PUBLIC

THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SESSIONAL COMMITTEE MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2026

RECOMMENDATIONS OF FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

The Committee met at 10.00 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Webb) - Welcome to today's hearing of the joint sessional committee inquiring into the recommendations made in the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings. Welcome to the table, Attorney-General. I'll introduce the members of the committee who are with us today. Online we have Cecily Rosol MP, Greens member for Bass, and Jess Greene MP, Labor member for Bass. Here at the table, the honourable Cassy O'Connor MLC, member for Hobart; the honourable Sarah Lovell MLC, member for Rumney; Jane Howlett MP, Liberal member for Lyons; and myself, Meg Webb, Independent member for Nelson. We also have support today from Jenny and Ali in the secretariat and Terry on Hansard, which we're very appreciative of.

We'll get to introductions for you and your team shortly. But before we begin the session, I'm just going to make some comments around recognising the content of this hearing, which may be triggering for some members of the committee, members of the community watching online and others who may come into the room. I would encourage anyone impacted by the content of this hearing to make contact with support services. These include the statewide sexual assault support line, which is 24-hour support from local specialist counsellors, the Sexual Assault Support Service or Laurel House. The numbers are 1800 697 877 or 1800MYSUPPORT. There's also Lifeline 24-hour crisis support on 1311 14 or Tasmanian Lifeline, which is 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day on 1800 9844 34; or 1300YARN, a 24-hour crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, on 139 276; and Relationships Australia, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, on 1300 364 277.

Could you please state your name and the capacity in which you are appearing before the committee?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Chair, for the opportunity to present today. My name is Guy Barnett, Deputy Premier.

CHAIR - Acting Premier today, I believe.

Mr BARNETT - Acting Premier today, also Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and a range of other portfolios, but in that capacity today.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr BARNETT - Would you like me to introduce my -

CHAIR - If they could just state their name and their positions at the table.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you, Chair. Kristy Bourne, secretary, Department of Justice.

Ms van ADRICHEM - Pauline van Adrichem, deputy secretary, Justice and Reform.

Mr PATERSON - Bruce Paterson, director of Strategic Legislation and Policy at Justice.

CHAIR - Excellent, thank you. Can I confirm that everybody has received and read the Information for Witnesses guide sent by the committee secretary?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Great, thank you. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom, without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. The hearing is public, which means members of the public and media may be present. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. This hearing is also being broadcast. Should you wish for some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make that request to the committee, and the committee will consider your request.

Since we will be taking sworn evidence, please take the statutory declarations in front of you for those it's relevant for.

The **HONOURABLE Mr GUY BARNETT**, DEPUTY PREMIER, ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, WAS CALLED AND WAS EXAMINED.

Ms PAULINE ELIZABETH MARIA van ADRICHEM, DEPUTY SECRETARY, **Ms KRISTY LEE BOURNE**, SECRETARY, and **Mr BRUCE PATERSON**, DIRECTOR STRATEGIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you so much. I imagine, Deputy Premier, that you may have an opening statement you may wish to make and then we'll move to questions from the committee.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Chair. And again, thank you for the opportunity to present before the committee today. That's appreciated. I'd like to thank the Implementation Monitor, Robert Benjamin AM KC, and the staff at his office for their work. Our government remains firmly committed to implementing the commission of inquiry recommendations and delivering lasting improvements to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania. The Monitor's independent scrutiny is an important part of the commitment of providing Tasmanians with a transparent assessment of progress and identifying where further attention is required.

This report recognises that substantial work has been undertaken across government while making clear that significant further work remains. The report examines reforms across schools, health services, out-of-home care and youth justice, alongside changes to independent oversight, accountability and support for victim/survivors. Progress highlighted includes strengthened independent oversight and advocacy for children and young people and expanded access to integrated services for victim/survivors. Our 2026-27 Budget included an additional $151.8 million over four years to strengthen child safety, support families and deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. This includes new funding to directly support key recommendations from the commission of inquiry, including further funding for out-of-home

care services and additional child safety officers so every child and young person in contact with Child Safety has an allocated child safety officer.

Delivering the recommendations of the commission of inquiry remains a priority for our government, with 99 per cent of the commission of inquiry recommendations across government having been assessed as completed, substantially progressed, in progress or embedded change across government. More broadly, the Implementation Monitor appraised 276 recommendations across the inquiries and reviews within scope, with 84 per cent assessed as completed, substantially progressed, in progress or embedded change. The Implementation Monitor observed evidence of implementation activity against all recommendations assessed. Keeping children safe is a responsibility shared across government, and every agency has a role in delivering these reforms and embedding child safety in its work. We'll carefully consider the Monitor's findings and observations as we continue delivering these important reforms across government.

I would, finally, like to acknowledge the courage of victim/survivors and the continuing contribution of children, young people and families, and those working across government and the community sector in helping to shape these reforms. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you for those opening remarks. We appreciate them. As you say, we're focusing in on the Implementation Monitor's first full annual report based on the evaluation framework. One of the things I'm interested in a general sense to ask, before we get to specifics, is around the experience of engaging with the Monitor from your department's point of view and how this process went. The department would have been providing evidence against each of the recommendations that it was responsible for to the Monitor and his office, and engaging around that. I know the departments put forward self-assessments and, once the Monitor had made assessments, there was then some discussion, which sounds like constructive discussion, often between departments and the Monitor's office, which sometimes resulted in adjustments to self-assessments. I'd like to hear a bit about how that process played out from the Department of Justice's point of view.

Mr BARNETT - I'd be more than happy to pass to the secretary, Kristy Bourne, to answer that question. But to indicate from my point of view, we've had a very constructive and collaborative good working relationship with the Implementation Monitor, with regular meetings with him and his office with my office, and that is appreciated.

Ms BOURNE - I would reiterate, on behalf of the department, the very constructive relationship we have with the Monitor's office. Obviously, we provide administrative support to the office as well, so there is that ongoing relationship. As head of agency, I meet with the Monitor and his office fairly regularly. But also at officer level, the engagement around particularly the preparation of the annual report and ongoing monitoring of our recommendations is very constructive. So, there's very open communication but also formal reporting. And although I'm not the individual necessarily providing the reports back and forth, as it's reported to me from my staff, and from Mr Benjamin and his office himself, and from what I've observed, it's an open dialogue where there are questions and the sharing of information backwards and forwards. Obviously, sometimes we agree to disagree on certain points, but I've never felt that the agency hasn't had an opportunity to put its view forward. I think what that has created is a broader level of engagement and understanding about where agencies are at, the interconnectedness between recommendations and a real openness to consider our views around each recommendation and where it's at.

CHAIR - Thank you. I appreciate that. Do you have an indication of how many instances there were where the self-assessment put forward initially by your department was then adjusted in response to the Monitor's assessment?

Ms BOURNE - There were a number recorded in the recent annual report where there was some adjustment, but I will confirm that detail and come back to you, if that's okay.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Attorney-General and Acting Premier, for coming along today. When we spoke to the Implementation Monitor the other day, he made it really clear that children's rights are not protected in youth justice. The Commissioner for Children and Young People, National Preventive Mechanism and the Custodial Inspector have showed, through their work and their various annual reports, contraventions of rights regarding isolation, access to health and legal services, detention in adult facilities, access to education. I acknowledge that the government that you're a part of has done a very substantial body of work to implement commission of inquiry recommendations and numerous bills have gone through the parliament. But we're still here, three years after the commission of inquiry, with the Implementation Monitor being clear that children's rights are not being protected in youth justice. What's your response to that?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for your question and your remarks in terms of the progress to date. On behalf of the government and my own department, certainly committed to the safety of children and young people who engage with the corrective services, to your point, as well as interaction with the Tasmanian Prison Service. That's important. And it's important, I think, to recognise that the Tasmania Prison Service only accommodates people who are lawfully remanded or sentenced by the courts, or otherwise lawfully detained by police.

Ms O'CONNOR - Of course, some of them are children.

Mr BARNETT - That's right, and that's the point I was about to make. Children and young people under 18 years of age may be accommodated in watch houses after they have been taken into custody awaiting court or police interview, or while they are waiting to be transferred to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. As I've said before, ideally young people would not be in adult prison facilities. This is why the government is working on alternatives. And Tasmania's watch houses are within the Hobart Reception Prison and also the Launceston Reception Prison, both of which are connected to the police station and the Magistrates Court. This makes it very difficult to source an immediate and practical alternative due to the necessary involvement of police and courts at the entry stage of the criminal justice system. I could say more, but that's an overarching response. And, of course, our ambition is to continue our efforts to implement the reforms that are necessary.

Ms O'CONNOR - We've heard quite harrowing evidence from a custodial officer about the circumstances that children and young people who are placed in adult watch houses face. I don't know if you've been to the Launceston remand centre, but it's a sunless pit. Do you acknowledge that, at this point, the rights of children in the youth justice system are not being adequately protected? And do you agree there is an argument for bringing forward some of the recommendations like 12.11, which is raising the age of criminal responsibility and the minimum age of detention? And perhaps while you're answering that question, you could address recommendation 12.14, which relates to the 24-hour bail system for children and young people, which is pushed out to 2029. There's a suite of reforms that are required and until they're implemented, children's rights will continue to be denied in youth justice.

Mr BARNETT - Well, thank you very much for that very lengthy question.

Ms O'CONNOR - It wasn't that lengthy.

Mr BARNETT - And I just wanted to respond, if I could, in a thorough way to make it clear that the commission of inquiry didn't examine adult custodial facilities. The Monitor encouraged the government to implement its youth justice recommendations in a way that created consistency across all custodial facilities in which children and young people might be held. And the Monitor notes that until better alternatives are available, he considers that more investment in the Tasmanian Prison Service is required to provide better support for children and young people who are held in adult correctional facilities. So, my department and DECYP are exploring options for short-term custodial facilities for children and young people that are within proximity to the Magistrates Courts. And yes, I have been on many occasions to both the Launceston reception facility and the Hobart Reception Prison. We're exploring those custodial facilities and the options, and the goal is a practical alternative to accommodating children and young people in watch houses alongside adults for detention after arrest and before court, bail or transfer to youth detention. The government will ensure that proposed solutions are consistent with the commission of inquiry recommendations and DECYP's Youth Justice Blueprint. And I'd want to note that -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, of course, but 12.11, raising the age of criminal responsibility and raising the minimum age of detention: a lot of these issues arise because we put children into adult detention facilities and the youth justice system doesn't provide for children's rights adequately. Is there any consideration to bringing that recommendation forward?

