact details. One is 13 Seeds Hemp Farm in the south of the state, which makes various food products, including hemp ice cream. The ability to produce and sell low THC hemp as food is fairly recent, but there is a lot of planting being planned, industry development and activity going on to take advantage of the opportunity.

**Mr DEAN** - Of the hemp being grown currently in Tasmania, not all is processed here in these organisations. So where is it going to? Where are the sale opportunities?

**Ms RODGER** - Traditionally, most of what was produced was seed for further production. It is a crop, the seed is harvested and the seed is on-sold to ramp up the industry. That has primarily been the focus. There is a strong fibre industry in other states. Tasmania has not traditionally gone there. The climate has made it slightly less suitable here. The opportunity is in seed production for further cropping and food production.

**CHAIR** - A question in regard to the decrease under the supervision of the poppy and hemp crops. We are increasing the hemp, but there is a decrease in the poppy industry: is that why we have a decrease in the allocated budget?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - What you are referring to is supervision in 2.3 going from $719 000 to $585 000. This area was recently transferred into my department and into Carole's division, and through that process we have portioned the corporate overhead in the department across different parts of the agency. This is essentially an internal accounting mechanism - because there is no output group - to ensure there are corporate services in the budget. It is smeared across the output groups. The actual amount of money going to the frontline is not changing through this process. Essentially it is an accounting mechanism.

**CHAIR** - The department is being more frugal?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I would like to say that, but that would probably be misleading. It is more about ensuring the corporate overhead is appropriately allocated across the output groups.

**CHAIR** - Was there any consideration when you were doing the budget that there would be an increase in hemp crops, but possibly a decrease in growing poppy crops?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the resources required from the department?

**CHAIR** - Yes, even though we are not going to have fewer people on the ground was that something considered? Do you look at what is happening each season? Was it reported there would be fewer poppy crops in Tasmania this coming season than in the past?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will defer to Dr Whittington. The supervisory roles from the department mean the cropping will change over time and go up and down. So variation within the cropping does not necessarily have an impact on the supervisory capacity within the department.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - A few things come into play. Certainly, poppy production is less now than it was back in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

**CHAIR** - Farmers are not actually making any money out of it, so they are not likely to grow it.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** Back then we were in 20 000-plus hectares. In the 2017-18 season, it was not quite 12 000 hectares harvested, but that is more than the 2016-17 season, so it is still a very vibrant and viable industry, but not on the scale it was four or five years ago.

Our hemp industry is growing. By putting our entire regulatory crop into one space, we can achieve efficiencies, so we are comfortable we have the resources to manage both hemp and poppies, and manage the annual fluctuations.

**Mr DEAN** - On the burgeoning market in the hemp industry at the present time: what is the return to farmers? It must be a reasonable return for farmers to be increasing plantings.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The increased revenue and productivity to farmers with cropping going up exponentially would indicate they are finding it a profitable enterprise compared to other crops. I would ask Carol or John for their opinions.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** I cannot tell you the gross margin on hemp. On the list we have gross margin tools available for different crops and there is one for hemp.

If I was at my computer and we had 10 minutes, we could probably work it out. It is part of the information we have on the list and I can take you through that another time.

**Mr DEAN** - My question is on the poppy situation which has a significant downturn. A number of farmers have asked me about the future of the poppy growing industry in this state. Currently large quantities are held by Tasmanian Alkaloids and other distributors and manufacturers. Is it because of large stockpiles? Is there a downturn or is it now being sourced from other countries?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The future of poppies is still bright in Tasmania. We have amazing farmers producing amazing yields. With poppy plantings, the number of hectares is one measure but the yields of our crops have gone up substantially.

Considerable research and development in Tasmania have increased that. The actual demand is driven by a number of global factors over which we have no control. There have been legislative changes in the US and a marked reduction in the prescription of pain medication.

Despite the fact we have seen the commercial expansion of poppy growing on the mainland, it is important to note Australia's two largest poppy producers still choose to grow exclusively in Tasmania. There were concerns previously when it was opened up to the mainland. The fact the two largest producers choose to be here is a clear sign from a climate perspective, from the quality of our farmers and from security that we have great infrastructure here. It has been supported actively by this Government and preceding governments in terms of the way it is supervised.

We are still the dominant player in the world. We are still a large contributor, and when you have so much market share and there are changes in demand, it creates an impact. Having met poppy farmers and talked to them and having attended some of the awards ceremonies some of the companies have for their farmers, it is a proud part of what we have done in Tasmania in terms of innovation. It has been world-leading and it has been embraced by farmers and processors. Notwithstanding the fact that these are challenging times, I think the industry still has a very bright future. I think the participants in the industry in Tasmania do an outstanding job working well together, particularly when global factors are challenging.

**Mr DEAN** - The other question I had was on the Poppy Advisory and Control Board. The cost of licences - and I think these are the ones paid for by the farmers - to grow is increasing. I think you touched on this. At a time when poppy growing is at an all-time low and farmers really can't make a profit out of them and it is very close to the line, why is the cost of the licences increasing? Am I reading it right? The cost of the Poppy Advisory and Control Board per licence -

**Ms COURTNEY** - Which table are you looking at, sorry?

**Mr DEAN** - At the bottom of page 256. Just explain that to me, please. I read note 12, on the next page, which says the increase in the indicator 'is primarily the result of a reduction in the number of licences issued'.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is actually an internal performance measure from the department. That is not a charge provided to a grower. Because we have had a decrease in the number of licences, the cost internally is spread over a smaller number and that is where it has gone up. This is not actually a cost for the licence; this is the cost per licence borne within the department. The department has a cost -

**Mr DEAN** - Who pays that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There is an allocated position internally and because that is being divided by a smaller number, the number is going up. It is an internal performance measure; it is not something borne by growers.

**Mr DEAN** - Okay. My other question is: according to the Tasmania Police annual report this year - I am going from memory here - the number of poppy diversions was up quite considerably last year. What is the position with the supervisory activities around poppies? Does it mean we need to increase that, or is there an explanation for the unusually high number of diversions last year?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As you know, the field officer monitors crops and liaises with growers statewide to make sure any incidents are reported in a timely way to police, as well as suspicious activity, interferences and thefts. There were 14 reported in 2017-18. The actual investigation of these incidents in 2017-18, I am advised, is a matter for Tasmania Police. I am advised that in some of the 2017-18 cases, it appears tourists were involved, drawn by the plants' aesthetics and how pretty they look.

**Mr DEAN** - That is an explanation for some of that.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The key statistics for 2017-18 are 1430 capsules were stolen, 200 capsules were recovered, and there were 14 interferences. The investigation into those is a matter for Tasmania Police.

**Output group 3**

**3.1 Resource Management and conservation -**

**Mr FARRELL** - Treasury has done a masterful job in the notes saying this funding has gone from here to there and there is cessation of this and that, which I try to get on top of. As far as NRM goes, it looks like many of these areas are covered by Landcare Tasmania and other groups. Is the NRM funding from the federal government?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There is various funding for the three regional NRMs. I will get you the details of the state funding. We have increased our contribution to the three regional NRMs to $4.2 million over four years in recognition of their role. The federal component has recently gone to tender, as you may be aware. There has been some reporting of that in the news. NRM South and Cradle Coast NRM were unsuccessful in their funding bids. That was a Commonwealth decision.

However, at the moment the department in Tasmania is working closely with the Commonwealth to ensure we retain the capacity to deliver the environmental and agricultural priorities. Senator Colbeck made some comments around the transitional funding being provided. We are working through it at the moment. We are hopeful that the funding will be available. We are working through with feedback from the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has provided feedback to the unsuccessful NRM groups and we are in active conversations with the Commonwealth to ensure a pathway for Tasmania to secure funding for all three regional NRMs to continue doing what they are doing. From a state perspective, we have increased our funding.

**CHAIR** - Can we have some understanding of why they were unsuccessful? Was it a poor application or their works didn't hit the mark of what the Commonwealth Government was looking for?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It is important to recognise this is a Commonwealth program. My understanding is the Commonwealth Government has provided direct feedback to the unsuccessful organisations. It is working with them, and the Tasmanian representatives from my department are assisting and liaising to address the concerns or the issues that have been raised. It is hard for me to speculate what they are. I will ask John Whittington to elaborate further on what is being provided formally to the department.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - This is a Commonwealth program with Commonwealth decisions.

**CHAIR** - If the department is assisting, it must have some idea of why they were unsuccessful.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Absolutely, and we will come to that. I just wanted to make it quite clear we weren't involved in the assessment process.

**CHAIR** - You didn't help them write their submissions?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I didn't help them write their submissions but I also didn't help assess them from the Commonwealth's perspective. I am reflecting the Commonwealth's views. The Commonwealth Government has provided fairly detailed information back to the regions. I make it clear that NRM North was successful through the first round of tendering.

The two non-successful NRMs: in summary, the Commonwealth Government is concerned their bids didn't represent good value for money for the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth was seeking strong on-ground action. The feedback is that the bids didn't deliver what the Commonwealth was expecting in the context of on-ground action. The Commonwealth is asking the regions to work in with us to think how they can restructure themselves and their bids to provide for more direct on-ground action and better value for money for the Commonwealth.

**CHAIR** - They were potentially looking for new initiatives rather than rehashing the old?

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** That is probably a fair assessment. The Commonwealth is not looking at sharpening the pencil around the edges. The Commonwealth is looking for a significantly different approach to ensure they have the on-ground action they are seeking to purchase through this model.

**CHAIR** - The Agriculture Landscape Rehabilitation Scheme has ceased. How is that being assessed? The money has gone out of this line item.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is the flood recovery money. The works undertaken with regard to that have now ceased, given the time period.

**CHAIR** - So all the fences are back up?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The rehabilitation work has been undertaken. This was to rehabilitate the land and the stream systems damaged by the flood. Through the scheme, 230 landowners received immediate specialist technical advice to assist them respond to damaged cause by the floods and to cost out works required for repairs and restoring river health and farm productivity. More than 180 landowners across 24 catchments and 22 local council areas received funding support under the scheme. Offers of funding were made following a multistage assessment process, including specialist technical review of each project and checking for consistency with eligibility guidelines. The rehabilitation scheme goes back to an earlier comment of mine. We have significant new funding in this Budget for the regional NRMs, weed action grants have $5 million and the doubling of funding for Landcare plus a Landcare grants program. This includes the really successful Cows out of Creeks project done with DairyTas. There is ongoing additional funding to assist in landscape rehabilitation for various means.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I had some follow up questions about Landcare, putting the land back into Landcare and the doubling of funding to Landcare and the Cows out of Creeks project.

**CHAIR** - Who is going to round up the cows?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Will the farmers apply or does Landcare identify them? Who decides who is identified and which areas?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Within the funding for the Landcare action grants programs, there is $2 million over four years to co-invest with farmers, Landcare and other community organisations for on-ground practical work. This includes $200 000 for a DairyTas partnered project, Cows out of Creeks, which helps support farmers with practical measures to - quite literally - get cows out of creeks.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is not only for dairy farms?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, it is not just for dairy farmers.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - There are cows in other areas -

**Ms COURTNEY** - Cows out of Creeks is the DairyTas project, but the other funding within the Landcare action grants program will be available for other mechanisms to be able to support farmers.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - In Launceston, for example, there is a number of issues with the Tamar River, including cows in farms along the river.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Indeed. There are significant challenges, but there is clear recognition by farmers and peak organisations within the farming groups.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Does Landcare identifies them or can farmers come to Landcare seeking assistance?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will check regarding the action grants program. We are still working through the process for the grants. We are mindful of the necessity and priority to make sure farmers have clear pathways to access funding.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I appreciate that. If we know how much is needed, we must have some idea of the work required and the farm involved.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions in this particular line item? We will move on to 4.1, which is Water Resource Management.

**Output group 4**

**Water Resources**

**4.1 Water resource management -**

**CHAIR** - We have already touched on the valuable contribution irrigation has provided across the state. It must be two years ago since the parliament passed legislation to make it easier to build dams on farms. On page 261 of the budget papers the approvals for dam works show 62 days for processing and application, but the actual number of dam works is only six. Minister, has the legislation not hit the mark to make a big difference to farmers or landowners being able to build on-farm storage? Six only. How many dams did we actually approve? It notes the number of landowners applying to create small on-farm buffer dams was lower than anticipated. Has a reduction of red tape for property owners to build on-farm storage been useful? Has there been any uptake? It appears a very small number, from what the note tells me.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Permits going down? You alluded to the government simplifying and streamlining the dam works process by abolishing the assessment committee for dam construction. Those effects came in on 1 January 2016. As highlighted in the table, it is pleasing to note the average time for processing is well below the statutory 84 days, or 12 weeks. It is also noted that the average time for issuing the dam floor permits is well below the target.

