PUBLIC

THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SESSIONAL COMMITTEE MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2026

RECOMMENDATIONS OF FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

The committee met at 9.32 a.m.

CHAIR - Welcome everyone to today's hearing of the Joint Sessional Committee Inquiring into Recommendations Made in the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

Members of the committee here today are online, we've got Jess Greene, Labor MP for Bass; we've got Jane Howlett, Liberal MP for Lyons; Cecily Rosol, Greens MP for Bass; honourable Sarah Lovell MLC member for Rumney; and myself, the independent member for Nelson, Meg Webb MLC. We've also got support from Jenny and Ali, and also Henry on Hansard, which we're very appreciative of.

I'm just going to go to some statements about the nature of today's hearing just as an acknowledgement at the beginning. I recognise that the content of this hearing may be triggering to some members of the committee, to members of the community watching online, and others who may come into the room.

I would encourage anyone impacted by the content matter in 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; Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS) or Laurel House, and that is on 1800 697 877 or 1800MYSUPPORT. There's also the Lifeline 24-hour crisis support on 131 114, or Tasmanian Lifeline from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., every day on 1800 984 434; or, 1300YARN, a 24-hour crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on 139 276. Relationships Australia from 9 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Monday to Friday on 1300 364 277.

Now, what I might get each of our witnesses here today to do, is in the first instance, just please state your name and the capacity in which you're appearing today. If you wouldn't mind beginning, Minister?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb. Felix Ellis, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. With me in the room here is Adam Foster, who's my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, and at the table here?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Robert Blackwood, Assistant Commissioner.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Ms WEBB - Thank you so much. Can I confirm that we've all received and read the Information for Witnesses Guide sent to you by the committee secretary?

WITNESSES - Yes.

Ms WEBB - 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. This hearing is public, which means members of the public and the 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 some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make the request to the committee, and the committee will consider your request. The committee is taking sworn evidence today, the minister doesn't need to make a declaration, and if your chief of staff won't be taking questions, he won't be required to make a declaration, but here at the table I might ask the witnesses to make the statutory declaration please.

Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, and **Mr ROBERT BLACKWOOD**, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SPECIALIST SUPPORT, TASMANIA POLICE WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

Ms WEBB - Thank you very much. Now, Minister, would you like to make a short opening statement to kick us off for today?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you Ms Webb. I'm pleased to be here today to update the committee on the significant work underway to strengthen child safety across Tasmania. Before discussing our progress, of course, we'd like to acknowledge the victims/survivors whose experiences are at the centre of the commission of inquiry and subsequent reforms. These recommendations exist because children were not adequately protected. That must not be repeated, and trust must be rebuilt.

I'd also like to acknowledge the progress that's been made by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management (DPFEM); I know the passion that they have for this. In particular, both the Tasmania Fire Service and Tasmania Police have taken significant steps to review their practises, identify areas for improvement, better support victim/survivors and create safer environments for children to prevent abuse. Substantial progress has been made across all recommendations for which DPFEM is responsible, with the current focus on embedding these reforms into business-as-usual.

Importantly, this work has not simply been about responding to recommendations; it's resulted in tangible changes to governance, oversight, reporting pathways, information-sharing and organisational culture aimed at strengthening child safety across the department. The recently released annual report of the Implementation Monitor recognises the significant progress that's been made. Together with the leadership groups continued willingness to accept past failures and to drive reform, this gives me confidence that these changes will be enduring and meaningful.

By way of overview, DPFEM has been responsible for nine recommendations from the commission of inquiry. Of the nine, three have achieved embedded status, five are assessed as complete, and one is substantially progressed. In addition to commission of inquiry recommendations, DPFEM has also led the response to three, although originally two, recommendations from the Weiss independent review into former police officer Paul Reynolds; the three recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, delivered in 2017. Two of the Weiss review

recommendations are assessed as complete, and by agreement, a third recommendation is in the process of being transferred from the Department of Justice to DPFEM. The three Royal Commission recommendations concerning reporting pathways are represented as closed as they are reflected in, and expanded through, the Tasmanian COI recommendations 16.1 and 16.2. Those reforms have strengthened child-safe governance, complaint and reporting pathways, information-sharing arrangements, workforce capability and organisational oversight across the department.