Mr BARNETT - As you know, the government has committed to all of the 191 recommendations of the commission of inquiry. We're working through those, I think, in a very measured and substantive way, with additional funding of $151 million in the more recent budget, on top of the more than $400 million additional funding in the 2024-25 budget. We are very committed, as a government, to implementing those recommendations. We're working our way through that and I think we've made very significant progress to date, as I think the Implementation Monitor has noted. To add to my answer, I will ask the secretary to see if she could assist.

CHAIR - And perhaps you could confirm, because I believe you are bringing forward that recommendation, that it will be next year, 2027, perhaps, that you are bringing forward a new youth justice act that might address the -

Ms LOVELL - The discussion paper was due to be released in the second half of 2026. I was going to ask about that and whether that's on track.

CHAIR - Yes. So, perhaps an update on the progress of those steps towards that change?

Mr BARNETT - Well, perhaps, if I could respond to that question and then pass to the secretary to add to my answer, if that's okay. Of course, in terms of the Youth Justice Blueprint, it's clearly a responsibility for the minister for Children and Youth, which is Ms Palmer, and I think she's appearing before your committee in February next year. So, of course, she's -

CHAIR - We're talking about the legislative change, though. That's your responsibility.

Ms O'CONNOR - And the two agencies are working together on this.

Mr BARNETT - They do. But I'm just making the point she's the responsible minister for the Youth Justice Blueprint. The original implementation timeline for the recommendation in the commission of inquiry was phase 3, 2029; my department revised the legislative aspects of the recommendation to 31 December 2027. However, our Justice legislative work is dependent on the DECYP-led youth justice reform package. Having said that, there's a lot of work going on. I will pass to the secretary in terms of those operational matters.

Ms BOURNE - Not too much more to add, other than you have said that we're responsible for the legislative elements of the recommendation. But working very closely with DECYP, having looked at the work that they've done in relation to the youth justice reform and reviewing the recommendation against that reform program, has identified a range of interdependencies and the need for the legislative work to reflect the service system reform that DECYP is progressing, down to details such as to what extent do you legislate the system response, who does what and who's responsible for responding to what circumstance? We're working very, very closely with DECYP on that element and, as the deputy said, have brought forward the legislative aspects for completion by the end of 2027. However, that work is very dependent upon the DECYP-led youth justice reform package of work.

Ms LOVELL - The discussion paper on youth justice reform, I understand that's a DECYP piece of work, but it is outlined here as something that there's some sort of joint work on. It says in this report:

> Subject to Cabinet approval, the discussion paper will be released for public consultation in the second half of 2026.

Is that on track to be, as far as you know? I imagine you would be aware of that if it's something that you're working closely on. Is that on track to be released in the second half of 2026?

Mr BARNETT - I think that's a question best put to minister Palmer

Ms LOVELL - With respect, minister Palmer is not appearing before the committee until into 2027, so we won't have that opportunity, necessarily. To your knowledge, as the minister responsible for the other portfolio working on this piece of work, and as a member of Cabinet who would know whether that's been considered or not, is it on track to be released by the end of -?

Mr BARNETT - I am very aware of the huge amount of work that minister Palmer and her department have been undertaking. They've been liaising and consulting with my department and, indeed, across government, police and other parts of government. It's a very significant body of work and I know there's a lot of work going on behind the scenes. In terms of the timing of that, I am not going to pre-empt minister Palmer's decision in and around that. I can advise that there's a lot of work that's been going on. We have had discussions in recent months, in fact throughout the year, in terms of the Youth Justice Blueprint. I will not be pre-empting decisions of Cabinet and I will not be pre-empting minister Palmer, except to say there's a lot of work that's been going on with respect to the Youth Justice Blueprint, and I commend and thank minister Palmer for her work.

Ms LOVELL - Nobody's arguing there's not a lot of work happening. I don't think you're pre-empting a decision of anyone in saying whether or not it will be meeting a timeline that has been set by the government. You've brought the timeline forward and that timeframe has been set in the response to the Implementation Monitor. So, you're not able to say whether or not that timeline will be met?

Mr BARNETT - There's nothing further I can add to the answer I've already provided.

CHAIR - I'm going to move back to a couple of earlier parts of your answer to Ms O'Connor to pick up on a couple of things I'd like some more detail about. One is that, in part of your answer, you quoted some bits from the Implementation Monitor's annual report, page 118, where there's some observations from the Monitor. You quoted some of the parts about the adult custodial facilities and the fact that you're looking into - certainly the Implementation Monitor has expressed high concern about children and young people being detained in adult environments and has also said that there must be more investment in the Tasmanian Prison Service to provide better support for children and young people in adult custodial facilities. Is it your intention to follow the indication there of the Monitor and actually put more investment into that space?

Mr BARNETT - The answer is yes, and we already have. If I could assist the committee to outline some of that work that's already been undertaken. In the absence of immediate and practical alternatives to remove young people from watch houses, under my instruction, my department has taken steps to improve safety and wellbeing of young people in prison watch houses. Key initiatives to date include the following: implementing the use of body-worn cameras for staff engaged with young people and implementing body scanners across the Tasmania Prison Service facilities; procuring the Australian Childhood Foundation to develop and deliver training for correctional officers and managers on trauma-informed engagement with children and young people in custodial settings; improved record-keeping processes; and reviewing and amending the key director's standing orders to comply with the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023*. I'll just check with the secretary if she can add to that answer in any way useful for the committee.

Ms BOURNE - Again, probably not much to add other than to state what might seem very obvious: that the agency and the Tasmania Prison Service, I think, agree that children and young people being held in adult facilities is not a preferred option and it shouldn't be a long-term arrangement. However, our correctional officers go above and beyond in terms of the care that they provide to those children and young people, and we have been able to make some changes, particularly in the Hobart Reception Prison, to try and identify spaces for children and young people, although, I'm not suggesting by any stretch that that's desirable. And the Launceston Reception Prison, obviously, has a number of shortcomings. We are, again, working very closely with DECYP around the examination of some alternative short-term arrangements using existing space that we have, and talking with the Deputy and government about what's required to make that happen, to try to provide the most safe, supported and culturally appropriate space, given the environment they're currently in.

CHAIR - On that - and I'm picking up on the answer provided earlier by the Attorney, what's the timeline on those alternative spaces that you're looking at? When would we expect you to have identified and then finalised and be operationalising that?

Mr BARNETT - That's a good question and I thank you for the question. It's difficult to answer the question other than to say that we are under active consideration and, in fact, practical work is being undertaken by my department. They are consulting with DECYP, the Education department, in terms of those options. I'd say they're progressing very positively as soon as possible and -

CHAIR - Are we likely to be here this time next year still talking about them, yet to be operationalised?

Mr BARNETT - I'm hoping that this time next year we will have a solution in place.

CHAIR - Are we looking for a solution to be in place prior to changing the age of criminal responsibility and that legislation?

Mr BARNETT - It's difficult to say, but we're progressing as soon as possible and -

CHAIR - There's little accountability about that, I think, is the problem. If you're not going to say, 'We're aiming to have it done in the next six months', or, 'We're aiming to have it done on a certain timeline', and then be able to speak to that if it changes, but actually be accountable to it as well, 'as soon as possible' could be forever and never happen.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, and I think I've just answered your question. You just said 'this time next year,' which is 12 months -

CHAIR - So, you're aiming to do it within the next 12 months?

Mr BARNETT - That's my ambition, yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Picking up on that question about rights that Ms O'Connor was putting to you earlier, one of the recommendations that's delayed until the end of next year, by the look of things, 2027, is 12.39, which relates to appointing the Commissioner for Children and Young People as an NPM under our OPCAT legislation. That hasn't occurred yet. I know we've only recently been establishing and putting in place our new commissioner under the new commission model, and we're still yet to fill some of the other key roles of that model. However, we could presumably have been progressing this recommendation to set up that role being allocated to the Commissioner for Children and Young People so that the NPM functions and the -

Ms O'CONNOR - Underfunded as they are, I'm sorry.

CHAIR - Well, hopefully, in this respect, they'll be funded well within the new Commission for Children and Young People, if that's well funded. We'll see how that goes. When we're talking about rights of children in these various environments of detention, an NPM specifically focused on that in terms of children would be one way we could be reassuring ourselves that that's being monitored. So, why is that delayed and why is it delayed so long?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. The first thing I would want to say is congratulations to Sonya Pringle-Jones, our new Commissioner for Children and Young People, and highlight the importance of the establishment of the commission, which is a key piece of architecture under our legislative reforms implemented by our government. We are

very pleased and proud of that. It's taken a long time, huge effort and, of course, Ms Pringle-Jones has dedicated her career to championing children's rights, amplifying young people's voices and concerns, and improving outcomes for vulnerable children. It's been excellent to be able to announce that decision on 8 October when that role commenced, and meeting with her more recently as well. I want to put on the record thanks to Ros Cornish for her interim commissioner role, which was very important.

So, that work is well and truly underway. The commission, I'm sure, will progress as best they can. It's advertising, as you are probably aware, for the Child Advocate and likewise for the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children.

CHAIR - Yes, we may well talk about those aspects later. But I'm asking you about the delay on 12.39, which is allocating the role of an NPM, a National Preventive Mechanism, under our OPCAT Act, to the Children's Commission and why that's delayed?

Ms O'CONNOR - By 18 months.

Mr BARNETT - Well, the commission has just been established, like literally in the last - less than a month.

CHAIR - But you haven't legislated it, and you could have, with an 'on proclamation' type of arrangement, so it came into play as soon as the commission and the commissioner were there ready to assume the role. Why haven't you progressed allocating the role to that commission?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you again for the question. As I say, I've had one official meeting with the new commissioner, Ms Pringle-Jones. They've been established only less than a month. I think there's a lot of work to do. I'll check with the secretary what more could be said. Obviously, we want to progress, but the commission is a key piece of architecture. We put a lot of time and effort across government. The Department of Justice is now responsible. It was the Department of Premier and Cabinet, originally but, of course, my department has done a lot of work in this space. I will refer to the secretary.