**CHAIR** - But the numbers.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In 2017‑18 a performance target of 40 dams was set with a combined storage of 10 200 megalitres. As of 7 June, 56 dams were approved with the combined storage capacity of 11 548 megalitres.

**CHAIR** - So it has actually gone up.

**Ms COURTNEY** - As of 7 June 2018, 56 dams were approved with a combined storage capacity of 11 548 megalitres.

**CHAIR** - The legislation did work.

**Ms COURTNEY** - It did.

**CHAIR** - Was it useful for landowners? It wasn't terribly clear from the tables provided.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The anecdotal feedback I have is that it has been very positive. I know from my discussions with farmers that they are very welcoming of the changes my predecessor put in to make it easier and to cut red tape.

**CHAIR** - That was one of the first initiatives of the Red Tape Reduction policy, from memory. If it is working, we can only be pleased about that.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Minister, I note the budget papers indicate under output group 4 that some 780 000 megalitres of water has now been licensed for irrigation. Given the role the Tasmanian irrigation schemes are playing in expanding the amount of water available, can you give an update on what the contribution the proposed Tranche 3 irrigation program could give in expanding the amount of water licensed for irrigation?

**Ms COURTNEY** - This is a very exciting contribution within the budget papers and we discussed it more this morning when outlining our target of $10 billion by 2050. We have a commitment in our 100-day plan for Tasmanian Irrigation - TI - to start development of a business case for Tranche 3 irrigation schemes with federal funding, which will complement the $70 million the Government has committed to.

I am pleased to report TI is progressing the development of the business case for what will be known as the Pipeline to Prosperity program or Tranche 3 in collaboration with Infrastructure Tasmania, DPIPWE and other stakeholders.

The Pipeline to Prosperity program has the potential to boost the water available from Tasmanian Irrigation by approximately 50 000 megalitres, which is a 50 per cent increase in the water available under the current Tasmanian irrigation schemes. This will mean a significant increase in agricultural production which will support more jobs for more Tasmanians.

The Government's election policy included 13 potential projects statewide for investigation. More recently, a potential scheme at Don-Barrington was added to the list for further investigation after local farmers demonstrated a potentially strong case.

Having recently undertaken an expression of interest - EOI - process with farmers into a number of these potential schemes, TI is now progressing with feasibility studies. This feasibility work will naturally help inform the overarching Pipeline to Prosperity program business case which is proposed to be submitted to the Commonwealth later this year.

What projects ultimately will then proceed from feasibility to construction will be determined by TI's normal consultative project development and approvals process involving farmers. This includes the need for the scheme to demonstrate technical feasibility, landholder and investment support and environmental sustainability as well as a viable business case and an economically positive investment.

As this process proceeds, I expect the list of potential projects will be further refined. Some may be amalgamated, some excluded and some schemes will be confirmed. Currently working with TI through this process, I am very confident we will have a strong suite of potential projects and a very strong argument in our business case for achieving the federal funding on top of our $70 million commitment.

**CHAIR** - Minister, how many more streamflow meters have been added to the number of meters we have on our streams and rivers around Tasmania? I note the percentage of sites that meet quality assurance standards is 98.8 per cent, but that doesn't actually tell me how many we have and whether we have added any. With some of the uptake of irrigation, there have been some changes to in the streamflow of water through waterways, particularly in the dry summer months.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The current monitoring activities include: operating 82 stream gauge stations that continuously monitor river levels and gauge river flows; operating 13 stream gauge sites that also have continuous water quality monitoring equipment - and seven of these sites are in collaboration with Cradle Coast NRM; and operating 81 bore sites that measure depth to groundwater levels and temperature.

We are also collecting spot-sample water quality data, including pH, turbidity, electrical conductivity, dissolved oxygen and temperature at all active DPIPWE stream gauging stations on average five times per year. We are collecting spot-sample water quality data, including pH, turbidity, electrical conductivity, dissolved oxygen and temperature at all DPIPWE river health monitoring sites each spring and autumn on a two-year cycle. We are collecting spot-sample water quality data on electrical conductivity and temperature at all DPIPWE groundwater sites when they are serviced.

**CHAIR** - Have you added any to that list in the past 12 months?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, we have not.

**CHAIR** - Do you intend to add any?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - No. It's on an as-needed basis; if something emerged, we might add it.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Not at the moment, but we will always be responsive if the need presents.

**Output group 6**

**6.1 Biosecurity -**

**Mr DEAN** - I have one question which I might as well get off my chest right now: minister, what has Biosecurity learned from the fox saga?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I might direct that to my left?

**Mr DEAN** - What changes will we see?

**CHAIR** - We are going to hunt feral cats now.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I thank you for the question because it is a really important question. Much has been learned over the long period the fox program was in place. It ended in 2014, and we learnt a lot from that. It would take me hours to go through all the lessons learned.

**Mr DEAN** - You could answer it by saying, 'Yes, things have been learned and we have made changes.' I don't know whether you can go through them or you might take them on notice.

**CHAIR** - Yes, Mr Dean was right.

**Mr DEAN** - It is not about me being right; it is about getting through this properly. That is what it has been all about. I have never suggested it is about me being right.

**CHAIR** - I apologise to the member.

**Mr DEAN** - Is it better to take that on notice than to give a list of what might have changed?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I will give a bit of an overview. I am sure the minister and Lloyd Klumpp would like to add to it.

First, if we come to biosecurity principles - and that is the need to be well prepared for a possible incursion - the preparedness part of any invasive species program is really important. By being well prepared, you are in a position to react quickly and effectively. It is probably fair to say that in the early days we didn't have the preparedness there. There was quite a lot of thinking on our feet and reacting quickly. Preparedness is critical in this.

The way that we collected and treated evidence of foxes was certainly improved through the life of the program. With such significant expenditure of public money, the way we collect, curate and manage evidence and information around that is certainly done much better now after learning through the program.

We are a lot better as well with the focus on planning and what the end looks like. It is being clear about what the performance criteria for the program are and operating to those. I have covered the main learnings. I could talk for hours on this. Is there anything further?

**Dr KLUMPP -** The only thing I would add is our legislative tools. As you know, we are working on a new biosecurity bill and we have taken lessons from a whole range of things in the development of that bill, including some of the lessons from the Fox Eradication Program.

**Mr DEAN** - When are we likely to see the biosecurity bill come through?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We are actively working on that at the moment. It has gone out for consultation. We are doing consultation on that bill with targeted stakeholders at the moment. As Dr Klumpp said, it has been in development but we are keen to make sure we incorporate all the key learnings from a range of things. We will even take learnings from the fruit fly incursion as well. We learn about how to respond. There are significant changes as we implement our sustainable salmon plan, which has biosecurity elements. We are consulting widely because we want to ensure the legislation we bring forward is appropriate and achieves what it needs to.

**Mr DEAN** - When you look at Biosecurity in budget paper 2, it is spread out over about 11 different pages, starting at about page 236 and going through to page 275, and there may be other references. I think it goes even further than that. It would be helpful if these items could be condensed and kept in a similar area. I know it is not easy, but spreading this information over so many pages makes it difficult to follow.

My question is on the washdown stations, which the minister may have covered in her opening. Where will they be and who will be required to use them? Will there be any requirement that certain vehicles use those washes? What sort of pressure can be put on those people, or will it simply be voluntary?

**Ms COURTNEY** - At this stage I am not expecting there will be compulsory use, but I expect many people will voluntarily use the facilities. The first cab off the rank with this project is the one being built at Powranna at the moment. That is on track to be completed in September, which is quite exciting. This facility will be a pilot project. It has been a model of cooperation between three levels of government, being built by the private sector, which has greatly assisted with access to land and connection to utilities. It is going to be operated by the not-for-profit Northern Midlands Business Association.

**Mr DEAN** - Will there be a charge for vehicles using them?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - What is the cost?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No -

**CHAIR** - It is the length of time it takes to wash your truck out. It can vary on how dirty it is.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Powranna facility is going to be operated by the Northern Midlands Business Association. They are a not-for-profit association. There are huge benefits from washdown facilities for biosecurity and farm hygiene, to make sure you are disposing of weeds and not carrying pests and diseases and spreading those, and for workplace health and safety. It is also a better amenity for road users so we don't have waste on roads. The reason this came about was a review undertaken by my predecessor in the last government under his watch of the provisions of washdown facilities for livestock and rural vehicles. It found Tasmania generally lacked publicly accessible infrastructure for dealing with effluent produced during transit. That was the catalyst for this funding. We will be looking to partner with farmers, agribusiness and local government to build truck and machine washdown stations to improve biosecurity, to help with farm hygiene and to stop the potential spread of disease and weeds.

**Mr DEAN** - Where are the others likely to be in place? We have the one at Powranna. Where else are we targeting around the state?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I might let Dr Klumpp answer this one.

**Dr KLUMPP** - The first part of the project will be undertaking a strategic review into that. The current thinking is the ports are really important - Burnie, maybe Bridport and Smithton. We have to sit down and do the work to get the very best -

**CHAIR** - There is already one at Smithton.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** There is a TasWater facility at Smithton.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Even the Smithton one needs work and so part of this project may be looking at the current facilities and whether they need work to upgrade them.

**Mr DEAN** - So it is well advanced. Going to the table on page 264, barrier inspections conducted to appropriate standards and effective screening of all passenger transfers from Bass Strait ferries and major airports. Is Launceston a major airport for the purposes of screening?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - Although 100 per cent is identified here, the 100 per cent is currently not being met. Where are we with that? I have been through the Launceston Airport a number of times this year and I don't know if I have been checked once yet with a dog or anything. It might have been once. There is nothing there to check anybody, you just walk straight through. That is for the flights I have been on. What are we doing with that? When you say there will be 100 per cent checking, that means everybody on every flight. That is, if Launceston is considered a major airport - is it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Launceston is a major airport. On the drug detector dog side of things, our commitment was on the capacity to meet 100 per cent of flights. That is our clear objective. On the Bass Strait ferries and ports, I will get you some more -

**Mr DEAN** - I take it this means incoming as well. Of course, for outgoing you have to go through the screening.

**Ms COURTNEY** - During the last term of government, my predecessor Jeremy Rockliff doubled the number of detector dog units. At the moment, at Launceston Airport, 88.4 per cent of flights are covered by detector dogs compared to only 17 per cent in 2014. At Hobart Airport, 81.24 per cent of flights have been met in the past 12 months compared to only 57 per cent of flights in 2014. We have targets around capacity to meet 100 per cent. I guess there will always be flexibility around meeting those because planes don't always land on time so the scheduling can provide challenges around meeting a particular flight. However, the resourcing and funding is there for the capacity to meet 100 per cent of the flights.

**Mr DEAN** - To meet the 100 per cent, does that mean you will need more staff to do that or is it achievable with your existing numbers?

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** We have staffing scheduled to have a complete coverage against our standard, but the standard isn't that every passenger will be met every time. The standard provides for the various things that will happen along the way. That is what we are aiming to do and we have the capacity to aspire to 100 per cent coverage against our standards. There will always be times where a flight is not met for various reasons. Our performance, however, has been significantly higher than it was in the past.

**Mr DEAN** - No doubt about that. I think everybody has noticed, which is good.

**Ms ARMITAGE -** A couple of follow-up questions on biosecurity. We have dogs at the airport, but do we have dogs in Melbourne doing inspections on the *Spirit of Tasmania*?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With the *Spirits*, there are extensive quarantine and checking facilities, pre-border in particular. I will let Dr Klumpp refer to details about how the *Spirits* biosecurity arrangements are done.

**Dr KLUMPP -** No, we do not have the dogs at Port Melbourne, except in special circumstances. The dogs still operate at the Devonport end of the terminal.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So checking when the boat arrives?

**Dr KLUMPP -** Partly that is because of our legislation and the legislative requirements. Our officers are not authorised to operate in another jurisdiction under our current legislation. They do not have any powers in Port Melbourne particularly for biosecurity purposes. They actually need those powers so we operate our dogs at the Devonport end.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** The dogs are not drug dogs, they are biosecurity dogs.