While significant progress has been made, the focus now is on ensuring that these reforms remain embedded across the department for the long term. This means continuing to strengthen capability, maintain robust oversight and accountability arrangements, and regularly reviewing policies and practices to ensure that they remain effective. Embedding a strong child-safe culture is an ongoing responsibility, and DPFEM remains committed to continuous improvement to ensure children are safe, heard and protected. DPFEM has robust internal governance processes which complement a cross-agency approach to implementation across all Keeping Children Safe reform work. The recommendations of the Weiss review have been progressed within the existing governance arrangements, in place for COI recommendations, and the child sexual abuse strategy and action plan Change for Children. This includes oversight and assessment from the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor.

Chair, I have some more comments, but perhaps in the interests of time, I'm happy to move to questions, and we might be able to cover off on some of the remaining remarks through the course of these hearings.

CHAIR - That's fine, and then if there's things that we don't cover, you're very welcome to go back to it at the end if you want to make clear some points that haven't been covered; that will be fine.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - So, as you are aware, and you've alluded to in your remarks, we are looking at the annual report from the Implementation Monitor, which is the first full one done, making assessments of the implementation progress made by various departments. Certainly, your department, I think, fares quite well because it's got a smaller number of recommendations and they're well progressed, which is good to see.

We're also responsible for scrutinising the Monitor and the functioning of his office. So, one of the things I'm interested to start with is to ask you about the experience of your department in working with the office of the Monitor to provide information and to feed into this process of assessment and the annual reporting of implementation, and how that was experienced by the department, and if there's any comments you'd like to make around that?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Webb, I'll pass to Tasmania Police.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Thank you, I'll take that question for the minister. We have a very good relationship with Mr Benjamin. I chair our cross-agency - sorry, across our agency - working group in relations to the commission of inquiry, and one of the leads on it is our Director of Strategies and Support Elaina Deayton. She has very regular contact with Mr Benjamin, in relation to our recommendations, the acquittal of those, and any questions he might have.

I also maintain semi-regular contact as well, and have done that across a range of forums with him, where he's had questions as well. I think that confidence has been built up post-commission of inquiry when I've met with him ongoing since that time.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Then in terms of the assessments, the departments typically did self-assessments and provided information through, and then the monitor's office made assessments. In some instances, we are given to understand there was then quite a constructive interaction, where departments, in some instances, reconsidered their self - assessments and made some changes. Was that something that was experienced by this department and how was that process?

Mr HIGGINS - Through you, minister, yes, it was. I'm trying to think of the exact recommendation where that happened more recently. But yes, that is the case that not everything just goes through to the Monitor and finishes. There will be, as there should be, questions, there'll be clarifications, questions about - is it fully implemented and embedded or is it complete because now that's just business as usual.

CHAIR - So, there were instances where the department adjusted its self-assessment based on interactions and feedback from the Monitor?

Mr HIGGINS - Yes.

CHAIR - That's positive to hear. Thank you. Are there any other questions from the committee on general matters before we move on to some specific areas of recommendations?

Ms LOVELL - No, I've got a more specific one, though. Minister, you mentioned recommendation 16.02 in your opening remarks, I believe. I had a question. This report obviously was prepared a little while ago and I think there's maybe been some progress with that now, this is in relation to an online platform for reporting child sexual abuse, and at the time of the report there was progression with the Safe2Say online reporting platform. I just wanted to confirm that platform is live now and up and running? Then further to that, what the plan is in terms of evaluation and monitoring of the efficacy of that platform?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Lovell, I'll pass to Tasmania Police.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Through you, minister, Safe2Say is up and operating. I think around August we did a soft launch and, whilst it's been advertised quietly in different areas, I know Mr Benjamin put it on his Facebook page I think, you can find it through our Tasmania Police internet page, and Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) and Laurel House and others are aware of it. We've had 31 reports on it so far, which has been really pleasing.

There's a few different features to it, it's not just for child sex offence reporting, it's for any sex offence reporting. You can be anonymous as well. It might be that you're just choosing to report it because you want that recorded, but you actually don't want any action at that time. There's also the ability to engage anonymously with investigators. So, if you're not sure, but we want to develop that trust and understanding of process and what might occur and what your options are, that can occur. I think we've had about two of the 31 reports - I think 28 actually there was enough evidence there or enough information there to stipulate the sexual

offence that occurred to be recorded and on about two occasions where people have engaged in that anonymous chat.