Ms BOURNE - As the Deputy said, a key factor that we were waiting for to really progress discussions around this recommendation was the commencement of the commissioner. That said, the department has had discussions with the previous NPM, Mr Connock, some time ago and, whilst the commission establishment work was progressing, has had further discussions with Dr Davies in his now role. I think there has been a divergence of views in terms of the best way to apportion NPM responsibilities to a new commissioner and really need to now formally seek the views of the incoming commissioner. And then, obviously, now that that's a standalone agency, have discussions with Ms Pringle-Jones around the support Justice can provide around appointment process, required expertise, resourcing and how that particular new function would be operational. Noting, of course, that the NPM functions are broader than those that relate to the wellbeing of children and young people across corrective environments, disability, aged care and mental health. So, there's still some work to do with the input of the new commissioner around how that would work in practice.

Ms O'CONNOR - It's not necessarily that encouraging because it sounds like this recommendation, potentially, could be delayed even further if there's dispute or disagreement

about how you give the commission and the commissioner those NPM functions. What's the point of difference? What's the issue that's been identified?

Ms BOURNE - Without speaking for others or mischaracterising others' views, I think there is differing views about whether, in a jurisdiction such as ours, we need to effectively duplicate the functions of the NPM and spread them across two statutory roles. And not saying that there's a particular preference either way, but I think particularly with a new commissioner with a range of differing functions, and noting the Child Advocate and the Aboriginal Commissioner for Children and Young People, being able to now progress those discussions - and in saying 'progress', not wanting to give the committee the view that discussions haven't been had and work hasn't been done. There's an MOU with the previous commissioner for children and young people in relation to NPM delivery. So, there's a really good basis of work that I think now we're in a very good place to formalise, and the department will continue to support those statutory officers to, hopefully, come to endorse the position that they can put to government and to move forward.

CHAIR - What strikes me is that there may be a concern here around resourcing being taken from one bucket and put into another. Won't that first bucket, not wanting to lose resourcing potentially if we're going to split the NPM role, which to me seems fairly straightforward: one focuses on adults and adult environments, the other on children and children's environments. But if your government, for example, isn't willing to adequately fund both buckets, then I can see why there might be some reluctance to have that split.

Mr BARNETT - I think the first thing to say is that we've increased the funding in this last budget from $150 million. So, we are very committed -

CHAIR - But the NPM is still underfunded.

Mr BARNETT - Well, we're very keen to implement the commission of inquiry recommendations, as the secretary's outlined. There's a lot of discussions that goes on behind the scenes. The commission has just been established. The commissioner has a role to play. It's very important that Ms Pringle-Jones has that opportunity to assess what's best for children and young people, their safety and their welfare in her new role. I'm very confident of her ability and experience to deliver in this new role, but she does need to meet with, I think, Dr Davies and the Custodial Inspector, and to consider this -

CHAIR - Or the NPM in this instance?

Mr BARNETT - And the NPM. And obviously discuss that with my department. But I think the secretary's given that commitment, I've given that commitment. We need the best brains to put together to work this through, and there's no indication of a lack of commitment from our government to progress.

CHAIR - I think it's fair to say this committee is going to be interested to keep an eye on this progressing promptly, given the key role an NPM has in ensuring rights are being upheld and the concerns expressed by other entities, such as the Monitor, about the rights of children currently.

Ms LOVELL - On a related area, is recommendation 9.33, which is the appointment of an independent child advocate, the Implementation Monitor has noted there that the legislative

framework for the statutory office is complete. However, he doesn't consider that the Child Advocate can be considered to be established until the act has commenced into law and there is a dedicated resource in that office. Are you able to provide the committee with an update on that, given that the delayed timeline for that recommendation is 31 December this year?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I certainly can. As I indicated earlier, we have already gone to advertising for expressions of interest for a child advocate. This was the next step after the appointment of the commissioner, which was 10 October, is my understanding - 8 October, when the new commissioner formally commenced. So, we're actually moving pretty quickly. It's now early November. Likewise, there's been advertising for the commissioner for Aboriginal children as well. I'll pass to the secretary for an update on how that's progressing, but it certainly is progressing.

Ms LOVELL - On that, I'm happy if the secretary wanted to update us on both of those roles at the same time. I had some questions about the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People as well.

Ms BOURNE - Sure. The Child Advocate role is very well progressed. The panel has formed, really significant interest received by way of the number of applications that we received. We hope to shortlist very soon and then undertake interviews and the like. With respect to your question around how those functions are delivered in the interim, the specific functions and powers of the Child Advocate, as you have said, Ms Lovell, will commence when someone is appointed in that position. However, the stopgap measure in place is implemented by way of a transitional clause in the act, which mirrors the advocacy section in the 2016 act that allows the commissioner to appoint an advocate for a detainee, if required, to continue to support children and young people. This is really important because the commissioner can't advocate for a child or young person themselves because of risks around legal conflicts. So, we've been very deliberate in the commissioning, for lack of a better word, around the legislation to make sure that those conflicts are managed but, critically, that there are no service or function gaps.

The Commissioner for Aboriginal children and Young People role has been very recently advertised. Last weekend it went live. Ms van Adrichem might have some further detail to provide. But I would like to acknowledge all of the significant input and collaboration from the community and organisations and representatives, particularly of the Aboriginal community, who have helped inform the information package for that role. It's something that we've wanted to make sure, that is not our process, because we need to make sure that it's an appointment that has involvement from the Aboriginal community.

Ms LOVELL - Could you talk through that consultation, who has been involved in that process, what that's looked like and what that will continue to look like beyond this point as well?

Ms van ADRICHEM - Thank you for the question. We've liaised with Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations, including the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation and the Aboriginal Elders Council of Tasmania, TRACA as well, and Aboriginal partnerships through DPAC. This has been on, I suppose, an ongoing nature through face-to-face meetings or email correspondence, sharing the information back, bringing that feedback back in and adjusting where appropriate. We are also working really closely with the TAC around the establishment

of a youth panel. They recently published an EOI to seek expressions of interest from young Aboriginal people to establish that panel as well.

If I may add, the recruitment process for the Commissioner for Children and Young People was, I suppose, our first attempt at establishing a youth panel in accordance with the provisions in the act, and it's been a really powerful piece of work to have that input in that selection process. So, similarly for the Child Advocate role, establishing that youth panel as well.

Mr BARNETT - And I recently met with some of the youth panel representatives, and they are very engaging and keen and supportive of our decision-making around the commissioner and appreciate the input into the process.

CHAIR - Just to follow up on that one for a moment. So, the intention is to have youth panels involved in the other two appointments as well, then?

Ms van ADRICHEM - Yes, in accordance with the requirements.

CHAIR - Different youth panels presumably?

Mr BARNETT - It's set out in the act.

CHAIR - But not the same youth panel, a different youth panel?

Ms van ADRICHEM - No. We ran a separate EOI for the Child Advocate, so that has a panel of seven young people.

Ms O'CONNOR - If I could ask broadly about funding: there was a point in the hearing the other day where Robert Benjamin became quite passionate about his concern about funding cuts to the Department for Education, Children and Young People, which from memory is a quantum about $228 million. He's concerned that that would affect the implementation of recommendations, the concern about the impact on out-of-home care.

If we look over at Justice. Justice, too, has a substantial funding cut across the forward Estimates and, you know, I'm going to gratuitously mention that your government has chosen to fund a stadium over some of these recommendations being prioritised. But what is the impact on the Department of Justice's capacity to deliver on its elements of the COI recommendations? How many FTEs are being cut from the department who'd be working in these areas, particularly, for example, the legislative branch of the DOJ?

Mr BARNETT - So, thanks for the question, and I appreciate the comments you've made.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you.

Mr BARNETT - I don't concur with the characterisation of some of those remarks, but I will respond to the questions, and firstly to indicate, of course, in terms of the 2026-27 Budget, there has been an increase of $151.8 million over four years to strengthen child safety, support families and deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.

And you made mention of the out-of-home care, so I'd like to just indicate in terms of that new funding, that's directly to support key recommendations from the commission of inquiry for further funding for out-of-home care services, and additional child safety officers so every child and young person in contact with child safety has an allocated child safety officer. And I think it's a really important point to note, if I could.

CHAIR - Can I just say, though, on that - because the Monitor was very clear when he was here with us two days ago - that that is not being achieved yet and will not be likely to be achieved under the funding provided. He expressed grave concern that considerably more funding was provided to fully deliver on the recommendations in that area. You may not have had a chance to hear his remarks about that yet, but he was very clear about it.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for that, and, of course, we respect the views of the Implementation Monitor and appreciate all the work that's been undertaken. I'm referring to the Budget, 2026-27, and the forward Estimates and the increase in funding and, of course, that's on top of the 2024-25 Budget across government, which was an extra $423 million, which is unprecedented funding, which demonstrated our commitment to the commission of inquiry recommendations and their implementation.

Ms O'CONNOR - Attorney, if I could just thank you for that information, but just take you back to the question about cuts to the Department of Justice, which proportionally for the relatively small agency it is, are very significant cuts. So, that means there will be people who have been working in DOJ or have been working on COI recommendations who may be made redundant.

So, my question to you is: given cuts to DOJ the next four years, what has that done in terms of capacity to deliver on the recommendations, and are any people that are currently working on COI recommendations part of what will be agency job cuts?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, through the Chair for your supplementary question, which is one of your many questions, so I think I -

Ms O'CONNOR - No, my first question was about DOJ's funding.

Mr BARNETT - I think I've answered a number of your questions. I'm more than happy to answer your specific question on the Department of Justice and to note initially that we've allocated $25.832 million over four years in the 2024-25 Budget to the Department of Justice's commission of inquiry implementation initiatives. In the 2026-27 Budget, it includes $13.365 million over four years for the department's direct implementation responsibilities. And as the Implementation Monitor has outlined in his report, which I think we've all agreed, there's still substantial reform underway, substantial work complete, and substantial work to be completed going forward, so we continue to engage with his office on those reforms. Specifically on your comments: I will ask the Secretary to address the specificity of the second part of your question.

Ms O'CONNOR - And part of that is: have you been able to quarantine that capacity within DOJ from your government's broad-scale cuts across agencies?

Mr BARNETT - So, as I pass to the Secretary to indicate that we remain totally committed to the implementation of the COI recommendations. We have done a huge amount

of work with substantial budget behind it in the past right up till now and going forward, and, of course, there's more work to do. I will pass to the Secretary to add to that answer.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy. As the committee knows, the department is not immune from its operational efficiencies that the government needs to meet and that we've been set. As we've talked about at budget Estimates most recently, the strategy that we're implementing is effectively requiring a whole look at the services we deliver, our essential public services, what are our legislative and statutory responsibilities, to support that longer-term financial sustainability.