**Ms COURTNEY** - On Biosecurity funding, we recognise the importance of biosecurity. In Mr Rockliff's term as minister in this role, he increased funding to Biosecurity year on year and we are investing $8.6 million over four years in additional funding. Mr Dean earlier mentioned our clean green brand. From a brand perspective, we also have a valuable primary industry sector. We have a special environment we want to protect, so we recognise the importance of biosecurity. It is good for the whole community to be aware of pressure from biosecurity threats and to be vigilant.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We learned that recently. Back to the Biosecurity and the drug dogs, everybody should be working together. You obviously work together with the other inspectors. Do we have drug dogs and biosecurity dogs there?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Drug dogs would be a matter for police.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand and I am not asking you about that. I am saying if the ship is coming in, do we have two different departments working in isolation or do you actually work together?

**Dr KLUMPP -** The short answer is we do. We do have MOUs with other agencies and the police. We have agreements and we sometimes find things we refer to the police and vice versa. We work together.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** We train the dogs to search specifically for certain smells.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand. I imagine others working at the same time in the same areas.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** We coordinate our activities - one of the big areas our dogs work in is mail and distribution centres. A lot of work is done out of the public view. That is a major growth area - parcels and packages coming into the state. We have dog teams working behind the scenes in mail and distribution centres.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Could you give me an update on how many vehicles were inspected last financial year, 2016-17? How much security risk material was seized? Are inspections random? Would a lot of them be random inspections as opposed to everyone being inspected?

**Dr KLUMPP** - In Port Melbourne every vehicle is inspected.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Every vehicle?

**Dr KLUMPP** - Yes. Then we have a system for flagging high-risk vehicles and every one of those is inspected by us at the Devonport end. We have a 10 per cent audit process where we randomly inspect in order to quality control the system.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - There is a self-declaration area too?

**Dr KLUMPP** - In some circumstances a vehicle cannot be properly inspected or washed in Port Melbourne. Those ones are flagged to us and stopped when they arrive.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They would be stopped when they arrived?

**Dr KLUMPP** - That is right. We have three layers in the new system.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - John is just getting the figures.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** I am not sure if I can.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - If I could take it on notice. A comparison from previous years to see whether -

**Ms COURTNEY** - The TT-Line offshore biosecurity clearance system has significantly boosted our pre-border protection, and more than 59.15 tonnes of biosecurity risk material has been seized even before it came to Tasmania. Since implementing the new arrangements around three years ago, more than 342 000 vehicles and more than 78 000 passengers have been screened. This new way of working has streamlined the process and increased the volume of materials seized. Passengers are welcoming it; the typical disembarkation time has been reduced from two hours to around 30 minutes. In addition to the tonnes of risk material seized in Melbourne, more than 11 500 items were referred to Biosecurity Tasmania for inspection on arrival in Devonport.

**Mr FARRELL** - There is concern in my electorate and other areas of the state about the use of 1080 poison and its effect on the wildlife population as a fairly untargeted method of treating pests. I would like the number of permits and amount of 1080 around Tasmania. Is its use increasing? If so, are there plans to reduce the use of 1080 in favour of other more targeted options?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Browsing animals cause significant impact for our farmers and we have maintained access by farmers to 1080. It is important to recognise this is one measure in a suite of strategies that include fencing and shooting, and the appropriate tool is selected for specific reasons. We have implemented a number of initiatives to help streamline services to assist farmers in managing browsing animals and as a government we have said that until a safe, viable and cost-effective alternative is available, farmers should have the ability to access 1080. However, there are a number of controls with regard to 1080. It is used under clear supervision of the officers. In ensuring it is managed appropriately, clear guidelines need to be managed and there is a clear process for applications for use of 1080, and clear reporting. I recognise the concerns but I also clearly recognise the genuine need of farmers to have this available in the suite of measures available to them. As a government, we have clear controls and guidelines to make it appropriate but until an alternative is available, they will have to continue to allow farmers to access it.

**Mr FARRELL -** What right do neighbouring landholders have to object to its use if they feel it is going to impact on their property?

**Ms COURTNEY** - There is a code of practice to be adhered to and every application is assessed on a case-by-case basis, including a reapplication. There is a new application process. Conditions within the process include notifying neighbours and looking at strategies to minimise the impact on non-target species. In the application process, a number of conditions to be met align with the code of practice.

**Mr FARRELL** - Are we able to get documentation on how much and where it is?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In 2017-18 up until 31 May, 1.92 kg was used. There were 39 permits issued and up until 18 June; up to 31 May, on 35 properties.

**Mr FARRELL** - Around the state?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes.

**Mr FARRELL** - Any areas where it is more prevalent?

**Ms COURTNEY** - It is on an as-needed basis, so no particular area is more prevalent than others.

**Mr DEAN** - I have a number of questions on the Queensland fruit fly issue, because it is a big matter in this state.

We have been provided with federal moneys of $20 million to be used for the fruit fly response or other responses. Minister, where is the funding going and what is happening to it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I was pleased at Agfest to announce, with Richard Colbeck, this funding of $20 million for a biosecurity emergency response and research fund. This Budget confirms $5.6 million from that fund. That will go towards three additional Biosecurity inspectors to target high-risk produce coming into the state; a new specialist fruit fly adviser within Biosecurity Tasmania; and a new industry collaborative role for Biosecurity Tasmania in working with growers, farmers, industry groups and wider Tasmanian community on communications, consultation and education programs. We have recurrent funding to participate in the fruit fly SITplus program, the sterile in-flight insect techniques, should that be required as insurance. At this stage, we are not anticipating needing it and hoping not to. It will support the growers' assistance package beyond the $2 million already committed. A portion of the funding is already invested and articulated. Dr Whittington can expand on the fund more broadly. It was a very welcome investment from the federal government. Tasmania has actively participated in conversations with its interstate counterparts. I have active and direct dialogue with a number of agriculture ministers on this. Dr Klumpp, along with his Victorian counterpart, is leading a fruit fly project. It is an area we are actively participating in and we are thankful to the federal government for this commitment.

**Mr DEAN** - There is a lot in the press. What were the likely sources of the Queensland fruit fly entering Tasmania? Do you now know where it was likely to have come from? It has been in a number of areas, the north-west, in the north, in the south in the state. It is not one place. Do we have any idea of the sources of the fruit fly detected in Tasmania?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have a strong understanding of some; considering there have been a number of incidents, I will get Dr Klumpp to go through those.

**Dr KLUMPP** - We need to recognise this is a national problem which is really important to Tasmania. It has clearly been a national problem. We have had outbreaks in Western Australia, eastern parts of South Australia and now western parts of South Australia. We have had production losses caused by pests in Victoria. Part of the reason for the $20 million is a recognition that this is a national problem. There is a national process in place to investigate why we have this problem and, apart from the increased pest pressure, why conditions have been such the fly has been much more prolific.

There has been loss of some control measures because a couple of chemicals are no longer allowed to be used on the mainland. All that has resulted in increased pest pressure. Already we have recognised some system failures and natural failures. Part of the process of investigating the reasons for these widespread outbreaks are failures in the Queensland systems around interstate certification arrangements; they are related to pre- and post-harvest treatments and compliance with those arrangements. Part of it is about weaknesses at different points in the supply chain, like the fumigation process, which is one I would call a natural failure in most cases. Fumigation is never 100 per cent effective. A small percentage of larvae always survives the process. If you have a vast number more presenting to fumigation, you end up with more that make it through. That is a natural failure.

The culmination of all those things has resulted in outbreaks across the country. That has resulted in the national processes underway at the moment. My Victorian counterpart and I are leading a process around post-harvest treatments, including fumigation. I will be factoring into that the possibilities of radiation as a post-harvest treatment in order to manage all those risks pre‑border for Tasmania.

Considerable work is happening with alternative technologies for the control of the fly and surveillance et cetera. A vast amount of work has arisen out of the response. With the minister's indulgence, I can talk about Tasmania specifically.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am led by the committee but I am conscious of time.

**Mr DEAN** - These are important questions the public wants to know about and wants answered. This happened over a period of time. The first outbreak was back in early January. It would seem more than one generation of fruit fly was getting into this state. It wasn't one access into the state of fruit fly or fruit fly larvae, it would seem on this evidence, and perhaps you could say whether that is fact.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The incursions were believed to come from fruit infected with larvae.

**Mr DEAN** - Different ages of the larvae, not only the one.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We suspended a fumigation facility in Victoria, which has since been corrected. Staff from Biosecurity Tasmania went across and inspected it. We are inspecting pre‑border, at-border and post-border, and we have strong mechanisms in place to minimise the risk of having infected fruit come in. With regards to the generations, I will get Dr Klumpp to answer.

**Dr KLUMPP -** We have fairly good evidence the initial incursions were a small number of shipments of mangos from Queensland - we even know what part of Queensland - that likely entered the state around November 2017. There were effectively three outbreaks - Flinders Island, near Devonport and George Town.

**Mr DEAN** - Wasn't there one down south, in the Huon?

**Dr KLUMPP -** No, they are not outbreaks.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Detection.

**Dr KLUMPP -** We are fairly confident they are from exactly the same source as the Western Australian, South Australian and Victorian events.

**Mr DEAN** - Looking at all of this, is it not time to do a complete assessment of biosecurity preparedness, response and capabilities across the whole of the Biosecurity portfolio area? We have had fruit fly. We have had blueberry rust. It is not the first time it has happened and on each outbreak, we seem to be trying to improvise with strategies and plans. It doesn't seem we have it right, that we know exactly where we should be going or that we have everything in place to manage and handle these issues when they arise. Sadly they will continue to arise. What do you say about that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I agree we will continue to have pressure from biosecurity threats. This is not only a challenge for Tasmania. This is a challenge for Australia. We have increased trade. We have increased numbers of visitors coming here. That is happening on the mainland, which means there is going to be increasing pressure on our biosecurity system and we have acknowledged this. That is why my predecessor invested extensively into biosecurity. That is why this Budget commits an extra $8.6 million into biosecurity. In terms of the suite of risks out there, as you point out, it is broad in terms of what Biosecurity Tasmania needs to deal with. It is important to understand that in Biosecurity Tasmania, we need to manage it from a risk perspective. I have confidence in the system and the decision-making of Dr Klumpp and his team to be able to manage that risk profile. We have a strong approach to biosecurity at the pre-border, at-border and post-border system. We are bringing in a new bill on biosecurity to continue to provide mechanisms to not only help our system stay strong, but also to be able to be responsive. We always need to be able to be responsive to threats and pests as they emerge.

**Mr DEAN** - Are you saying we have everything in place and there is nothing more we can do in this area to ensure we can do it better?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, it is always an area of continual improvement, which is why we continue to invest substantial amounts of money. I will let Dr Whittington speak, but I pointed out yesterday during Estimates that we will always seek to improve biosecurity. It is an area of continual learning and improvement, because it is so important to our state. The Government is clearly focused on it with the quantum of our investment, but it is a shared responsibility across the entire community.

**Mr DEAN** - Has anybody done a full assessment of what is available, what is there, what should happen, of the current and contemporary legislations and actions in relation to these things happening around the world? Is it not time to take a look at the whole thing?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I completely agree we need to stay on top of trends in biosecurity and I believe we are doing that. A national review was undertaken by Wendy Craig that reported last year. Its recommendations are being considered by all ministers at the moment, and they are developing a response. That review, while a national review, looked at the systems all jurisdictions have, including Tasmania. We have had an independent national review, part of which considered how jurisdictions like Tasmania operate, and it is providing recommendations. I am quite comfortable we are well positioned in the context of those recommendations.

As part of evolving the act, we went through a long process of discussion papers and consulting with industry around the development of the new act. That consultation is ongoing and we are building in what we have learnt through the fruit fly and blueberry responses and many other things we intercept at the borders in that space.

Also there is the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy, which we have been operating under now for a number of years. That was developed in consultation with industry, what was then called PR [inaudible]. We are about to start a review of the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy linking the new bill, the national review and the national response to that, and what we can do with the scale of the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy. That is all coming together now. All that combined will provide the sorts of scrutiny of the system you are asking about.

**Mr FARRELL** - Yesterday we were told Plant Health Australia undertook an exercise in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania last year relating to fruit fly preparedness. When was the report received? What were the findings of the exercise? What were the recommendations and were they acted upon?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I made some broad comments regarding this yesterday on how much of the information is publicly available. There is confidentiality around it. That is the nature of the exercise undertaken. I might get Dr Whittington or Dr Klumpp to talk about the actual project.