Ms LOVELL - Can you talk through a little bit in terms of, particularly in the anonymous reporting, how that works. Then I guess part of it is around building trust and people seeing that those reports that something's happening with them, given that they're reporting anonymously, is there a way for that to be fed back to them in any way?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Yeah, there is. The individual then is able to log back into the system anonymously and it scrambles their IP address and different things and so they can then log back in and engage in a chat with the investigator. Again, that's about building that trust, understanding, and that options-talk discussion which we have with everyone who comes into an Arch or a police station to report a sex offence, really explaining the system and the process of what's available to them. That can all be done online.

Ms LOVELL - And it's a pilot, is that right?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Yeah, it is. It's a 12-month pilot. We got our first sort of update only last week. We're happy with how it's going. It's a system that we've taken from Western Australia. Over time, over this year, we will increase its, I suppose, promotion to make sure that everyone is aware of it. We're just working through how it works at the moment.

Ms HOWLETT - You just mentioned the Arch centres before. Can you give an evaluation of how they've been going and -

CHAIR - Can we just - with this topic first and then come to that straight after, if you don't mind, Ms Howlett?

Ms HOWLETT - Yeah, that's fine.

CHAIR - Just on the pilot of the reporting system, can I ask about how that's going to be evaluated? Is it something you're doing internally? Are you getting an external evaluation so you can sort of see at the end of that 12-month pilot where to from there?

Mr BLACKWOOD - At the moment, I suppose what we're doing is internally collecting all the data and the learnings from it. We haven't set up a decision whether we would get it externally evaluated or not. But that's open to us though, it's only early days. It only commenced in August, so it's quite possible we would do that.

CHAIR - It would be potentially useful. A pilot program suggests that there'll be some sort of assessment about its functionality and effectiveness, and then a decision made about going forward from that.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - That's right. We're not the first to use it, I suppose, is a key thing here as well. We're taking this from Western Australia, and we've certainly utilised all their learnings from when they did it as well.

CHAIR - Can I just get an indication, you mentioned there'd been 31 reports made through the system already since August. Is that comparable to the number of reports of these sorts of matters, or things that would have been coming up through the previous systems that

were available to people? Are you able to reflect on whether having the system in place is already noticeably generating more?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - It's interesting because I actually asked that question of the staff to say, 'Do you think these people are coming forward and otherwise wouldn't have come forward?' What we do is we ask the individual why did they come through this way? How did they find out about it? We had 17 go to our Tasmanian Police website and have accessed it via that way. One's come from a support service, one's come from a friend, 10 have been aware of it through social media, and then 10 are in the 'other' category. It's really hard to tell. I suppose the anonymous reporting is something that we didn't have available before, so I would say they may not have come forward previously.

CHAIR - They may well be new.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yeah, new reports. And in terms of -

CHAIR - Of the 31, how many are anonymous, if that's available to be specified?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - It is. I'll give you some others, interesting parts to it.

CHAIR - I'm happy to hear whatever you have there to describe it.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Of 31 reports, eight were child historical sexual abuse matters, three were adult historic sexual abuse, 10 related to sexual abuse or grooming of a child. It's not always the victim reporting; it can be a third-party reporting as well. Two related to sexual abuse of, or assault of, an adult, four related to online or technology-facilitated sexual abuse. There was one that related to feedback. I think they were seeking feedback and they put another report in, and there were three reports that didn't fit, they didn't identify the sexual offence that actually occurred and of those, five were anonymous.

CHAIR - And do you have a sense that there's adults as well as, potentially, children using this facility?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes. I think it's a great tool. It's just another option.

Ms LOVELL - Do you collect the age of the person making the report in any way? Can you tell if those reports are adults or children?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - If it is a victim reporting and naming up who they are, then yes, we would.

Ms LOVELL - But otherwise, no.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yeah.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - So, the 12-month period will be August to August?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yep. I think what we will do between now and August as well, we'll increase its promotion. It's a pilot, but it is something that is proven and tested in Western Australia, so we're not going to sit quietly on it for a year, we will increase its use.