There's no doubt, as is evident publicly, that there have been some adjustments to the dedicated commission of inquiry funding, and we're continually assessing the resources required to complete outstanding reforms and maintaining, particularly, ongoing frontline service delivery. We're prioritising, where possible, those services. We have had to operationalise a number of those - the additional funding provided to increase victims of crime support, supporting community corrections to people in our care in the community who have demonstrated harmful sexual behaviours and the like - are something that we're working through at the moment to, ideally, prioritise those moving forward.

I think a predominant line item in the Budget is a review of the legislative pipeline. The Strategic Legislation and Policy team - without wanting to speak about Mr Paterson, who's at the table - obviously received an injection explicitly to address the significant legislative work coming out of the COI, which it has done magnificently well at a whole-of-government level. And we're working with Bruce and his team now about how we can smooth out that funding moving forward now that some of the significant legislative projects have been done.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm sorry to interrupt there, but are you able to provide to the committee information on the sort of DOJ headcount cuts, if you like, as a consequence of those cuts because, logically, that would have an impact on COI recommendation delivery if it's not very carefully managed.

Mr BARNETT - Perhaps, if I initially answer that and then pass to the Secretary to assist, but you made reference to the COI recommendation delivery. I want to make it very clear that we're continuing to deliver on the recommendations.

Ms O'CONNOR - We acknowledge that.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you. I really appreciate that.

Ms O'CONNOR - We do.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, because we do have operational efficiencies across government which you're very aware of and in terms of the Department of Justice managing and delivering on their work program and going forward, it includes embedding the COI-related work into core business and embedding the COI-experienced staff in existing teams, so I'm saying like a business-as-usual approach.

There, of course, have been no impact on child safety roles, I'd want to make that point, and savings have been realised through the completion of key recommendations, including the Commission for Children and Young People, which I've just made mention of. It's a lot of work

that's gone into that and, of course, and the Child and Youth Safe Organisations which have both previously been dedicated teams within the department.

You made mention of the Strategic and Legislation Policy team, as represented here by Bruce Paterson, and they've progressed COI-related legislation on behalf of the government as part of their core business activities. And the previous coordination role of a separate unit within the department is no longer required. In terms of the changes, they reflect the transition from dedicated project-based resources to a more integrated approach, ensuring COI-related work continues to be progressed and embedded across the department's core business and, finally, the government remains committed to implementing the recommendations of the COI while ensuring departmental resources are allocated effectively and frontline child safety services are maintained. I hope that assists the committee.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. If we could just sort of get down to some of the numbers.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy, through you. There's no doubt, as I've discussed in previous committees, that the core parts of our budget savings strategy include looking at how we deliver services and what, as I've said at the risk of repeating myself, is essential, desirable or discretionary. Our priority is on looking at our establishments across the agency in line with our ability to fund what we can deliver. It's inevitable that there will be staffing reductions. I'm not keen to detail those today, given that the agency's currently working with our output managers around what that looks like in accordance with their plans -

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry, but can I just say, it's now been some months since the state Budget was delivered, and I know that all agencies have had to go through a process of assessing how they're going to deliver on the efficiencies. We don't need much detail, but just an understanding of how much DOJ will shrink, given the size of the savings challenge that your department has been given. Is it possible to have some understanding of -

Mr BARNETT - Through you, Chair, I think the Secretary was entering that question.

CHAIR - Getting to that. Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - You think so? Okay.

Mr BARNETT - Well, was answering the question to the best of her ability, noting where matters are at within the department. So, I think if you could allow the Secretary to respond.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just a broad assessment.

CHAIR - Sure. We'll hear a bit more then, from the Secretary. Thank you.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you, through you, Deputy, as part of that looking at our establishments moving forward, I would anticipate that the agency has to reduce its footprint by about 10 per cent - is what we're talking to managers about. Now, does that necessarily have to be an FTE reduction? Not necessarily, because the agency has a number of levers in terms of, not just our people, but our services and that's what we're looking at now, through redesigning processes, greater use of technology and, again, supporting workplace renewal where that's appropriate. Obviously, there's been the whole-of-government TVES process as

it's now called, so trying to support staff where they have identified that they wish to leave the State Service, but very appreciative that these discussions remain ongoing and that at the end of the forward Estimates, we need to reduce our expenditure by just shy of $70 million. So, there's a great deal of work happening about how outputs can achieve that, with a prioritisation of services that we have to deliver.

Commission of inquiry recommendations are very much embedded in the work of the agency, but as we move forward, and particularly for those recommendations that are due for completion in 2029, we continue to assess what we require to enable that to happen and we'll continue to engage with government about any additional funding we need to implement some of those bigger recommendations in a year or two's time.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, you've got a huge task on your hand.

Ms BOURNE - Yes, we recognise that.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you, Chair. I want to go back to some of what the Secretary said earlier, where you mentioned that there might be adjustments to dedicated funding for commission of inquiry recommendations, and you said where possible you would prioritise implementation. Are there areas where you don't think it will be possible to prioritise implementation as a result of funding cuts and, if so, what areas do you think it won't be possible to prioritise?

Mr BARNETT - Through you, Chair, I will pass to the Secretary. It sounds a somewhat hypothetical question, but we're happy to assist the committee in any way we can. I will pass to the Secretary to assist.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy. Thank you for the question. Nothing jumps to mind at this point in time, other than key areas of service delivery that we're continuing to talk about at an executive level, where I think there would be a huge consequence if the services, or additional services didn't continue; for example, additional victims of crime counselling, timely assessment of victims of crime applications, legal assistance, direct personal responses and the delivery of apologies to victim/survivors.

We were obviously happy to receive additional appropriation to fund our work to ensure the department was child safe; which, again, really is now somewhat embedded in terms of our general people and culture work, onboarding of staff and the like. So, nothing at this point in time that I am concerned about, but there are a number of additional services that we have been able to develop and maintain to this point as a result of additional appropriation from government that, as we continue to work through our savings strategy, we need to keep front of mind as we work with outputs around what their future state looks like, how we can prioritise the delivery of those services.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Just to clarify, when you're talking about adjustment to dedicated funding, you're talking about adjusting up and asking for more funding; am I hearing that correctly? Where current funding might not be sufficient, you are looking at asking for more funding in budgets to cover them?

Ms BOURNE - Thank you for the supplementary question. Potentially, as we look at each of our outputs' operating budgets and take into account additional services that they're

providing, we do undertake an ongoing assessment about whether that can continue. I think as the budget papers demonstrate, there is a reduction or some funding ceases in the 2028-29 financial year and we're looking at how we can prioritise service delivery and establish what particular parts of the agency deliver, moving forward, to work within what we now know the funding envelope will be. But yes, if we felt that there was a risk that a particular service may not be able to continue or sustain its current capacity, my intention would be to engage with government and budget committee and the like, about those particular budget risks.

CHAIR - While we're on resourcing, just a quick practical question following on from our discussion earlier about the new Commission for Children and Young People and that new structure being in place with at least the key role in place and others soon to come. Looking at recommendation 12.38, where the Implementation Monitor has commented on the fact that while the structure is there, is legislated and beginning to be put in place, the resourcing and we are subject to future budgetary processes, and the new commissioner will be well placed to inform that. Is it your understanding that the new commissioner, on behalf of the commission, will be putting in a budget bid for the preparation of the 2027-28 state Budget?

Mr BARNETT - First of all, we engage directly with the Implementation Monitor and we, through the department and through myself, so we'll take on board very seriously anything that the Implementation Monitor says in terms of the commission. Of course, the act got royal ascent on 23 December, I'm advised. In terms of the budget going forward, my understanding, it was established as a state agency, it's recognised under the *State Service Act* and the *Financial Management Act*. And the State Service (Restructuring) Order effective 8 October effectively transferred the staff of the former interim Commissioner for Children and Young People and enduring Independent Regulator to the new commission.

In terms of the budget, it also - the commission manages its budget and staffing as the COI recommended, and I am advised the creation of this new agency has required the transfer of appropriation funding of $8.436 million in 2026-27 from various outputs. So, you've got the Office of the Independent Regulator, the Commission for Children and Young People and you've got the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People as well. So, future budget bids will be managed and assessed in the usual budget process.

CHAIR - I'm just trying to clarify, is it your expectation then that there will be a separate budget bid for the commission put in by the commission - the commissioner leading the commission - or is it something you're expecting your agency to do as part of its agency bid only and not informed by the commission?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you. As the commission is now its own agency, as the Deputy has outlined, the existing funding for the separate offices, as well as the transitional funding that government provided Justice to set up the CCYP, all transfers to the new agency, and I anticipate that future budget bids would be managed or be put forward by that head of agency or the commissioner, and obviously we're here to very much support Ms Pringle-Jones, particularly as we approach that first budget cycle.

CHAIR - Including for the next upcoming state Budget 2027-28, there will be a budget bid?

Mr BARNETT - Mhm.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms LOVELL - Deputy Premier, I had some questions about the Woolcott review recommendation, so I understand that they've been referred to the Office of the Implementation Monitor for oversight and they're not covered in this annual report because of how recently that's taken place - or not in any level of detail. We were told by the Implementation Monitor that he understands that DPAC and Justice are working on an implementation plan for those recommendations. So, my question is if you can provide the committee with an update on when that plan will be finalised and whether that plan will be made public?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. And first of all, I'd like to acknowledge and thank Peter Woolcott AO and, of course, Radha Sharma for their excellent work, really appreciated, and lots of engagement across government over a long period of time, very considered work, and we're very, very grateful for that hard work.

So, I note that part A was released on 4 November 2025 and part B, focused on the justice system, on 2 December 2025, the government's response was tabled 26 March earlier this year, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet's coordinating that development of a whole-of-government implementation plan.

I'm pleased to note my department's work with the Joint Referral Review Team was positively acknowledged with the review, confirming that all relevant matters of concern regarding individuals arising from the commission of inquiry have been comprehensively identified. In terms of going forward and that implementation -

Ms LOVELL - The question was about the implementation plan itself and whether that will be made public and when that will be finalised.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I'll just pass to the Secretary.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you for the question. I can't speak on behalf of Premier and Cabinet, who are leading the government's overall response, and I don't want to speak for Ms Morgan-Wicks. I think, when we were last before this committee there was some indication that the intention was for that implementation plan to be made public, but I can't confirm that.