**Dr KLUMPP** - That was Exercise Decini, a national exercise spread across New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. The aim of the exercise was to check the Lynfield traps to see how effectively they captured flies and for agencies to then find the flies in those traps. The secondary part of the exercise was the ability of the diagnostic systems within the traps. The outcomes are confidential. These are highly sensitive trade issues. They can impact on our export markets. The outcomes are confidential and even we, as individual jurisdictions, don't get the full details from those operations. What we do know is one of the outcomes is that the Lynfield trap is prone to wind stripping. Dead flies obviously locked into the trap can blow out of it because of the nature of the trap if it is not set in the right place. One of the recommendations is for us to review the Lynfield trap and look for other technologies, and also to review the way we deploy those traps. That has happened.

**Mr FARRELL** - Insect diagnosis - did that refer to not knowing what the insect was or habits?

**Dr KLUMPP -** That is about diagnosing what the species of the insect was and we assessed 100 per cent right.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** The fruit flies used were fruit flies we would normally see. They were exotic fruit flies brought in for the purpose. It would have been quite a moment for our entomologist, who would not have known it was a blind test.

**CHAIR** - We still have three line items and the Office of Racing, Regulation and Policy, so we will be taking a break from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - My question is about bees. Pesticides and parasites are endangering the bee population. We have funding of $750 000 over three years: is that also to look at the possible extinction of some of the different groups of bees? If we didn't have bees, we wouldn't have human life. Many people say they have noticed fewer bees in their garden. There are probably a few more wild bees, less honey bees, more bumble bees, and while they all work and interact together, is this to do with ensuring our bee colonies grow rather than diminish?

**Ms COURTNEY** - We have provided the bee industry funding in recognition, as you clearly said, of the importance of bees for honey, pollination services, our environment and for our primary industries sector. It is important. In terms of the $750 000, this is for infrastructure upgrades to help allow resource access so the industry can access places they need to. There is also funding for industry development activities. That $750 000 is more for industry development. With regards to the biosecurity component of bees, Dr Klumpp might want to comment more from that perspective. The funding we have provided is recognition of how important the industry is and wanting to grow the industry.

**Dr KLUMPP -** We have quite a strong bee biosecurity program with an officer who has been in the position now for nearly three years and has developed a lot of skills in association with industry around bees. Clearly, a whole range of pests and diseases also threatens bees. We have a range of import requirements attached to those. We have surveillance. We have a biosecurity system effectively for the bees. There is considerable national work happening with bee biosecurity, both in terms of exotic pests and diseases, but also some of the endemics there.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do we have neonicotinoids in our insecticide and pesticides in Tasmania?

**Dr KLUMPP** - There is some minor use of some of those chemicals generally for household use.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The intense use of pesticides known as neonicotinoids has had a major role in the bees decline. When bees are exposed to these, they go into a shock and forget their way home. Like the insect version of Alzheimer's disease. Do we have this and if it is increasing, will we look at how that might be impacting on the number of bees we have, because it is known to affect the colonies.

**Mr DEAN** - That is the answer to those drunken bees we see.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is obviously an issue.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Work is happening nationally through the ABVMA and an assessment of those sorts of chemicals. You might be aware in Europe some of those chemicals have been banned. The science is still equivocal about relationship between those chemicals and colony collapse disorder, which is the syndrome.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You do not want the queen bee to get lost and decide your house is a good place to stay.

**Dr KLUMPP** - That is certainly recognised as an issue and there is some work being done.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - And we are looking at it. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Again, I apologise for indicating we may finish early but as always the committee has come up with a number of areas they need to scrutinise, and it would be an unhelpful look for the parliament if we tried to rush some of these important areas.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Is it possible to provide an estimated finishing time because we have a number of staff and departmental people who had expectations of travelling long distances this afternoon, based on the timetable. We are more than happy to answer questions as long as possible, but some people need to make alternative arrangements.

**CHAIR** - We will do that when we adjourn, but obviously the timetable was based on last year and we have a minister with us now who has extensive knowledge of her portfolios which has expanded the answers. We will suspend until 2 p.m. and I will have a private conversation after that. If members want to stay for a couple of minutes, we will have a talk to the minister.

**The committee suspended from 1.03 p.m. to 2 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Welcome back. We always have a few time pressures and we will do our best, minister, to try to adhere to the commitment we have for your staff at the table.

Minister, I have a question in regard to feral cat eradication. It is something brought to my attention, not only more recently in the Meander Valley area, but I also recall having a number of meetings some 10 to12 years ago around feral cats and the damage they are causing to our environment. I am interested in what the department is doing in regard to feral cats. Is there a plan to have a working relationships and dialogue with local government, because obviously you will need their support as well?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Absolutely, Chair, and that recognition of local government involvement is very important. The Tasmanian Cat Management Plan was launched by the Government last term, in June 2017. That plan provides a comprehensive approach to cat management across Tasmania. As you said, involvement by local government is integral into the success of this. A sum of $360 000 was provided in the 2017-18 Budget to support the implementation of the Cat Management Plan. Through this funding three coordinators, one in each region in the state, have been employed to work with local government, with the broader community and with stakeholders to improve the levels of responsible cat ownership and deliver more effective cat management within Tasmania.

I can outline what is actually within the Cat Management Plan, but within the Cat Management Act, Biosecurity Tasmania undertakes a range of activities, including providing advice on cat management to owners, organisations, land managers and local government as well as undertaking compliance action.

The plan recognises that cat management is a shared responsibility across the community. There is a focus within that of community awareness of responsible cat ownership and what that looks like.

In terms of feral cats - feral cats are widespread in Tasmania and it is not considered possible to eradicate them; however, management is a clear focus on managing the impacts particularly for the environment and for farmers, on both of which they have an impact. A review of the Tasmanian Cat Management Act 2009 as part of developing the Cat Management Plan identified a number of legislative limitations for effective management of cats in Tasmania. There were several proposed amendments and there will be public and stakeholder consultation on the draft amendment bill as part of the process.

**CHAIR** - We won't see that legislation this year if we have to have a stakeholder engagement process. We are not likely to see the legislation this year?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is correct. That is not my expectation.

**CHAIR** - I am aware also that there have been some trials with a specific type of feral cat trap. I know that they are reasonably expensive, although very effective. Do you have any information in regard to those feral cat traps?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is more on the operational side so I might ask Dr Klumpp or Dr Whittington to elaborate further on that.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - A number of trials are going on with traps that actually spray as well. They catch the cat and then spray it with a toxin that it licks off its fur. They are trials as the technology is still being investigated, so they are not available for use at the moment.

**CHAIR** - Is it planned that they will be more widely available? How long is the trial going to be before a decision is made about whether they are effective in helping control the feral cat population?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of management of feral cats, we have the Cat Management Plan and I am always going to be open to feedback from the community. We have the three coordinators who are now out on the ground liaising with local councils. We have proposed amendments to the Cat Management Act. I am not going to pre-empt some of the detail around the strategy from a legislative perspective, but Biosecurity Tasmania is always keen to be responsive and is very focused on outcomes, making sure the funds we have produce these outcomes.

**CHAIR** - No time frame on the trial

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Just to be clear, the trials are not being done in Tasmania. These trials are being done nationally; they are not our trials but they are trials we are looking at to see how they go. That is the trial you are referring to?

**CHAIR** - We are not undertaking any trials in Tasmania at this stage?

**Mr KLUMPP** - Not with traps, but we actually have a nationally funded project we are working on, on Bruny Island, which is more about understanding cat movements et cetera. We are using tracking technology to do some pretty good work on Bruny Island to see the patterns of behaviour of cats. That work will feed into control methods a little later on and we have those technologies available.

**CHAIR** - Okay, that is fine. I think there is already some work being undertaken in Tasmania and that is a conversation I will be happy to have with you, minister.

**Ms COURTNEY -** Yes, from some federal funding, I understand, with an individual.

**CHAIR** - That is what I am aware of; we will perhaps have a more expanded conversation about that.

**Mr DEAN** - On this point, I am not sure what you said before I arrived -

**CHAIR** - Cat Management Plan.

**Mr DEAN** - I have an email here from a concerned person representing a group. It is headed, 'Feral Cats Out of Control Contaminating Our Food', and it goes into a lot of things about feral cats, and it identifies - and I am not sure if these facts are correct, and you can tell me if they are not -

Parks and Wildlife estimate that feral cats are now past the million mark in Tasmania and if forecast to get to 3 million next year.

That is what the email says. There is obviously a population explosion of feral cats, and toxoplasmosis and all the other diseases they carry are a problem. Are we doing enough through the Cat Management Plan to get in control of this problem?

As I understand it, this is a situation where we cannot attract Commonwealth funding because to do so you have to be in a position where you can say you can get rid of the problem. Is it along those lines? I could be wrong. I do not know if we have tried to get federal funding in this area.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Government clearly recognises the impact of feral cats. Yes, for farmers, but also the environment. That is why in the last term Jeremy undertook the Cat Management Plan. We have actually implemented it with $360 000 per annum over the forward Estimates. There is significant recognition by the Government, by my predecessor, and in continuing my work as minister, so yes, there is clear recognition that this is an issue. I understand we produced the first ever cat management plan for the states. We have committed $360 000 per annum and we have undertaken a review -

**Mr DEAN** - What will that $360 000 do?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As I outlined earlier, there is funding for the coordinators across the three regions. In terms of further detail about funding, I am happy for Dr Whittington or Dr Klumpp to expand on that, but we are implementing outcomes of the plan and part of that is amending the Cat Management Act as well.

It is also important to recognise that there are a range of stakeholders within this area, so it requires a lot of coordination and engagement. There are farmers and people who have concerns about the environmental damage. There are a lot of cat owners around Tasmania, and councils have a responsibility, so it is an area that is quite complex in terms of competing interests. That is why we have committed the money and why we have the amendments going forward.

We have seen what has been happening on Bruny Island. That is a great example of federal and local governments working together in a community. I know there are a lot of passionate and enthusiastic people. I have been to forums on cat management - I went to one in Riverside - and there are a number of individuals and local organisations that play actively in this area. The Government is committed to it, which is why we have a plan and why we have committed $360 000-worth of funding.

**Mr DEAN** - With the greatest respect, minister, $360 000 is nothing when we are looking at the pest the feral cat is. My predictions are that in a few years' time, we will regret we have never taken the real action we should have taken because of the problems feral cats are causing. We have a lot of endangered species now and there will be more endangered from the pests we have.

I do not want to say this, but we spent $50 million on another pest we did not have and here we are, spending $360 000 a year on a pest we have. In my opinion, we are not doing enough and we should do a lot more.

**CHAIR** - We will take that as a comment.

**Mr DEAN** - What is the Government doing to exterminate these feral cats?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will let Dr Klumpp respond to that more fully but, as I noted earlier, my advice is that it is not considered feasible for eradication in Tasmania because of our landscape and many other issues. We manage the impacts. I am sure Dr Klumpp would be happy to expand on that.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Where I can. It is a complex problem, as you would understand. There are three major populations of cats we classify. There are the owned cats and a lot of the work we need to do is about responsible cat ownership and preventing the seeding of the other populations. Then there is a population of cats we designate stray cats. These are domesticated cats that have strayed and they often form little colonies around places like tips et cetera. There is the third population, which are the true feral cats, out in the bush, breeding populations in the bush.

**CHAIR** - Growing quite large.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Yes. All three of those populations are a problem with the way they are managed.

The Cat Management Plan is an integrated pest management plan to try to attack the problem on all those fronts. The main focus of the three coordinators is about that first and second populations, about controlling those populations which then feed into the third population as well, being self-generating. A lot of work is to be done there and a lot of work among a number of stakeholders, including local government and landholders.

Then there is the feral cat population, which is much more problematic. The same principles need to apply to those as to other pests. We need to understand where they are. We need to understand the biology and then we need to apply the appropriate technologies to undertake that control.

We are still only in the first two stages of understanding where they are, the numbers and the biology. There is a bit of work to be done there. We have funding from the Commonwealth to investigate some of those things.

**CHAIR** - Hence the Bruny Island trial.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Yes. That comes under the Threatened Species Strategy from the Australian Government. There is a process in place. There is not magic wand for an endemic pest of that complexity. There is a process for us to work through to get the best outcomes we can.