The department, as I've spoken to Mr Benjamin about recently, has effectively, in anticipation of feeding into that whole-of-government process, started its own planning process so that we can be sure that we're reflecting the Deputy's priorities in terms of staging and timing of responses to recommendations, and providing advice around where recommendations ideally are progressed as a combination or three or four recommendations given some similarities and crossover.

I would anticipate that, subject to the Deputy's views, that would form part of the whole-of-government plan and our reporting requirements to the Monitor once they continue to establish their monitoring framework.

Ms LOVELL - And so, when would you expect to have that plan finalised - or what timeframe are you working towards at least?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question. In terms of our Department of Justice, which we had, I think it was, 13 of the 27 recommendations and DPAC had the others, as the Secretary's indicated. So, we on 18 August, so just a few months ago, I referred all the recommendations supported by government to the Monitor -

Ms LOVELL - Specifically about the plan, the implementation plan, when will you expect to have that finalised?

Mr BARNETT - Well, the department's working on that implementation plan. It's my understanding -

Ms LOVELL - Yes, we just heard that.

Mr BARNETT - And in terms of our recommendations and the Department of Justice, I know there's liaison with DPAC and there needs to be further engagement with the Office of the Implementation Monitor, so I'll check with the Secretary, if you can add to that.

Ms BOURNE - We would be providing advice to not just the Deputy but DPAC as soon as possible to enable any publication. We're well progressed in terms of our understanding of our advice to the Deputy around recommendations, and would be supportive of getting something out as soon as possible.

Ms LOVELL - Can I phrase the question a different way and add to the earlier question, understanding that you can't speak on behalf of DPAC and the whole-of-government plan itself: in terms of Justice, the recommendations, the 13 recommendations that sit with Justice, when do you expect to have a plan for implementation of those finalised, and will you make that plan public?

Mr BARNETT - I think it's fair to say we've already progressed very substantially our response to the Woolcott recommendations - now 13 of the 27. I think there's been a lot of work that's been undertaken. I'm very pleased with that progress. There does need to be consultation and engagement with DPAC. My understanding that that engagement has been and continues to take place, so I think the best answer I can provide is, as soon as possible, but I do note -

Ms LOVELL - And will you make it public?

Mr BARNETT - there needs to be engagement with DPAC and a whole-of-government decision will be provided, and it's my expectation that that will happen as soon as possible.

Ms LOVELL - And will you make it public?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, look, further discussions will take place with DPAC but that would be my intention to make either all of it or as much as possible public.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. I had a question about one of the recommendations just following up from our previous hearing that we -

CHAIR - From the Woolcott?

Ms LOVELL - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay, I'd like to stay on that topic.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, yes. I just had a question in relation to recommendation 1.6 and I know they're numbered quite specifically.

Mr BARNETT - Are you talking of Woolcott?

Ms LOVELL - Woolcott, yes. But it was the recommendation around independent statutory authorities and their ability to seek legal advice that was not from the Solicitor-General's office. We did have a discussion about that at our previous hearing on the 26 June this year.

Mr BARNETT - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - And at that stage, you advised that there was some consultation going to be undertaken with those independent oversight bodies about that Treasurer's Instruction and whether they saw that there needed to be any changes to make it clearer for them and, perhaps, easier for them to obtain independent legal advice.

I was just wondering if you can provide the committee with an update on that consultation and what has taken place and what you've heard through that since June.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, thanks for that, and I do recall that interaction earlier in the year, so thanks for the question. So, certainly, the government supports the objective of independent access to legal advice and, as such, we've supported in-principle all of those related recommendations. We're working through the delivery of those recommendations now. The 'in principle' relates largely to the fact that independent agencies can already access independent advice, including external legal advice when necessary. However, any amendments will be considered carefully to maintain appropriate coordination and consistency in legal advice across the State Service.

Ms O'CONNOR - Amendments to what, sorry?

Mr BARNETT - Legislative amendments.

Ms LOVELL - It was the amendments to the Treasurer's Instruction, I think, is what we were referring to.

CHAIR - Treasurer's Instructions we're talking about.

Ms LOVELL - In June you said there was some consultation underway, or there was a process in train, where there was some consultation happening. What has happened in terms of that consultation and what have you heard through that?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, thanks very much for the question. There has been consultation, I understand, with Treasury in terms of the Treasurer's Instructions, but I'll just check with the Secretary to assist the answer.

Ms LOVELL - In June, you said there was consultation happening with the independent statutory authority. That was what –

Mr BARNETT - My understanding that's all progressed and that consultation has taken place. Of course, we continue to consult with the independent agencies but let me just check with the Secretary to update the committee.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy. So, that's right, post our last discussion I've sought the views of all independent statutory officers and oversight officers regarding the implementation of recommendations 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6.

In a general sense, I think it's fair to say that the feedback unanimously supported a mixed model under which their officers would be empowered to determine whether to obtain legal advice from either Crown Law or an external provider.

Just this month, I've formally engaged - albeit noting that I've conversed with the Crown principals on a very regular basis, but had formally engaged with them all regarding the recommendations, and as the Deputy has said, we've also engaged with Treasury, given that the TIs are the purview of the Treasurer, so now we're looking at providing further advice to the Deputy about what that potential mixed model looks like; what particular advice, potentially, would you clarify, would ideally be sought from Crown Law? What's the mechanism? Does there need to be a mechanism, given that the feedback identified that independent officers would still like the option to be able to go to Crown Law? It's about providing that clarity and framework that's clear.

Ms LOVELL - And the recommendation was really about what steps they had to go through to be able to seek independent advice?

Ms BOURNE - Yes.

CHAIR - In the Woolcott review recommendations that have now been referred to the Monitor for ongoing assessment for implementation, you mentioned they've all been referred. Is that correct, just to clarify? All recommendations from the report?

Mr BARNETT - I'll just check on that.

CHAIR - And is it in the public domain somewhere which -

Mr BARNETT - I'll get back to you very shortly.

CHAIR - No, that's fine. It might be that you can point me to something that's in the public domain about which ones have been referred and, potentially, some that haven't. And if that's not in the public domain, is it going to be put in the public domain somewhere?

Mr BARNETT - The referral?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr BARNETT - I'm pretty sure that has happened. I'll just do a double-check and confirm because I thought a gazettal occurred. But I'll just clarify that for the committee.

(Seeking advice)

Of all the recommendations of the Woolcott review that the government supported, supported in part or supported in principle, were referred to the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor under section 13 of the *Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Act*, and I understand they were gazetted and so were public in that regard. Can I just add to that? It means that only four recommendations or sub-recommendations were not referred due to their noted status, as outlined in the government response. These are operational recommendations 5.4, part 2, strategic recommendation 5.4, part 3, operational recommendations 5.3 and strategic recommendation 1.1(b). This work reflects the government's ongoing commitment to ensuring systems are robust, agencies are accountable and, most importantly, that the safety and wellbeing of children remains a central priority.

Ms O'CONNOR - When he was talking about the machinery-of-government changes, Robert Benjamin - and I paraphrase him here, said, 'There are some good things I can see and potentially some bad things'. When we teased that out a bit, what his concerns were, he talked about potential for slowing of reform, the impact on victim/survivors' trust in the system, which this process of implementing the recommendations has been slowly trying to build and reinforce, maintaining momentum for reform, preserving institutional knowledge and making sure there's real clarity about who is accountable for decisions relating to COI recommendations. I'm not sure if you were briefed on his comments from the hearing, but what's your response to that?

Also, are you on the newly established children and youth reform committee of Cabinet? And is that the forum where those concerns about machinery-of-government changes could be fleshed out and dealt with to the Implementation Monitor's satisfaction?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. Of course, I always have to do a double-check when I hear you're paraphrasing a certain witness's comments. But I'll take it prima facie, as read, and in good faith. The first thing to say is that I take very seriously the views of the Implementation Monitor. I have said that since day dot. I respect and admire Robert Benjamin, and I thank him for his work.

Ms O'CONNOR - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - Having said that, as a government, we remain firmly committed to the commission of inquiry and the implementation of those recommendations. Likewise, we appreciate the feedback from the Implementation Monitor, which I receive on a regular basis and my department more regularly. And, of course, going forward, we'll continue to take it seriously. I think his latest report acknowledges the very substantial work undertaken already by government and across government, and also indicates there's a lot more work to do. I think in terms of what may happen in the future, that the future will determine that. But we're taking it very seriously and we'll continue to implement the recommendations.

Ms O'CONNOR - And are you on the children and youth reform committee of Cabinet?

Mr BARNETT - Have a guess.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I would hope so, but it's nice to have it confirmed at the table.

Mr BARNETT - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, that is potentially the forum to engage with some of those concerns the Implementation Monitor has about machinery-of-government changes that could interfere with the reform process, isn't it?

Mr BARNETT - Indeed.

Mrs GREENE - Good morning, Attorney-General, and your team. The Implementation Monitor has identified court delays as a systemic issue, with very serious consequences for victim/survivors of child sexual abuse. We know that the Office of the DPP, Legal Aid and the courts are under very significant pressure. While the Babb review has made some recommendations very recently to address some of those issues, the question really remains whether the system has the capacity and the resources to deliver timely justice. Can you let us know today the current average time for child sexual abuse matters to progress from a charge to finalisation through the courts? And has there been any measurable reduction in those delays that the government is working towards?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I appreciate the interest in improving efficiencies across our justice system, particularly court backlogs. It's been at the forefront of my mind. Hence, as you've mentioned, the Babb review. I commend Lloyd Babb SC, who's now just been appointed a judge in New South Wales. I thank him for his report. In fact, I had a meeting with the Justice Forum, all the key legal stakeholders, including the DPP, yesterday in terms of the Babb review and the implementation of it. So, we've not waited; we've acted very quickly, and the department is already progressing and, indeed, other stakeholders around that very large table. I thank all the stakeholders for their input, contribution and work to implement the Babb report and recommendations. We're getting on with the job.

With respect to the latter question, I'd have to take that on notice and get back to the committee once we've had to do a bit of digging into some of those court matters. We'll get back to you.

Mrs GREENE - Thank you. Further to my question, what advice have you received about staffing and resources that are needed across the DPP, Legal Aid and the courts to address delays?