**Mr DEAN** - I do not envy you the problem. I accept it is a huge problem.

The soft-shelled clam issue, minister, has that been raised? This is a biosecurity issue. What is the process on that? From a biosecurity point of view, is that a real issue or is it located in that one area?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As you have highlighted with the soft-shelled clam, marine pest biosecurity is an important part of our biosecurity strategy. We want to protect our marine environment for our aquaculture and fishing industries as well as our natural environment. Currently Biosecurity Tasmania is responding to the detection of a soft-shelled clam at the mouth of the Prosser River at Orford. This represents the first detection of this species in the Southern Hemisphere. The species is native to the north-west Pacific and indications are that it may have been present for some time.

The response has been managed in accordance with the National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions in accordance with nationally agreed protocols. We have been actively consulting with local seafood industry participants and relevant stakeholders, and the Department is currently taking expert advice on response options, including if eradication is feasible or if control methods should be adopted.

**Mr DEAN** - We are satisfied that it is probably the only area where it is?

**Ms COURTNEY** - At the moment that is our indication.

**Dr WHITTINGTON -** These clams live largely underground. It is extraordinarily hard to determine where they are. We think we have found them now because recent rain events stripped away some sand, which exposed them. Otherwise they are extremely cryptic. They are up to half a metre underground with these long, thin feeding tubes. One of our tasks is to try to understand where they are. To do that will require all sorts of trickery. It will require a spade and digging. It will require observation at the right tide level to see whether we can see the tubes. We are also looking at potentially training a dog to sniff them out. The first step is that. They could be just located there but there might be other colonies. We don't know yet. We are fairly confident that, given their size and other parameters, they have been here for a number of years. It is the first time they have been exposed. We do have a sample given to the museum a number of years ago - 2013, I believe - of a single shell, which indicates they been here for at least that period.

**Mr DEAN** - On the issue of infringement notices to landholders in relation to declared weeds, have any notices been issued in the financial year we are dealing with? What are the real problems we are currently confronting in relation to weed control? Gorse would be well up there, but what are the problems?

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regards to weeds, I will let the department talk about the particulars. As I outlined earlier, the Government understands the importance of being responsive to weeds, which is why we have committed $5 million across the forward Estimates for our Weed Action Plan and doubled the money for Landcare. It is why we have committed to a grant for Landcare. It is why we have increased funding for our regional NRMs because weeds are a significant burden for farmers and also a challenge environmentally. In terms of compliance, there are 126 authorised weed inspectors in Tasmania located across different state and local government organisations. During 2017-18 Biosecurity officers dealt with 346 compliance matters, including serving five requirements notices requiring landholders to control declared weeds, and no infringement notices.

**Mr DEAN** - What were those declared weeds they were issued notices for?

**Dr KLUMPP -** I don't know offhand. They would be things like ragwort and maybe gorse.

**Ms COURTNEY** - We are speculating. We will see whether we can source that information for you.

**Mr DEAN** - If you could. The issue of gorse has been raised by other committees. There was something in the paper about it as well. I am not sure when the department would involve itself in issuing a notice for gorse because it is so prevalent. What stage does it have to get to before a notice would be issued?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of infringement notices, and I will let Dr Klumpp talk to this, I know that Biosecurity Tasmania works hard in terms of compliance, starting with education and trying to work with landholders. Often landholders might be unaware so an infringement notice is the -

**Dr KLUMPP** - Last straw.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Yes, to a degree, Dr Klumpp, in terms of infringement notices.

**Mr DEAN** - I am not suggesting infringement notices should be issued. I am not saying that. I asking about notices where farmers and landowners have been advised and to what extend does the gorse get to before you do that.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Like a lot of things, it is about what the risk is. Whatever pest is impacting on natural values, physical assets and productivity, those sort of factors are taken into consideration when deciding what action will be taken. Clearly there are cases when there are not significant impacts, and we would not expend too many resources on those areas where there are not impacts, but when there are impacts and a need to act, these sorts of mechanisms kick in.

**Mr DEAN** - What is the position with the investigations and inquiries about the deaths of the polo ponies. I guess the question here is: why is it taking so long? It happened back in January. It is a very topical matter and the public has a lot of interest in this, minister. Do we know when an outcome will be known?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I cannot give you a precise date. I obviously take on board the public interest in this case. The challenge around investigations such as this one and other ones is their complexity. It is hard for me to comment directly on this case without jeopardising it. It is a cross-jurisdictional matter. Biosecurity Tasmania has been working with Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. A lot of jurisdictions are involved. That creates challenges.

Without commenting directly on this one, there are also times during animal welfare investigation complaints where there might be court proceedings so there are a number of reasons. With this one, I can say that it is particularly complicated because of the cross-jurisdictional nature of it. We hope to be able to conclude it as soon as possible. I know Biosecurity Tasmania is very mindful of the public interest side of things and is working hard to complete it as quickly as possible. Noting that we are very focused when we conduct animal welfare investigations, we need to ensure we conduct them appropriately and well, and with the appropriate due diligence, because if a matter ends up with the DPP for prosecution we need to ensure the evidence collected was collected in an appropriate manner.

**6.2 Product integrity**

**Ms HOWLETT** - Minister, food safety and testing is vital for maintaining our strong market reputation for quality seafood products. Can you provide an update on the Government's investment in supporting shellfish food safety?

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the Tasmanian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program ‑ TSQAP - and ShellMAP, the new partnership agreement with the Tasmanian shellfish industry has been finalised. This will close the Tasmanian shellfish quality assurance program and establish the Shellfish Market Access Program, or ShellMAP. This partnership agreement will involve DPIPWE, Oysters Tasmania and the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council. The partnership agreement establishes a joint industry government management committee that will oversee operations and industry development and will ensure the integrity and robustness of the regulatory framework. The management committee will be led by an independent chair; a process is currently underway for that appointment.

On that, I would like to thank Oysters Tasmania for the work it has done. It has undertaken a lot of work, particularly with the partnership agreement with the department, to bring that to fruition. As a new minister I have had the opportunity to meet with Oysters Tasmania on a number of occasions. Notwithstanding the fact that it has been through some really challenging times in the past, I think the industry has a very bright future ahead of it. It is a great way to get people into regional areas, particularly the east coast, and it obviously supports jobs in those communities as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Just regarding product integrity, obviously shellfish are very important, but what other products are involved with the product integrity area?

**Ms COURTNEY** - The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code applies to all states and territories, and in Tasmania it is applied through the Primary Produce Safety Act. National standards have been implemented for higher risk primary production activities such as meat, eggs, seafood, poultry, pet food and seed sprout sectors through regulation under the act. The department has an MOU with the federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to minimise duplication in monitoring activity for primary produce and primary produce businesses supplying domestic and export markets. The act also provides for third party auditing, which we see in some industries, of individual businesses food safety programs.

Approximately 230 food safety audits are expected to be conduced on behalf of Biosecurity Tasmania in 2017-18. A small number of noncompliances have been identified, but in all cases corrective actions have been taken to achieve compliance.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - What was noncompliant? Do you have a list of those that would be noncompliant, if it is just a small number? What was the actual product that was noncompliant?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, but we could provide the description of the type of product.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It would just be interesting to see where the noncompliance is with the product integrity.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Klumpp can expand on that further.

**Dr KLUMPP** - I can give a couple of examples.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am happy to take it on notice. I do not mind.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Perhaps a couple of examples.

**Dr KLUMPP** - For example, the way that the product is harvested and transported falls under the standards. There may be some small noncompliances in terms of the temperature maintained during harvest and the transport - those sorts of things. It could be the way the food is stored prior to shipment to retail, understanding we do the pre-retail stuff and the Department of Health does the retail onwards. Those are the sorts of things with small management techniques that may not be strictly compliant with the code.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It may make a difference to someone either becoming ill or not becoming ill with different products.

**Dr KLUMPP -** Over a longer term, that is right.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I appreciate that. Thank you, minister.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If there are no further questions in this area we will move to 8.2, Crown Land Services.

**Output group 8**

**Parks and Wildfire Management**

**8.2 Crown Land Services -**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Minister, how much revenue does the leasing of crown land bring into the state? While you are looking for that, does the funding that comes in go directly back into the management of crown land, or does go into consolidated revenue?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will find out.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am happy to take it on notice if it is not readily available.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I think we should have the information; it is just that we have competing pages.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How much of Tasmania's landmass is crown land? I should just put questions on notice and forward them to you.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of leasing and licensing in the 2017-18 financial year to 22 June, there were 63 leases and 240 licences were issued, along with 34 associated land actions - including rent reviews, land management tasks and variations - which is a total of 337 completed activities. Revenue received from crown land agreements has continued to increase annually due to updated rental reviews and the issuing of some high-value leases. Revenue for leases and licences in the 2017-18 financial year is expected to reach approximately $2.5 million, which is consistent with the target for the financial year.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Does that money go back into the management of crown land?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - The revenues raised through the Crown Lands Act, whether it is through leases, licences or sales ends up in the Crown Lands Administration Fund. The CLAF is set up under the Crown Lands Act, but is administered by the Treasurer. The CLAF provides some funding back to Crown Lands to assist with the management of crown lands. The fund, the CLAF, is under the control of the Treasurer.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Did Forestry, Parks or one of the other areas do the clearing and things to do with fire management that came out of that money?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - I am differentiating between crown land administered under the Crown Lands Act as opposed to the Crown Estate that may be under reserve land. National Parks Reserve Management Act managed land, I am treating as quite separately.

What we have just mentioned here is leases and licences on crown land under the Crown Lands Act, not under national parks and reserves.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How much of Tasmanian's landmass is crown land?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - It has just been put in front of me. I am advised this would be unallocated crown land at June 2018 would be 445 000, which includes the Future Potential Production Forest Land - FPPFL - which is 379 300 hectares.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - On a slightly different tack to do with crown land, how many hectares of crown land are being released for residential development and where are these parcels located? Page 34 of the budget paper 1, if that is any help.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the current situation, we are working with other departments, such as Treasury and Housing in terms of a process around that. At this stage there is no further information the secretary is able to provide.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So you won't be able to tell me how many dwellings, but that is okay. What you might be able to tell me is: is there any requirement under the Crown Lands Act 1976 to consult with the public before any crown land sales?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, there is not.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You can open up this land for public housing without consultation?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No. The act provides in terms of the sale process for sale of crown land. Any future use for that needs to go through a planning process, so through LUPAA, and that process provides for opportunities for feedback and further consultation with the community. The actual process for the sale of Crown Land is articulated by the act but what actually happens to that land has a planning process attached to it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I guess that is difficult particularly for building of houses because it almost putting the cart before the horse: it is sold for a particular purpose and no-one has any opportunity for consultation or opinion. After it is sold, before it actually goes out to the local councils - I guess for LUPAA- they can discuss it but it just seems a very twisted way of doing it.

**CHAIR** - An amendment to the Crown Lands Act?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I assume that normally the sale of Crown Land would not be in bulk, as it is in this case, for the building of houses?

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, and in terms of sale of Crown Land, it is something that is done very carefully and with due process. In terms of an example about the quantum in the 2017-18 financial year, 30 parcels of Crown Land were sold and they were predominantly to rectify encroachment or access issues.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I accept that, minister. I understand that and when I was a local councillor I saw that as well - there will be certain areas where they sell off crown land because of issues like that - but in this particular case we do not know how many dwellings this land will be released for, or how many hectares will be released, but we are looking at probably very large parcels or reasonably large parcels of land for something quite different. Has this happened before in the last few years - have we sold large parcels of crown land for housing development? Are there any areas you can identify where that has happened?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Again the Crown has all sorts of different types of land so, for example, there is portfolio land that may be administered by the Education department and potentially if a school - and this has happened, a school -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I have seen that happen in Wentworth Street in Launceston. It caused quite a lot of angst.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - If a school is closed and the land is no longer required for education, that land may then be sold under the Crown Lands Act for the purposes of whatever. That might well be for housing or it might be for another purpose. There are examples of crown land being sold for a whole range of uses. The minister mentioned the number of sales have been conducted by my department over the last financial year. The larger blocks are normally...

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The greenfield sites.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - The larger or more strategically important sites are generally sold by Treasury. It manages the sale process, still with the same minister, Ms Courtney as the crown lands minister, finalising the sale. However, in a process sense my department tends to deal with the small sales that deal with encroachments and those sorts of things. Treasury has a work group that specialises in the sale of larger parcels of crown land or more strategic pieces of crown land so they be able to give you more detail on those big ones.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You will have details at some stage because it needs to go through your department if it is your land that is going to be sold?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Absolutely, but the process of managing that is done through a different agency although it all ends up with the minister for crown lands.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. I do not think I am going anywhere there. I might have to ask some questions in the parliament when you have a bit more detail or when the Treasurer or Mr Jaensch has a bit more detail.

Over half a million dollars has been allocated each year for the next four years for structural asset upgrades. How is the work schedule for the spending decided?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I invite Jason Jacobi to the table.

**CHAIR** - You provided information to the committee last year and I am sure you will be happy to do it again.

**Mr JACOBI** - I am afraid I do not have the exact detail on the full expenditure of all of the items, but Crown Lands is responsible for a number of major asset portfolios, including several of the buildings in Salamanca Place, the Royal Theatre and Elphinstone Sports and Social, so we have a number of buildings across the state that require asset maintenance expenditure and that is what the allocation is for.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You have an ongoing management list of places?

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - One of the ones I recall a few years ago now is the resurfacing of the floor at the Elphinstone sports centre, for example. That is the sort of discretionary expenditure that we do. It might be fire escapes or all sorts of things on Crown-owned land, particularly these buildings.

**CHAIR** - Disability access?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - That potentially is the sort of thing that would fall into that remit.

**Mr JACOBI** - The Salamanca Centre was one area where we recently funded quite substantial improvements to the building structure for things like disability access.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I was going to ask what the factors were that decide the prioritising or the spending. Factors that decide the prioritising would be?

**Mr JACOBI** - Critical asset repairs and maintenance are the primary allocations we make, or for structural improvements to prolong the life of the building. Or, for example, as the secretary mentioned in the case of the Elphinstone sports centre, maintain the building to an acceptable purpose for sports activities.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Can you provide the detail of the number of approved fuel reduction burns on crown land by year from 2014 to 2018?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - The fuel reduction program, as you would be aware, is run as a cross-tenure program. It is managed out of the TFS, but it is a tenure-blind program. The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service partly delivers that program. Parks was involved in completing 35 burns over 13 367 hectares in the 2017-18 financial year. What I cannot do, though, is break that down into reserve land as opposed to unallocated crown land; I do not have that breakdown here. We would have it captured somewhere, but that is not how we designed the program. The program is around risk so whether the risk is private, reserved land or crown land, we kind of work across tenure and the fire might actually be over all three tenures.

**Ms SIEJKA** - I am interested in the 2014 through to 2018 so I am happy to take that on notice.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will take that on notice.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Kingston council has a question on notice at the moment around a hold up with staff shortages in Crown Land Services. Are you aware whether any fuel reduction burns might actually be being held up on crown land because of this?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As outlined by Dr Whittington, because it is coordinated by a different entity, I can't speak for another organisation in terms of the development of fuel reduction burns.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - The prioritisation of fuel reduction burning is not Crown Lands verus Parks versus other land, so risk is the priority for the fuel reduction program regardless of tenure. I do not think there is a hold up with fuel reduction burns as a result of any staff shortage.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** (Mr Dean) - Are there any other questions in this line item? The matter of the crown land in Pipers River arises almost every summer. The service might be aware that last year or the year before, I put in a report from the people of that area about the heavy growth on crown land, which is right into the town centre. What will happen there as a long‑term strategy to keep that under control? There is only one way in and one way out of Pipers River, and in my view it is a real risk to have crown land running right into the town.

**Ms COURTNEY** - With regard to that specific example, we would have to investigate that separately.

**Mr DEAN** - If you would and I am not sure if it was brought in last year or the year before but there was a lot of concern at the time. As a result, some clean-up occurred.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Happy to look into that.

**CHAIR** - Are there any more questions on Crown Land Services? We will go to Grants and Subsidies and the Capital Investment Program, and invite anyone to provide input into that. If nobody speaks up, we will go to the Inland Fisheries Service, minister.

**Inland Fisheries Service - Government Contribution** -

**Ms COURTNEY** - Dr Whittington now has to depart because he is required at another committee.

**CHAIR** - We thank Dr Whittington for his help over three days this week. We very much appreciate the work you and your department have undertaken and the support you provide to your new minister.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am pleased to provide an update on the progress the Government is making in growing, managing and protecting the Tasmanian tradition of inland recreation fishing. We are working to grow our world-class inland fisheries as part of the broader strategy of taking recreational fishing and boating to the next level.

The Government will make it cheaper to go fishing with its commitment to freeze trout licences at 2017-18 prices, which we have done. The price freeze will continue until 2021-22. We are supporting Anglers Alliance Tasmania, the peak group representing over 26 000 trout anglers, with funding of $215 000 over four years. This will help Anglers Alliance continue its record of improving the trout fishery and partnering with the Inland Fisheries Service - IFS.

The Government is also providing $30 000 in 2018-19 for the IFS to capitalise on the international profile the World Fly Fishing Championships 2019 will bring to Tasmania's trout fishery.

To build and upgrade facilities at potential World Fly Fishing Championship venues, the Government is providing $300 000 over two years. The IFS will work with Anglers Alliance to deliver upgraded amenities at high visitation areas.

To build on the popular Anglers Access Program, the Government is providing $200 000 from 2019 to 2022. The IFS will expand the program across priority lakes and rivers in the north‑west, north-east and Derwent catchments.

Participation in the trout fishery is increasing. In 2016-17, 26 195 anglers were licensed, an increase of 417 on the year before. While we are still finalising it, it is anticipated 2017-18 figures will increase. It is something we are very focused on. By freezing trout fishing licences, we hope to get more members of the community participating.

It was a delight to join John and his team at Liawenee recently and learn how to strip a trout of her eggs. It was a unique experience that I recommend to everybody - it was actually, strangely, quite satisfying. It was a bit cold.

It is important to remember we are continuing to support the eradication of carp from Tasmania. Following the successful eradication of carp from Lake Crescent, the only known carp population is in Lake Sorell, and it is estimated that fewer than 50 fish remain. Based on the continued success of the Carp Management Program, eradication is possible and we are very much hoping it will be achieved. It is probably a good time to wish the participants and the people working for you, John, the best with that because I know it is something many people have dedicated many years to. .

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Thank you, minister, for that. We will go to the member for Derwent who is going to start the questioning.

**Mr FARRELL** - I think we have Inland Fisheries in every year and it is one of the showcases of the Government - it does not have great big line items for extra money and bits and pieces, and it works well within its statutory allowance. I think that has not altered for quite some time, not even for CPI. The importance of the inland fishing industry to Tasmania is very great.

With all the discussion around pumped hydro, is it envisaged that will have any effect on the fisheries or any of the catchments? Is Inland Fisheries involved in consultations as this is worked through?

**Ms COURTNEY** - John can expand on IFS's role in a moment. I have been really pleased to see the good collaboration with Hydro. When I was up at the recent event at Liawenee, Hydro was there - it is a sponsor and indeed I recall its CEO was up there as well. Hydro has a really good partnership with IFS with regard to managing the fishery, and I have every expectation that will continue. John, do you have any further comments on the relationship with Hydro?

**Mr DIGGLE** - We work quite closely with Hydro Tasmania. We have MOUs on a number of lakes that are of interest recreationally and for conservation purposes as well. Through that relationship, Hydro has been consulting with us about the pumped hydro proposals, which obviously still to be finalised. The proposals are still in the feasibility stage but Hydro is keeping us in the loop as a key stakeholder.

**Mr FARRELL** - Do you feel there will be benefits to the fishing industry through Hydro's involvement? I know Hydro is putting some money in and it is the main user of the waterways. Does this have a positive impact on Inland Fisheries, generally speaking?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I think anything focuses on our wonderful water resource is a good thing. I think that will continue. Hydro's recognition of the importance of the trout fishery was clearly stated to me and clearly demonstrated through its sponsorship. I can only see it as continuing to be a good relationship, with more opportunities in the future.

**Mr FARRELL** - How much of a problem are carp at the moment? I know much work has been done to eradicate carp from certain areas. Are some waterways still of concern?

**Ms COURTNEY** - At the moment with regards to carp, we have eradicated it from Lake Crescent. It is known only in Lake Sorell at the moment, and we have already made significant progress there this year. One hundred and seven adult carp have been removed and it is estimated that fewer than 50 remain. We are very close. I am mindful we still have a little way to go so there are always risks with this with regards to spawning. Having met with and visited the team behind it, having learned from them what they are doing and having also learned about the challenges they have faced in the past when they have had setbacks, I am really hopeful. The team's focused and really committed in terms of the circumstances in which they actually go out and catch the carp. There has been a lot of collaboration with research around this. If and when we achieve this - and I have every expectation it is 'when' - it will be a great tribute to IFS and the people who have been involved in this. It is an absolute benchmark for other places.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You mentioned about 50 carp remain in Lake Sorell. A question regarding spawning. I notice that particularly in warmer waters, they can spawn multiple times in a season. While you have around 50 - I assume they are not necessarily sterile - what do you do? How do you manage that? They are continuing to breed. They are not all males. One would assume they are a mixture.

**Ms COURTNEY** - You are making a good point. I am sure John will elaborate on that in a moment on that. One of the setbacks several years ago occurred when there was a spawning event. The remaining fish are less viable fish, which is important to recognise. John, could you comment on how the spawning risk is managed?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Before you comment, could you explain how we know they are less viable? Why they are less viable?

**Mr DIGGLE -** We are thinking fewer than 50 fish. The male population in the lake has a type of tumour in their testes, leading to them becoming fully infertile.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Was that introduced?

**Mr DIGGLE -** No. We think it is a genetic trait linked to the bottlenecking and that population coming from small numbers. It is something in our favour. Probably around half the male population has that syndrome or defect.

You also asked what we are doing about the spawning risk. We have an integrated program where we are removing fish, but we are also preventing access to their prime spawning areas. We have barrier netting along all the wetlands in Lake Sorell, which is kilometres of barrier netting. Behind that, in case fish jump over, which they can do, we have gill netting as a secondary barrier. We have a key strategy of preventing spawning. The barrier nets also have traps built into them so as the fish push along the barrier nets, there are spots they can go in and be captured as well. If a spawning event is triggered by the environmental conditions being warm and rising lake levels, we can hopefully take out the spawning population very quickly.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How many would they have in one hit? It would be quite a few.

**Mr DIGGLE -** That is the thing. In 2009 we had that setback and around 50 fish were involved in the spawning. A 4-kilogram fish can have 1 million eggs.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They do it all very quickly.

**Mr DIGGLE -** The other side of the unfit fish is we are left with the runts from that year class. We have taken the top out of the population and the very slow growing and slow maturing fish are left. They are less fit, fewer eggs as well from being smaller.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. I find the Judas carp rather interesting, can you explain how that actually works?

**Mr DIGGLE -** It is a similar technique used in other vertebrate pest control, with radio tracking individuals. We implant carp with radio transmitters and we track those around the lake. They take us to groupings of carp whether they are schooling for spawning or feeding or whatever. That can target our effort, particularly when the population is getting smaller. You can stick nets out randomly and catch nothing. If you know where the fish are likely to be from the radio transmitter fish, your Judas fish, it gives away the location and you can target the fish.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I thought that was very interesting. Thank you.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - I thought that was very interesting, thank you for that. Minister, I am sure we have had this question answered before: but are we sure we can stop those fish being reintroduced into the lake once we get the clearance on them? What action can we take to ensure it does not happen again?

**Ms COURTNEY** - When we achieve this eradication, it will be an eradication from all Tasmania. More broadly Biosecurity Tasmania has a good partnership in this. When I was up at Liawenee, it was great to see Biosecurity Tasmania playing an active role, particularly with the visitors who will be attending the world championships. Biosecurity Tasmania is working closely with the IFS to ensure we are provide information to local anglers, and also to anglers coming in, about appropriate washdown. Biosecurity had washdown kits that you can buy to ensure you do not carry pests and diseases from one waterway to another. We do that via Biosecurity Tasmania; we are really focused on it. We want to make sure visitors come and fish, but do not bring anything else with them.

**Mr DEAN** - I take it they were deliberately introduced in the first place. Is that known or not?

**Mr DIGGLE** - They were introduced as live fish so perhaps they were brought in for bait or because someone wanted to carp in the lake so they could catch carp. We will never know the answer to that. They were introduced to the state alive.

**Mr DEAN** - I have questions about Arthurs Lake from a number of the people who own properties around there. There is now very poor fishing in this formerly prime fishing water. Lake levels were allowed to rise and fall to a considerable level which had a detrimental effect on weed growth and which has affected the food chain. Many shack owners are concerned that the quantity of fish is obviously very low. Is Inland Fisheries still taking fish from Arthurs Lake to stock other lakes? If that is the case, what are the numbers taken over the past five years? If not, are you going to restock Arthurs Lake, because people fishing that lake are now moving to Woods Lake and other lakes because of the lack of fish.