Mr BARNETT - I receive feedback regularly from the DPP, Legal Aid and the courts. I meet with the Chief Justice and Chief Magistrate on a regular basis, as does my department. Likewise, they meet with the DPP and Legal Aid. As you know, I'm a very strong supporter of Legal Aid and -

Ms O'CONNOR - They faced a massive cut in the budget, to be fair.

Mr BARNETT - and continue to advocate to the federal government for their role to play in their support for Legal Aid in Tasmania. I thank them for their work. I met with them yesterday, as I said, with the Justice Forum, with an ongoing engagement. We take their feedback and comments very seriously, and will continue to collaborate and engage with them to ensure that we deliver access to justice as soon as possible.

Mrs GREENE - On the funding and the resourcing that's required, though, are budget constraints limiting the system's capacity to deliver timely justice?

Mr BARNETT - I think everybody is aware that the budget is tight. It needs to be responsible and affordable. This is occurring across government, not just in the justice space. We've always indicated that those frontline services are a priority and that will remain the case. I continue to work with my secretary and the department in terms of delivering those efficiencies, but we are very cognisant of the importance of delivering for child safety and their health and welfare, and will continue to make that a priority.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I quickly follow up on that? We do know, and I've certainly been out and talked to stakeholders from Legal Aid and the community legal sector, that there's very significant cuts to the sector over the forward Estimates. The Women's Legal Service is having to cut programs and there's a real concern about the impact on the delivery of justice, particularly to marginalised people, people living in rural and regional areas. From your previous answer, you said you're engaging with the Commonwealth on that. Is it your contention, as Attorney-General, that all of the cuts to Legal Aid and the Community Legal Centres are the Commonwealth's responsibility and fault?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. You've made mention of Legal Aid, but you've also, in that supplementary question, made reference to Community Legal Centres. So, I just wanted to be very clear: in the 2026-27 Budget, the state government's provided Legal Aid with funding of $39 million and the legal assistance sector of $6.86 million across the forward Estimates. These commitments will deliver vital support to all parts of the legal assistance sector, including the Legal Aid Commission, Community Legal Centres, Women's Legal Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services. Our government's committed to improving access to justice for all Tasmanians. We've made record investments in the Tasmanian legal assistance sector. I wanted to make that very clear.

Ms O'CONNOR - But Legal Aid itself is facing, from memory, something like a $2 million cut across the forward Estimates. Just back to the question. Is it your contention that all of the cuts the sector is facing are the Commonwealth's responsibility?

Mr BARNETT - I don't think I said that and I don't concur with the allegations set out in your question. I will pass to the secretary to assist the honourable member -

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm not making any allegations.

Mr BARNETT - and this committee. And, of course, through the SGF, Solicitors Guarantee Fund, we've provided additional millions of dollars. I think it's in excess of $4 million in the last 12 months going forward. I think you might be thinking of the Safe at Home funding allegation -

Ms O'CONNOR - Allocation.

Mr BARNETT - In fact, allegation. I've indicated that those numbers don't add up. And to be very clear about Safe at Home, because it's an important program, those claims are wrong about the funding cuts to Safe at Home. Frankly, it's sowing doubt and fear for victim/survivors

while letting your colleagues in Canberra pull a pin on funding essential family violence services. The government invested permanent funding at $4.86 million for the Safe at Home family violence service system in response to community needs. The funding commitment ensures Safe at Home can maintain current and previous staffing levels and continues to deliver those vital services. Safe at Home also receives something from the federal government to deliver the Keeping Women Safe program. This program has supported hundreds of Tasmanian women and families impacted by family violence to feel safe in their homes. In this year's budget, our government has allocated $450,000 additional funding allocated for the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes initiative to support the shortfall, with Commonwealth funding ending on 30 June 2027. So, as part of the 2026-27 Budget, that was an increase.

I'll just conclude by saying, as a government, we've written to the responsible federal minister, Tanya Plibersek, highlighting the ongoing need for this program and urging the federal government to provide certainty for victim/survivors of family violence. That's a very important point I'd want to make.

CHAIR - Sounds like your contention is that the state government support into the legal assistance sector is not being cut over the forward Estimates. Is that your contention?

Mr BARNETT - In terms of the exact details on that, I'll pass to the secretary.

Ms BOURNE - As members would be well aware and has already been discussed, the legal assistance sector has, effectively, a split-funding model, so state and Commonwealth, and very conscious of our obligations under the Commonwealth's National Access to Justice Partnership. We work very closely with Legal Aid and their board in terms of the work that they need to do to adjust some of their services, particularly as a result of, I think from memory, a reduction in some funding allocated for costs consequences funding, which Ms van Adrichem is probably more across than I am.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's state funding that you're talking about there, is it?

Ms BOURNE - Commonwealth funding.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's Commonwealth funding. We're just trying to disentangle -

Mr BARNETT - Commonwealth.

Ms BOURNE - Yes but, Deputy, it might enliven a more substantive response if Ms van Adrichem could add anything to that.

Ms van ADRICHEM - TLA, in particular, has a mixed funding model. So, there was a cost consequence allocation from the Commonwealth that ended, from memory, in 2024 and that was not included in the new National Access to Justice Partnership Agreement, which commenced in 2025, which led to, arguably, a reduction. The Commonwealth has a view that they've maintained, through an increase in NAJP funding. However, the majority of the increase in National Access to Justice Partnership funding was allocated to the Community Legal Centres and Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Services in that agreement. So, that's a specifically Commonwealth-funded aspect of the funding profile for Tasmania Legal Aid. There's also the state funding that's primarily for criminal law services. As you have identified,

there is $2 million in the forward Estimates that will conclude at 30 June 2027, so it would be a matter for government around any future allocations.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, and the secretary has an answer to your earlier question if you're happy to take that answer now.

Ms BOURNE - In relation to your very sensible question around contested COI recommendations, from the Monitor's most recent appraisal process, there were seven departmental recommendations that moved from completed to substantially progressed. These recommendations primarily related to the establishment of the Commission for Children and Young People, which the department had initially marked as complete because the legislative aspects were complete. But I appreciate and respect the Monitor's view that they should be substantially progressed until further implementation steps occur that move into the purview of the commissioner. One of those recommendations, 18.11, related to the referral of serious misconduct matters to the Integrity Commission. The legislation had been put into the parliament but the referral process hasn't officially commenced.

CHAIR - Thanks for clarifying that. I appreciate it. Inbuilt in my questions wasn't any particular criticism of that process. It sounded like a very constructive process between departments and the Monitor in discussing the self-assessments versus the external assessments by the Monitor, and a lot of receptivity to finding common understanding on where to land.

Ms BOURNE - Yes, absolutely.

Ms LOVELL - I have a question about recommendation 16.17, which was about preventative programs for adults who are at risk of abusing, or have abused, children. There's an outline in the companion document about the work that has been undertaken, so we have that here already. My question is about when that program will start to be delivered. It says: 'Justice anticipates delivery of the program commencing during the last half of 2026.' Is that on track? Has it started?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question, a very fair question. In the report, as you said, and the companion document, which is very substantial, so thank you for digging into it and finding out these important matters for the committee and the public - it's an operational matter so I'll refer to the secretary.

Ms BOURNE - In a broader context, members may be aware that in 2026, Stop It Now! Australia was funded, through a federal grant, to deliver a national preventative program, and I understand that DPAC is currently working to increase the profile of that program. But from the department's perspective, Community Corrections has implemented the Rockwood Sex Offender Treatment Program for people with convictions for sexual offences who are subject to community-based supervision. That can be tailored to the individual needs of offenders. During the 2025-26 financial year, 51 individuals commenced treatment for sexual offending in the community through this program, which really is quite a significant advancement in community-based risk management. Facilitators across CommCorr and the TPS have been trained in the delivery of this program, so we can ensure that the same program content is delivered across all areas of the correctional system and that perpetrators receive that through-care support upon their release from prison.

Just to note, if I may, Deputy, community corrections also has, through additional investment, established a dedicated team to provide therapeutic advice, support, and intervention for staff, stakeholders, but also our high-risk and complex community-based offenders, which is a significant addition to the Community Corrections team to enable it to respond more effectively and in a more tailored way, particularly to those high-risk offenders.

Ms LOVELL - And in terms of monitoring and evaluation of those programs, what's happening or what is planned for that?

Ms BOURNE - That is a great question. I don't have an answer, particularly around the Rockwood program, but based on the previous approach of Community Corrections, that ongoing monitoring and considering whether the program is actually delivering outcomes for offenders is part of its core business. Whilst I can't confirm what that approach takes with this particular program, I would appreciate that there would be some evaluation of its effectiveness, particularly given the individuals that it's working with and how it's working with the new statewide team as well.

Ms LOVELL - It does say in here that part of the work that's been undertaken by Justice is preparing an evaluation to support monitoring and evaluation of the service framework. Do you have any information about how often that would be done, what that evaluation would look like, what you're looking for through that process?

Ms BOURNE - Through you, Deputy, I'd have to take that on notice and would be happy to provide those details to the committee.

CHAIR - Can I just clarify further on those questions, because I had also noted in the companion document to the monitor's report, that comment that this was due to be done by 30 June this year. There doesn't seem to have been any particular legislative delay, or any other particular stated reason for a delay, and it's been delayed till the end of this year, and what's described there is sort of preparatory work mostly, with the comment at the end -

> Justice anticipates that delivery of the program will commence during the last half of 2026.

From the answer you gave to Ms Lovell, do I take that to mean that you that Justice regards this as having commenced now in fulfilling of that comment? Can I just clarify that?

Ms LOVELL - Or the federal program is superseding this, or?

CHAIR - I'm just trying to clarify where we're up to, to see if we've progressed from what was assessed at the end of June by the monitor.

Ms BOURNE - Through you, Deputy. Yes, is the short answer. I think, we've taken action to commence the delivery of a program. So, our state program has commenced. The broader work -

Ms LOVELL - That's the Rockwood?

Ms BOURNE - Yes. The broader work that the recommendation notes, where we're working with DPAC around how that federal grant to establish the national preventative program is applied in the Tasmanian context remains ongoing.

CHAIR - Thank you, I just wanted to clarify that.