**Mr DIGGLE** - I do not have the records in front of me for the five years, but we are towards the end of this year's adult transfer. We have removed around 1300 fish from Arthurs Lake, not a huge number removed there. We have set a guide there of removing fish under 400 millimetres so the majority of the fish in the run have been moved up above our traps and allowed to spawn.

It is a complex question in regard to the situation in Arthurs Lake. Fish in the spawning run, I would say, are average, so thinking through the problem in the lake, if it was a reasonably healthy ecosystem with a small population of trout, they would be in excellent condition, making…

What we are seeing in the spawning runs is giving mixed messages. Our view is we are not having a detrimental effect overall on the fishery because of the small number of fish being removed from the lake, given they are showing signs it is not dramatically underpopulated in terms of the condition of the fish. Does that make sense? They are still spawning and carrying and we are allowing the fish to move up past our traps.

**Mr DEAN** - The shack owners and property owners are saying is Arthurs Lake is not fishing at all. There is just not the stock there and they have been moved to others areas.

I heard what you said, but: Will it be restocked? Will the stock be retained within Arthurs Lake for fishing purposes?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I understand there are fish there and in terms of future plans, that is managed by John and his team. Spawning is still happening but the drought has caused challenges for many places. These things have an environmental impact but I understand there is still stock in the lake which is still spawning, and it is managed in a sustainable way.

**Mr DEAN** - What we are saying is that perhaps these people have it wrong - that the people who live there and have fished the lake all their lives have it wrong. Is that what you are saying, minister?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am not suggesting your constituents have it wrong.

**Mr DEAN** - This is what they are saying to me, and I have the email from them.

**Mr DIGGLE** - Can I expand on that? The trout are still spawning there - obviously populations go up and down. This population went down in response to an event. Around 2009 the lake filled really quickly and that has created challenges from the really high level there as well, which limited productivity due to the ability for light to penetrate the lakebed. That is limiting productivity around the shallower parts of the lake.

As the lake goes back down - pumped into Great Lake or however it goes - that should improve. The population is still sufficient to recover so we are just going through a cycle basically.

**Mr DEAN** - Okay. I think it is important, minister, that there is enough there for them to recover.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Also on that, Ivan, I point out we do have a new 10-year fisheries management plan. The IFS has prepared the Tasmania Inland Fisheries Management Plan 2018‑28, which will help guide management. I have a copy of the plan here if you would like it. .

**CHAIR** - We will hand that over to the member and he might like to share it with his constituents.

**Mr DEAN** - I will. That will be great. They will enjoy that.

**Ms COURTNEY** - This supports participation and our commitments. As I outlined in the beginning, we have a range of financial commitments to the Inland Fisheries because it is important. That plan includes included two formal public consultation processes and a review by the Inland Fisheries Advisory Council at each stage.

We had an issues paper which had a number of submissions in the draft plans. We had 11 submissions for the issues paper, 19 for the draft plan; it is a great document which will help guide our future.

**Mr DEAN** - Another couple of questions about Arthurs Lake. What measures have been taken to stop people camping illegally rather than in the designated areas? Regarding the forthcoming championships, is all the planning is in place now? Are things progressing in the right direction? The illegal camping is an issue for them.

**Ms COURTNEY** - The championships are a really exciting opportunity. When I was up there, I had a really good conversation with some of the organisers and we are working constructively with them.

The actual event will run from 30 November 2018 to 7 December 2018; it was organised by Fly Fish Australia.

IFS is providing significant staff resources, infrastructure and regulation preparation. Tourism Tasmania is doing a lot of work on the promotion, and there is funding of $100 000 as our events partner, so we are upgrading amenities around high visitation waters. Our budget contains a new commitment of $300 000 to help build and upgrade facilities, which will be important not just for the fly fishing championships, but also because we want to see more people - from my conversations, more families - and more diversity with people going fishing.

If we have more suitable facilities, that will broaden the number of people coming to fish there, particularly, as commented to me, those with young children. We will also be working with the Trout Guides and Lodges Tasmania as well as Anglers Alliance to deliver the commitment. We are also providing additional money to help capitalise on the profile this is bringing. I earlier mentioned Hydro's responses; I note a number of major sponsors are participating - Huon Aquaculture, Goldwin, DJ Motors and *FlyLife* magazine. We have significant sponsorship on board.

**Mr DEAN** - Do we have an idea of the numbers of people who will be there at this stage?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Launceston will be the host city. We expect participation from 30 countries and around 800 anglers. Launceston will help to host it as a city and obviously there will be a great benefit for regional areas. We also know that once people visit Tasmania, we have very high levels of repeat visitation. I think it will be a great way to showcase our state's beautiful assets and also the amazing work IFS does in managing our fishery in a sustainable way.

**Mr DEAN** - The 800 anglers multiplied by the people who come with them obviously - partners and families?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is 800 anglers and support crew. We are not just going to have 800 anglers.

**CHAIR -** There would be hardly a fish for everyone.

**Mr DEAN** - My other question was about the illegal camping currently occurring - I think around Arthurs Lake, but perhaps it is happening around other lakes as well - what do you have in place to get on top of that?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will ask John to answer that one.

**Mr DIGGLE** - That issue is with the land managers; it will be with Hydro predominantly, which is the land manager around most of the lakes. I suggest that -

**Mr DEAN** - That would be the case with Arthurs Lake, would it?

**Mr DIGGLE** - In parts, yes. I gather there is mixed landownership around Arthurs Lake.

**Mr DEAN** - I can take that up with Hydro if that is the case. Thanks for that. The question we always ask when dealing with Inland Fisheries relates to illegal activities. Where is the predominant offence area and the number of infringements? That information would probably be in your annual report but what are the problem areas? The figures that come out of this normally astound us,

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can get John to elaborate further on the areas. There are 11 authorised officers within IFS responsible for enforcement. For the period from 1 July 2017 to 20 June 2018, officers inspected 4447 recreational angling licences and 241 recreational whitebait licences. There is a lot of interagency cooperation between IFS, Tasmania Police and the Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure we have good compliance. I am happy for John to provide further detail.

**Mr DIGGLE** - Of that effort of licence checking and interviewing anglers, we ended up with 111 infringement notice offences, a bit on the previous year, which was 82. That was the number of infringement notices, plus some were issued as cautions - a further 58 infringements as cautions. Through those routine patrols, we also inspected 600 vessels.

**Mr DEAN** - That is on the lakes and so on? Inland waters?

**Mr DIGGLE** - Yes, it is inland waters - inland waters only. The major areas of offences related to requirement to hold an angling licence and PFDs. So people not wearing their PFDs was a major issue we detected in those numbers of infringement notices.

**Mr DEAN** - It is good PFDs are being targeted very closely. They are causing lots of problems. Thank you very munch.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. This ends Primary Industries and Water, minister.

**Output group 5**

**5.1 Racing regulation and policy -**

**Ms COURTNEY** - First I welcome Mr King, Director of Racing, to the table. Our Government recognises the significant value of the racing industry to our state, our communities and our economy. A strong integrity body is indeed important for the ongoing sustainability of the racing industry in Tasmania. The Director of Racing through the Office of Racing Integrity has a statutory role responsible for the delivery of integrity functions, separate to the commercial business of racing managed by Tasracing.

The Office of Racing Integrity continues to work collaboratively as appropriate with Tasracing, peak bodies, other divisions within DPIPWE and wider industry to ensure the provision of quality integrity services.

We also continue our support for the industry through this Budget, which includes removing the efficiency dividend imposed on Tasracing, which resulted in an additional $300 000 per annum from 2018 for Tasracing to further invest and grow the racing industry. There is funding of $350 000 per annum over four years from 2018-19 for a grant program to thoroughbred and harness breeding programs. This grant will provide incentives to increase breeding of racehorses here in Tasmania, creating new jobs within the breeding, racing and associated primary industries, and increasing Tasmania's presence in the national breeding market.

We have also committed $100 000 to the Greyhound Adoption Program in 2018-19, which will assist in rehoming efforts, and a further $30 000 will be provided to Brightside Farm Sanctuary for veterinary costs associated with preparing greyhounds for adoption. Importantly, relevant to today's scrutiny is funding provided for the establishment of new steward cadetship positions within the Office for Racing Integrity, which will help strengthen integrity functions and attract and retain new people in steward positions.

**CHAIR** - I will begin by asking you, minister, have you met with the three codes?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I have indeed. I have met with many participants within the racing industry. As you can no doubt imagine, it has been a busy first few months in a very broad portfolio, and across Primary Industries, which we have already discussed, I have had very strong engagement as I have had across racing. I am yet to get to a greyhound meet since I have become racing minister.

**CHAIR** - That is what I had heard.

**Ms COURTNEY** - However, my office has been liaising with them to try to make it to one. I know that when we were on the greyhound inquiry we had the opportunity to go. Sadly some of them are also timed with ministerial things such as Cabinet, which is making it a bit challenging to be in two places across the state at once. It has been a priority of mine to meet various participants. My office is actively working to get me along to one of the greyhound meets sooner rather than later. I had been to several of them prior to actually becoming minister, so I have been up at Mowbray several times.

**CHAIR** - I know from your time on the greyhound inquiry that you have an appreciation for the valuable part they play in the racing industry.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Socially, in many areas as well.

**CHAIR** - I am sure they look forward to having you come to one of their meetings.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am looking forward to it as well.

**CHAIR** - In regard to the GAP facility, I have been asking a number of questions over the last 18 months. How far advanced are we with the new greyhound adoption facility?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Unfortunately I am not able to provide a specific update on that today, because that is within Tasracing. The GAP facility - we have funding through this Budget for it, but I understand it is going through a planning process at the moment - but that is run by Tasracing.

**CHAIR** - Obviously racing regulation and policies are vitally important for the integrity of the industry. There is a slight increase but then it talks about the different programs you are funding with that slight increase. Can we have an update on the Office of Racing Integrity? It has been a bit of a revolving door in respect of the head of that. What is happening in that space?

**Ms COURTNEY -** I will pass to Mr King in one moment to discuss what is happening within ORI. Yes, we have seen a few departures. The ones I am aware of have been for personal and professional reasons. We have seen the departure of one person from ORI to move to a role in Tasracing. I have had some great engagement with ORI. I have visited Henty House and had morning tea with many of the stewards and other staff who work within ORI. It was pleasing to have Mr King come on board in the capacity of Director of Racing. He brings, as discussed earlier, a great deal of capacity and experience to this role. I now leave it to Mr King to provide an update.

**CHAIR** - Before you do, are you concerned that the staffing turnover will leave the organisation very short on knowledge and skills in this important area?

**Ms COURTNEY** - Turnover is a natural part of organisations.

**Mr DEAN** - Not seven in two-and-a-half years.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of the capacity for ORI to carry out its duties, I will let Mr King talk about that. We understand the importance of the future of the industry, and that is one of the reasons we have seen funding in this budget for cadetships. I know you will understand that when we went through the greyhound inquiry, one observation was that many participants in the industry are getting older so having young people come into the industry, from the perspectives of both racing and integrity, is important. That is where these new cadetship roles are exciting and a pathway for a strong future.

**Mr KING -** On the last few weeks of being in the role, I have detected an amount of instability in the HR environment within ORI. It has been a priority of mine to engage with the staff and concentrate on filling the vacancies we have at the moment. We currently have a vacancy for the regulatory vet position, a full-time steward -

**CHAIR** - I saw that advertised in Saturday's paper, I believe.

**Mr KING -** One of the people in a full-time steward position was promoted to a chairman of stewards; there is also an integrity manager position. We will also be advertising shortly, as the Minister alluded to, two cadet positions. The aim there is to provide that level of experience coming through the ranks to provide continuity within the stewards' role. All our chairman of stewards at the moment originated in a cadet program that previously existed within ORI. The focus over the next six months for me is around HR and stability in the office.

**CHAIR** - Minister, of those people who have moved on from the organisation, are you aware of any workplace harassment issues?

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is a matter for Mr King.

**Mr KING -** No, I am not aware of any.

**CHAIR** - I know it has only been a short time, but has no-one brought that to your attention?

**Mr KING -** I believe some of those issues occurred over the last 18 months. I have been briefed on certain issues between staff and former staff. I believe most, if not all, of that, has resolved.