Ms ROSOL - I just have some questions relating to recommendation 16.08, which was around the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions receiving ongoing professional development for staff on child sexual abuse. I was just looking through the supporting document from the Implementation Monitor around the OAM's appraisal, and it says in there that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution has undertaken training, but that took place prior to the recommendations being made, and then it broadly referred to a variety of topics. I'm just wondering if you could update on this, like, what training has been provided? Is there a schedule that's been developed for this so it's ongoing? How is it being going to be ongoing? And noting the delay in the implementation of this, what do you see as still being required for this to be fully implemented.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. Through you, Chair, and before I pass to the secretary regarding those operational questions, in terms of child safety training, it is a priority and it must remain so, not just in Justice, but across all state servants. So, in response to this, I've made it clear to my department that I expect those training completion rates to improve. I know my secretary takes this reform seriously and will work with the office of the monitor to improve that rate. We need to ensure all staff have the appropriate training and capability to support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. And I'm advised - and I know my secretary is advised - that they have strengthened the internal communications to make both mine and her expectation clear that all staff will complete the training.

I also understand that the secretary has now included this is an assessment requirement in all employees' professional development plans. I could say more, but I think it's best I pass to the secretary to update the committee on the training and where it's up to and where we're headed. Thank you.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy, and thanks for the question. Without wanting to seek to not take responsibility for this recommendation, it does sit with the DPP, who is an independent statutory officer. The staff are Justice employees; however, that means that I'm limited in terms of not wanting to speak on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

That said, the deputy's comments around training across the Crown Law principal areas is something that remains a firm commitment of the agency, and I have a very collaborative relationship with the DPP and share information in terms of the training available to staff. But I do know that the director has a very significant training program that it provides to its legal practitioners - similar in some ways to the work and training that's been provided to legal practitioners within the State Litigation Office around trauma-informed practice and associated practice around ensuring that compliance with model litigant guidelines and the like. But, in terms of an explicit response to that recommendation, it's the responsibility of the DPP.

Mr BARNETT - I can assist, through you, Chair - to the honourable member just yesterday in the Justice forum, without speaking out of turn - but the DPP was talking about recent training that was undertaken by a number of the DPP staff. So, having said that,

obviously the secretary's response is appropriate and the DPP is probably best to answer that question. Thank you.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. I'm just picking up on something the secretary there said about - mentioned model litigation. I know that that is a recommendation that - I just haven't got it quite in front of me - but I know that at the moment you're aiming for that to be fully implemented by the end of the year, December 2026. Just wondering if you can update on that, where that's at and if you still see it as being able to be completed by the end of the year? It didn't look like that might be possible, based on what the OAM had said.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you for the question. So, this is a body of work that has progressed somewhat since we last appeared before the committee. As, I think, we talked about last time, the draft model litigant guidelines continue to be under development given that they hadn't been reissued since the establishment of the State Litigation Office in 2019.

CHAIR - Can we clarify the recommendation number that we're looking at for this just for our reference as we discuss it?

Ms ROSOL - 17.02.

CHAIR - Thank you. Sorry to interrupt.

Ms BOURNE - Oh, no, thank you. So, the work that we're doing is seeking to ensure that the model litigant guidelines respect and acknowledge the now separate State Litigation Office, as well as reflect trauma-informed practice and guidelines that legal practitioners already seek to conform with.

In terms of timing, that's advice that we'll continue to prepare for the deputy's consideration, noting ongoing consultation with the Crown principals around that final version.

CHAIR - Is it on track for delivery by the end of this year, then, as it's been indicated there: a delayed revised timeline 31 December 2026?

Ms BOURNE - I suspect - being realistic in terms of where we're at, at the year - it would be very close to completion. It may be that the final version isn't able to be provided to government for consideration until very early in the new year.

CHAIR - I appreciate that clarification. Further to that, Ms Rosol?

Mr BARNETT - Chair, can I understand, yes, we have an update for the committee. I think I advised in terms of the gazettal. It was my understanding that -

CHAIR - Of the Woolcott recommendations that have been referred?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, that was my understanding that there had been a gazettal. However, the secretary would like to update the committee.

Ms BOURNE - Apologies for the oversight. The referral has not yet been gazetted and it's being progressed. But the intention is for the recommendations that the Attorney has referred to the Monitor to be gazetted.

CHAIR - When did they get referred to the Monitor?

Ms BOURNE - I can check that date.

Mr BARNETT - We'll check that. That would be a normal process. That's why I indicated that. That was my understanding. But to correct the record –

CHAIR - Can I skip to another recommendation for us to discuss? I'm mindful we're on our final stages of the hearing and we want to get through a bit more material. So, recommendation 18.9, and in the companion document I'm looking at it on page 147, is around the Joint Standing Committee of the Tasmanian Parliament to oversee the performance and proper execution of functions of the Commission for Children and Young People, the new commission model. We had an interesting discussion with the Monitor about this because it says there it was due in 30 June 2026. It's been revised to a timeline to be negotiated.

I'm just a little bit interested in it and this committee is probably a little bit interested in it, given that the terms of reference for this committee do include, under 1(e) of the terms of reference, overseeing the performance and proper execution of the functions of the Commission for Children and Young People as provided for by recommendation 18.9. I'm keen to understand, is it your intention to have a conversation with this committee, not necessarily today, but at some point, about how this recommendation is delivered on and its relationship to this committee?

Mr BARNETT - The answer is yes. The commission's now established, 8 October. The act establishes a new joint standing committee on the Commission of Children and Young People, providing dedicated parliamentary oversight of the commission's statutory office holders. While the committee is established by legislation, its members are appointed by the parliament, which you're aware of. The act provides the committee is appointed in accordance with the parliamentary procedures applying to the appointment of select committees. Under section 38 of the act, the committee responsibility, as you know, and I won't go through it all, but the monitoring and reviewing of the performance of the commission, examining any reports, reporting to either House on letters of concern, guidance and advice on functions, powers, et cetera, of the commission, and giving distinct statutory functions to this committee.

In terms of that update, my advice is that that will occur very, very soon, once parliament resumes. That's my intention, to progress that as soon as possible upon the resumption of parliament.

CHAIR - You're intending to form a new standing committee?

Mr BARNETT - Mm.

CHAIR - Rather than interact with this committee, which has this function in its purview currently, although it is a joint sessional committee. There'll be some duplication and overlap, potentially, of the two committees, so what's your intention?

Mr BARNETT - I appreciate what you're sharing, I understand where you're coming from and you've noted exactly the point - that you're a sessional committee. I have to act in accordance with the act. I'm acting in accordance with the act. I'm giving you the heads up. It's

my intention, as a priority, on behalf of the government, but I have to go through the normal processes. The Leader for the House and the government would progress that in terms of a motion consistent with past motions, but consistent with the legislation, to establish a joint standing committee for the Commission of Children and Young People.

CHAIR - Is an option being considered to have this committee be made a standing committee, rather than a joint sessional committee, as a pathway forward, potentially, to achieve this end, given our terms of reference already include this function?

Mr BARNETT - I'm hearing what you're saying. I appreciate the feedback. I will be acting in accordance with the act. As the Attorney-General, you can understand the importance of that. And, of course, what parliament does, in both Houses of parliament, is a matter for the parliament. I'm indicating on behalf of the government our intention to act in accordance with this legislation to bring forward that motion for the establishment of the joint standing committee.

Ms LOVELL - Do you think it would be sensible to have a conversation, though? I mean, no one's suggesting you shouldn't act in accordance with the act. But it would seem quite absurd to have two committees established that essentially have similar functions and similar roles, and potentially end up with the six of us and you could have another six, 12 members of parliament on a committee doing the same thing. Do you think it would be sensible for the government to have some conversations before proceeding with the establishment of the new standing committee through the parliament to find a way forward?

Mr BARNETT - I think they're very good questions.

Ms LOVELL - Well, thank you. I do too.

CHAIR - May we invite you to have those conversations with us?

Mr BARNETT - I thank you very much for sharing that. It's not a surprise to me that you would share that, and I appreciate your feedback. Consistent with our status as a minority Liberal government and the importance of collaboration and cooperation across the parliament, that is really important, recognising the upper House, the lower House, the makeup of both. Of course, ongoing conversations is very important and of great merit.

Ms LOVELL - Will you be having those conversations?

Ms O'CONNOR - It's good to hear you say that.

Mr BARNETT - Well, look, I'm sitting here saying that I'll do my best to ensure within government we act in accordance with the law, but obviously all these discussions we're having now is on the public record. It's not new to me.

Ms LOVELL - You can just say, 'Yes, I'll have the conversations'.

Mr BARNETT - The answer is yes.

CHAIR - Yes, I'm extending a direct invitation to you to have a conversation with this committee about progressing this.

Mr BARNETT - Let's have further conversations, so long as we're acting in accordance with the law.

Ms O'CONNOR - One of the bodies of work that the Implementation Monitor is oversighting is the Weiss independent review. There were no timelines attached to the recommendations in the Weiss review. I acknowledge that DoJ has done some considerable work around the victim/survivors of a certain police officer. Are you able to provide a broad update on DoJ's progress of the various Weiss review recommendations? And then I've got a supplementary question I'll ask you about your engagement with the Commonwealth on the intercept powers.

Mr BARNETT - Be more than happy to respond to those questions. First of all, I'd want to recognise Regina Weiss for her work. I thank her for it. An outstanding piece of work and an outstanding individual.

I note the government's accepted all of those recommendations in the report, which you are aware of. In terms of the Department of Justice, we're responsible for three of the five recommendations, which you'd be aware of. Recommendations 1 and 2 relate to redress, restorative engagement and support for victim/survivors of Paul Reynolds and Tasmanian police more broadly. Recommendation 5 relates to the amendments to the *Integrity Commission Act,* including matters arising from the Weiss review and related integrity reform. I could provide further updates, but let's try and cut to the quick in light of timeframes. I'll pass to the secretary to add to that answer to assist the honourable member.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. And if it's possible, given that there's no timeframes attached to those recommendations, just some indication of timing of completion, noting that some of them will be ongoing bodies of work.

Ms BOURNE - I'd also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Ms Weiss and the support she's provided, particularly to our Justice Support Services team in progressing recommendation 1, in particular. That role has been particularly critical in the process around her direct engagement with victim/survivors to ensure that they're aware of the National Redress Scheme and understand the supports that are available to them, and any assistance we can provide to enable access to those supports. We're aiming for completion of the recommendation in early 2027, given the work that has significantly progressed.