**Ms COURTNEY** - One thing probably worth adding is that we do not have the benefit of having Dr Whittington here with us today. I do not want to try to quote him, but yesterday in our discussions across the table he noted that since ORI became a part of DPIPWE in July 2015, there has been a lot of work in terms of integrating it into the department and ensuring that modern practices happen within that organisation. That was a focus of the department and that will continue under Mr King's strong leadership. I think it has a really positive role to play and continues to play. As I said, I had the opportunity to meet stewards and other staff within ORI at Henty House and also onsite at various race meets. The role they play is incredibly important and I think they are doing a brilliant job. I see ORI is fulfilling its role well.

**Mr DEAN** - First of all, minister, what is John's position there now? What are the circumstances around that for the record? I know because I have been told, but I need to let *Hansard* know.

**Ms COURTNEY** - John King has been seconded from his position at Tasmania Police and will undertake the role of general manager, Office of Racing Integrity for at least six months. As we noted earlier, Mr King is a highly regarded Tasmanian police inspector. He has held various positions as a commissioned officer in the state and as a commander, and I think he will bring a wealth of experience to the role. This has been an important appointment because it will give certainty and stability to the state's racing industry and will ensure the Office of Racing Integrity continues to provide quality integrity services. Personally I can attest that in the time that Mr King has been there, he has embraced the role. I think his has been a really positive appointment.

**Mr DEAN** - I just congratulate you. It is great that this office for once has had brought into it a person of good quality in the investigation side who understands ORI issues, I would say, on the investigation side. I think it is a great move.

**CHAIR** - Mr Robin Thompson who was acting in the role also brought great integrity to that role as well.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I think there have been many people in the past who have.

**Mr DEAN** - Sure. It rather concerns me, minister, that you were not aware of, as indicated in the answer to the member for McIntyre's question, about what has happened in this office, because when you look at the previous general manager, Reid Sanders, who was there only for a very short time, one of his outgoing comments was -

When I first arrived here in Tasmania there were many things that needed to be addressed inside the walls of ORI.

There is more reading there as well. For an office to have a turnover of seven personnel in two-and-a-half years clearly indicates something was horribly wrong within ORI. Hopefully all that is behind you and that you are now content and satisfied that we can move on and get that office running in the way it is. If you could comment on that also.

My other questions are: how many personnel in that office? How many staff are on sick leave, or were on sick leave? How many individual weeks of leave have been paid out for staff over the past two years? How many staff are currently on this long-term sick leave, if that is still the case?

**Ms COURTNEY** - First of all, in my time as minister, and I have only been a minister for a few months, I have not seen anything to suggest anything is horribly wrong within ORI, to use your phrase.

**Mr DEAN** - I said it was horribly wrong. I did not say it is right now, but I said it was.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I guess it is a bit challenging for me to comment on things that happened before I was minister. It is obviously going to be challenging for Mr King to comment on things from the past. I apologise for not being able to have Dr Whittington here now to talk about the longer term period.

In terms of the detail around the sick leave, I will take that on notice. Mr King can point out some of them, but otherwise I will take them on notice.

In terms of ORI, I cannot reflect on the past because I was not minister. I am sorry; I am unable to do that. Reid Sanders tabled his resignation just before Easter and that was for personal reasons. It would be inappropriate for me to speculate on what they were. Reid brought outstanding knowledge and experience to the role, and delivered an improvement in integrity services. I thank him for his contribution.

As new minister, I am looking forward to providing a strong pathway for a viable industry, and I think we have all the building blocks for that. We have great participants on the racing side. We have outstanding people within ORI; under John's leadership within ORI, we will continue to have strong functions.

With regard to some of that detail, I will take that on notice and I will respond more fully on notice to those ones.

**Mr FARRELL** - Minister, I know the importance of the racing industry, particularly in regional areas - Scottsdale, for example. It is the night of the year they have the horseracing.

**CHAIR** - It is the biggest night at the pub, minister.

**Mr FARRELL** - I have seen how it can affect areas like New Norfolk, where we had a racing club and, for whatever reasons - and we need to move forward with some of these issues - that local racing event stopped.

There is a good opportunity with you, as a new minister and with Mr King in his position and having the skills he does, to have a good look into the industry. Is it your plan to do that? It needs some investigation to find out where things have gone wrong in the past to make sure they do not go wrong in the future.

**Ms COURTNEY** - In terms of New Norfolk, I have already had lots of active conversations with participants about that. It has been raised with me. The pacing club at New Norfolk has not been active since 2016. Tasracing has responsibility under section 40 of the Racing Regulations Act to make recommendations to the Director of Racing in relation to the registration and renewal of club registration.

In early 2017, Tasracing recommended to the Director of Racing that the New Norfolk Pacing Club did not meet the requirements of the club registration set down in section 40 of the act. The recommendation was based on the solvency of the club and other administrative matters. This recommendation resulted in the registration of New Norfolk not being renewed by ORI and it remains unregistered at this time.

However, a partnership between Tasracing and the Tasmanian Pacing Club has seen Kensington Park recently receive track upgrades, allowing it to be used as a training facility and the Government has made a commitment to work with Tasracing and local government to return the New Norfolk Cup to Kensington Park.

I have had some productive conversations. A number of stakeholders have a keen interest in this and I am working actively on this matter, and I know Tasracing is as well. It is important to recognise we see how important the community racing is and that is why we are committed to the grants rounds going forward. Those grants will provide clubs with the opportunity to invest in their infrastructure and be able to have sustainability because, as was commented earlier, the importance of racing to the social fabric of a lot of these communities is incredibly important. I recognise that. It is something we are working on and, as we committed, we will continue working with Tasracing, with local councils and with participants to see what a pathway can be. It is something we are actively looking at.

**Mr FARRELL** - You just mentioned the other issues: how do we ensure the issues that have affected the club - whatever they may be; I imagine they related to a person or persons - do not recur?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am unable to comment on what happened in the past and what the circumstances are. I am unable to do that, but I know Tasracing plays an important role in working with organisations to help them be sustainable. Perhaps - I know it is still a few months away - when we have Tasracing in here later in the year, we can discuss in a more fulsome way what is happening, and we will hopefully be able to provide you with an update of how things are progressing.

**Mr DEAN** - I just have questions around Oripavine, which is worrying the industry terribly. It is a blight on the racing industry. Currently trainers are being penalised, their horses disqualified, and owners and jockeys penalised for a food contaminant they have no control over. What proposal is being put forward to protect participants from losing their integrity, their reputation and credibility? Is there any plan to compensate these participants for their losses? What contribution to the racing industry is the poppy industry being asked to contribute to assist in the study of the affects of their alkaloids on the racing industry? Does Tasracing plan to at any stage to apologise to these participants for treating them in the same way as participants found guilty of knowingly administering performance enhancing substances?

Those questions are very important because the reputations of very good people in the industry are being tarnished for something they have absolutely no control over. The reputation of one of these people - someone prominent in the industry in Launceston and looked upon as a person to follow in the industry - has been tarnished by having a horse suspended and their licence, I think, interfered with because of Oripavine, which was beyond their control. It was in a feedlot and they had no idea it was in there. Can you answer those questions please?

**Ms COURTNEY** - As you would be aware, it is a prohibited substance in horses presented for racing. If it is found to be present, that horse must be disqualified from the race in which it participated on the day the substance was detected. Racing Australia and Tasracing have confirmed that currently neither body has any plans to change the national or local rules in relation to its detection in thoroughbred horses presented for racing.

Continued dialogue with both bodies will keep ORI informed of the situation. In terms of the work that ORI is doing, ORI will work with Poppy Growers Tasmania, AgriGrowth and the racing industry to develop and implement education strategies that alert the racing industry to the risks of feeding opiate-contaminated foodstuffs to horses, and the obligation of poppy growers to control poppy regrowth.

It is difficult to comment on individual cases; however, the Racing Analytical Services in consultation with ORI is currently conducting a population study on levels to assist with further discussions. It is something that is front of mind. Mr King, is anything more you would like to add?

**Mr KING** - I think, minister, you have covered it pretty well. It is a very difficult subject, but there are options the trainers and owners can go through. They have options with the types of feed they use and being particularly careful where that comes from. It is their obligation to present that horse without any prohibited substances in it. I think, from the reading I have while I have been in this position, that we are probably due for another education round in relation to Oripavine. It seems we had a flurry of activity 12 to 18 months ago on this and then education strategies were put in place. Then it died right off. When I was preparing this brief, I thought I would be able to report to this committee that there had been no positive hits, but we have recently had one in the last few weeks. I think the education is very important and we are probably due for another round to highlight the responsibilities of property owners and trainers.

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, these people do not deliberately go out and use performance enhancing drugs on their animals. Shouldn’t some common sense be applied in this area? You said the horse has to be disqualified; I guess that is all right - but the reputations of people are being tarnished through no wrong they have done. In one case in Launceston, which you would be aware of that, they had sourced their feedlot from the same source forever and a day, but all of a sudden they had a quantity of feed that was contaminated. Shouldn't a line be drawn there somewhere? I ask the new director in this area to take a good look at it because people's reputation are being tarnished - their good reputations are ruined and that is sad.

**CHAIR** - The question is, minister, will you look at it?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am sure Mr King as he does his education campaign will look at it. It is important, though, to recognise that while I understand the intent might not be there, it is as part of the rules of racing that it is the responsibility of the person presenting the horse on the day to ensure it is not affected by substances.

**Mr DEAN** - If I could just ask a question on the number of suspensions and disqualifications. This is on page 263. This is increasing fairly quickly. We had 519 in 2015-16 - that is, suspensions, disqualifications and fines imposed by stewards on licensed premises - then in 2016‑17 we had 717, an increase of almost 200. The target is 470 for this year: how we are tracking and are we going to meet that figure? It would be great if it was less than that, of course. Are we on track to meet the 470 target? Probably not.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will let Mr King talk about the actual numbers.

**Mr KING** - Mr Dean, we are on track to roughly come in around that figure. It does fluctuate over the years, I have noticed, and it fluctuates also within each of the codes. It would seem that at the moment there are quite a few offences within the racing rules in the harness code, which is different to previous years, so it does go up and down considerably.

**Mr DEAN** - I was going to ask where most of these offences are coming from. There has been an increase in harness. Right.

**CHAIR** - And a decrease where then for the increase in harness?

**Mr KING** - In thoroughbred.

**CHAIR** - Grants and Subsidies. I have a question about the subsidy; it is under the Deed of Agreement that supports the industry. It's on page 277. Obviously it is a set amount and then it was to be indexed. I am interested in what the actual indexation is annually. I could not quite work it out. It is $95 000 short of being 2.5 per cent - that is, if my calculator is working. It is $234 000 short of 3 per cent. What is the actual increase?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I can take on notice the number used for the indexation in the budget papers. It is important to recognise in this Budget we have committed to remove the $300 000 efficiency dividend for Tasracing, which provides more funding towards it. In terms of the indexation, I'm sorry, but without the secretary here to provide that response, can I take that on notice?

**CHAIR** - Okay then. Thank you. I would like to know what the actual percentage indexation number is, because I could not quite work it out with my mathematics skills.

**Ms COURTNEY** - That is fine. I can take that on notice.

**CHAIR** - Members, any other questions around grants and subsidies for the industry?

If not, then minister, on behalf of all Estimates Committee B, we thank you very much for your time today and acknowledge the work of all your department people. Certainly I expect your office has been a great support. I congratulate John on his secondment.

**Mr DEAN** - I hope it is a long secondment to be quite frank with you. I really do.

**CHAIR** - Obviously there is some work to be done in that area and we look forward to not having to ask questions about workplace harassment and those types of things next year. Thank you.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to be able to discuss the Budget with you. I also put on the record my thanks to all the representatives from the department, the ones who are still in the room and the ones who were here previously. They have done an enormous amount of work, not only in preparation to provide members with information but also in their role of supporting the industry. I firmly believe the racing industry in Tasmania has a very bright and sustainable future. We have some amazing participants. We have many people who are very focused and dedicated, and likewise across the breadth of Primary Industries - and I mean that broadly across the fishing and aquaculture industries. In my short time as minister, it has been very inspiring to see the people we have in these industries and also the men and women within DPIPWE, who work incredibly hard in a very focused way to support industry. I would like to put that on the record. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - I feel sure that before today you did not know that bees got Alzheimer's disease.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, I didn't. I did learn that today. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - I am sure there was some enlightening information. We also thank Lyn from Hansard and particularly our secretariat support, which is Ally and Natasha. They have been exceptional. Thank you very much.

**The committee adjourned at 3.47 p.m.**