In relation to recommendation 2, we've been working on developing the scope and design, and potential key parameters of a state-based restorative engagement framework, which is connected in many ways to some existing COI recommendations. and obviously working very closely with Tasmania Police on that front. In terms of a timeframe for completion, it is in some ways tied to ongoing discussions with the Commonwealth around the National Redress Scheme and its expected closure date. We note that that is scheduled to close on 30 June next year with the sunset period running until 30 June 2028. So, we're continuing to progress as much work as possible, noting that further considerations that the Commonwealth may or may not have impact on the framework that we would put to government, and what's the appropriate proportionate model, but we'd hope for that work to continue to progress into 2027 once that becomes clearer.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Secretary. So, if we can go to recommendation 5, which relates to the fact that, of all the integrity bodies in the country, ours does not have those intercept powers because it's not recognised under the Commonwealth act as a law-enforcement agency for the purposes of exercising those covert powers. The Implementation Monitor's companion document acknowledges that the Attorney-General has written to the Australian Government Minister for Home Affairs to seek relevant action, but also we are told in this document that this could take some time. My understanding of the amendment that's required is that it's pretty straightforward and quite simple. Are you able to sort of expand on what you've asked the Commonwealth to do and if you've heard anything back from the Commonwealth?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I can. Thank you for the question. So, it's in two parts, recommendation 5: there are two streams of work, the state integrity reforms and then the Commonwealth telecommunications reform, and I'll come to both. So, the state elements are being progressed through the Integrity Commission Amendment Bill 2026, which I tabled in the parliament on 18 June 2026. That bill proposes amendments to the *Integrity Commission Act 2009* to strengthen Tasmania's integrity framework and respond to the issues identified in the Weiss review, the Cox review and matters raised by the Integrity Commission.

It's the second stage of a broader Integrity Commission reform program, following the mandatory notifications bill that recently passed the parliament. A separate element of Recommendation 5 requires by the Commonwealth, as we've indicated, by the *Telecommunications Interception and Access Act 1979*, which does not require reform to the *Integrity Commission Act*. So, I did write, on 19 February 2026, to the Australian Minister for Home Affairs, requesting that the Integrity Commission be declared a criminal law enforcement agency with the purposes of that act. I also requested related amendments to allow Tasmania Police to lawfully communicate intercepted information to the Integrity Commission where appropriate, and the Commonwealth minister responded on 13 March 2026 and advised that Home Affairs will work with the Department of Justice to access the statutory criteria and that process will include a compliance readiness assessment with the Commonwealth Ombudsman and a privacy impact assessment.

I'll check with the Secretary, if you can add to that answer?

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy. Only to add that I understand that officers from my department and the Integrity Commission are meeting with the Commonwealth the week after next to further progress those discussions.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Thank you for that answer - and this is not on you, Attorney, or the department - but it strikes me that the Commonwealth is dragging its heels on this relatively straightforward amendment to the telecommunications act and perhaps at that meeting next week, a little bit more pressure might be put on.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for your feedback and your encouraging remarks.

Ms ROSOL - Thanks, Chair. Just a question relating to Recommendation 16.10, which is around the Witness Intermediary Scheme being extended. I note that this was a phase 2 recommendation, of which the implementation has been delayed. In the OAM's appraisal in the companion documents, it talks about a committee is being stood up and there is a plan in place and that plan was sitting with Cabinet at the time that the Implementation Monitor was

reviewing this. I'm just wondering what's happened with that? Has it been approved by Cabinet now, and if so, what steps are being taken since then?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I'll pass to the Secretary for an update on that one.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy, and thank you for the question. So, the government has given approval to the agency to draft the required legislative amendments to give effect to this recommendation, and we've also approved the use of intermediaries in police interviews of children accused of sexual offences has been approved to be undertaken as a pilot program for 12 months. That's been developed in partnership with Tas Pol and DPFEM, and we anticipate progressing consultation into next year, given the work we need to do around how we give effect to that model, any potential further legislative amendments and how we operationalise that, noting the impact on Tas Pol and other services, so that we can continue to attempt to embed the use of intermediaries into standard operating practices.

I recognise that the original timeline was revised to the end of 2026, and while government and the agency won't be able to ensure we meet that requirement to have the legislation in effect by the end of this year, we do hope that we can provide further advice to the deputy as early as possible into 2027.

CHAIR - Just two quick practical matters while we still have a couple of minutes left. One is that we'll be expecting a new government update on progress, a progress report if you like, for the second half of this year, presumably to come out early next year. So, if you could confirm that that's your understanding, too, that would be put up online the way others have been previously. My question about that is beyond confirming that that's the intention. Will the Department of Justice, in that next update report, be providing revised timelines, because there's a range of recommendations where timelines had already been revised and many of them to the end of this year, and will we then get a picture in the next update in early next year, in cases where that hasn't been achieved what the next revised timeline is expected to be? Will that occur?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I totally understand where you're coming from, so it's the intention of my department and myself in terms of Justice to progress and provide those updates. But, of course, this is being led by DECYP and I can't speak for minister Palmer, and I'm sure she's progressing that positively, but I can't speak for her. But the intention would be - like we've been doing in the past - to update the public and we're doing more, everything we can in terms of transparency and openness, routine disclosures and a whole range of areas, but it's my understanding that that would be expected in as soon as possible in 2027.

CHAIR - I appreciate that. For clarity, is it your understanding from your department's point of view in the information you're intending to provide into that process for public reporting, that you'll provide revised timelines for those recommendations that continue to be not quite met yet?

Mr BARNETT - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Another quick practical matter, the monitor in his annual report notes the independent review into Tasmania's Right to Information Framework that was

undertaken by Prof McCormack and Adjunct Assoc Prof Snell, and the fact that none of those recommendations have been referred to him for monitoring going forward and in fact expresses disappointment about that and an intention to remain engaged in that. Given that there is a government response to that review - which I know isn't the primary responsibility of your department, but many of the things relate to your department, so no doubt you're involved in discussions about it - how will monitoring, or even just public reporting, of action against the recommendations of that review be undertaken?

Mr BARNETT - Well, first of all, I certainly recognise Prof Tim McCormack, Rick Snell, and went through law school with both of them, and thank them for their work on RTI. I'm also aware of the Monitor's evidence yesterday. He was asked about anticipating the referral of any additional reviews or recommendations, so as Attorney-General, of course, I have power under section 13 of the *Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Act* to refer to the Monitor additional reviews or enquiries or a specified part of a review of inquiry related to child safety and wellbeing. So - and of course, I note those powers are shared by the parliament as well, both Houses are in agreement.

CHAIR - Is it your intention to refer recommendations from the McCormack and Snell review given the monitor has said, at 30 June this year, no recommendations had been referred? And his comment then was that:

> It does not seem that any recommendations from the Right to Information review will be referred to me in the foreseeable future.

What's your expectation there?

Mr BARNETT - That's a good question. What I'm saying, I have to act in accordance with the act, section 13 of the relevant legislation, in terms of the relationship to child safety and wellbeing. So, to the extent that it's relevant to child safety and wellbeing: of course, I would act consistently with the legislation.

CHAIR - So, you're still anticipating, potentially, you might refer some of the recommendations from the RTI review to the monitor?

Mr BARNETT - Potentially, yes.

CHAIR - When would that occur, then?

Mr BARNETT - Potentially, yes. But I need to take advice, and it'll need to be consistent with the legislation under section 13.

CHAIR - Sure. All of that given: that report has already been in the public domain all year, and so, if you were going to make referrals to the monitor for reporting on, presumably you would be doing them this year rather than letting it carry over to the following year. Will we understand if you haven't done it by the end of this year that you're not intending to do it?

Mr BARNETT - No, I wouldn't put it that way. There's a whole-of-government approach in terms of the response to the RTI report and recommendations of Prof McCormack and Adj Prof Snell, so that's a whole-of-government approach; have to take on board that feedback

and advice, and I'm more than happy to provide an update to the committee in due course. But I'll be taking that role very seriously, and I have to act in accordance with section 13.

CHAIR - Thank you and separate to recommendations that may be referred to the monitor in due course - as you put it - the others that then remain not referred, the second part of my question related to, how will you be having there be reporting on, or monitoring of, or some sort of visibility around, implementation of those recommendations?

Mr BARNETT - Are you talking with respect to the RTI report?

CHAIR - Yes, I am, yes.

Mr BARNETT - Well that's outside the scope of this child safety report and wellbeing that we're talking about. But my point is that we're doing a whole-of-government response to that, and already the government's indicated its position that there's more work to do across government in terms of the RTI report and recommendations which we take very seriously.

CHAIR - So, some of those recommendations are the responsibility of your agency, the Department of Justice. How are you understanding that they will be reported on, the ones that sit outside any that may be sent to the monitor? What's your understanding of how they'll be reported on?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you. Well, I think it's slightly outside the child safety and wellbeing perspective of this committee, but more than happy to answer and I'll check with the secretary.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Deputy. There is a whole-of-government RTI steering committee which the department has a senior representative on, and obviously taking responsibility for the legislative components of that. But they are regular reporting back to the agency executive in terms of the steering committee outcomes, and also the secretary's board has a function in terms of taking responsibility for a number of the recommendations of that RTI steering committee. So, there is a mechanism in place, albeit outside of the context of the Implementation Monitor.

CHAIR - Thank you. I appreciate that that's slightly beyond the focus of this hearing, but there's some crossover there, some distinct crossover, so it's of interest to us to see that progressed and how it will be visible. It's still not clear to me that there'll be any public reporting or visibility around those recommendations being implemented.

Ms O'CONNOR - We can RTI it, probably.

CHAIR - If we wish to. I'm mindful we've gone slightly overtime and I appreciate your indulgence and your time in doing that with us today.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, we've got an update for you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Before we close, let's have an update.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you, very quickly with your indulgence. So, the Deputy wrote to the Implementation Monitor on 18 August with the recommendations to be transferred to them. And I understand we're working towards a gazettal on 11 November.

CHAIR - Thank you. I appreciate that. I'm going to bring our session to a close and thank you all for your time today in speaking with the committee. The evidence you have provided at the hearing today is protected by parliamentary privilege, as we discussed. I take the opportunity to remind you that any comments you may make to the media or others outside of this room, even if you repeat what you have said here, will not be protected. Do you understand that?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you so much, and we look forward to talking with you further on these matters. So, with that, we'll close the broadcast.

The witnesses withdrew.

The committee adjourned at 12.05 p.m.