CHAIR - What would the promotion look like? What sort of avenues do you use?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Obviously, we have it on our website now, through social media, and we do things like our community engagement command spends a lot of time in schools doing the ThinkUKnow program. We'll add it into there, and whether it be flyers and brochures and things like that as well to talk about, okay, if you want to report, here is another option for you as well.

Ms LOVELL - And I imagine you have spoken to WA about how they promote it and what's been successful for them?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yep.

CHAIR - How long has WA had that system in place?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - It's a few, a couple of years at least.

CHAIR - It's well embedded there and well used.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I ask how did they promote it in WA?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I'm not sure. I could find out.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - My understanding it was through partners, much like our partners here.

CHAIR - Partner organisations and support services.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Plus it's on our site, that's one way, I guess. Through their partners and support partners being aware of it. I guess it's a referral in many ways, isn't it?

CHAIR - It is, yes, indeed. Any other questions on this before we move on?

Ms HOWLETT - Just in relation to the two-way chat on Safe2Say, what issues does that address and what's been the uptake so far?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I think there were - and I'll get it checked - but I think there was around three people that have engaged in the two-way chat. It's all about building trust because it's such a hard thing to report in the first place, and people don't know what their options are sometimes. It's building that trust and understanding. Sometimes people might not even know what has occurred was actually a crime. So, it's explaining, 'What you describe in your report', is this an offence or crime? And here are the options of what we can do. It might be just building up that trust to encourage them to come into an Arch, or to a police station if that's what they want to do, or refer them to a support service.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Is that chat available - is it instant, is it available all the time? How does that work?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - No, there is there is a separate login, to go back in to do the chat, and you can set up, 'Okay, well I want to go and do this', and the investigator might come to work the next day and see, 'Okay, well, this person wants to engage.' It's a messaging sort of system, but then it can become a live chat as well.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, yes, and they can sort of organise time between that?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, okay, thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Just in relation to the Arch centres: I know that the north-west coast was rolled out, I believe, in March earlier this year. The feedback that I'm getting is that they're incredibly successful, and people feel very comfortable going into the Arch centres. I was just wondering what your evaluation is so far of the Arch centres?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes, so we had the Adelaide Catholic University, and the Child Abuse Institute part do the review. Which was released, I think, in about August last year, or June last year. It's on the website, the evaluation report, which told some of the great stories of different victim/survivors and the experience they had from Arch. Obviously we have moved from a pilot phase now to it's embedded across the whole state. There's definitely some key learnings for us, it's new territory for all of us that are in there. So, it's not just from a police perspective but for other government agencies are there, and also the support services that are there.

Just recently we've had Kym Goodes come and do a review on a number of workshops, particularly with the steering committee trying to establish the right level of governance for the Arch, and how we do that. So, look, my theory with Arch is, all our decisions need to be victim-focused, and how do we make a service that's not about us, it's not about the other agencies there, it's about what are we going to do that's going to give victims the best outcomes when they walk into the Arch? That's how we try and focus our decisions, but we're also really keen for ongoing feedback.

We have recently introduced a system where - and it's hard to ask victim/survivors for feedback when they come in. Obviously, it's very different to other times people are asked for feedback. So, we've got two systems now in place where there is a small postcard in with some different ticks and flicks about what you think of your experience at the Arch. But then there's also a QR code available for you, where you can go into a lot more depth about your experience at Arch. That is really about just ongoing learning and improvement for all the Arch centres.

Ms HOWLETT - I guess there's been a different uptake in different regions as well. I know the north-west coast, we've got a higher level of family and sexual violence on the north-west coast.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Certainly when the north-west coast first opened the Burnie Arch, there were a lot of walk-ins quite quickly.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Just around the funding for partner organisations that are working in the Arch centres which portfolios are responsible for that? Might be a question for the minister, which portfolio is responsible for the funding of those organisations?

Mr ELLIS - Look, I understand that there's been a transfer from between a couple of agencies, so I'll just pass back to Tasmania Police to talk through the partner funding arrangements.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Previously DPAC was responsible for funding Laurel House and SASS, as the two support services in the different Arches. I was only told yesterday or the day before, I believe that has changed now to the Department of Health, who will be responsible for their funding.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes.

CHAIR - Right, because it's notable in the annual report from the monitor that he particularly notes that funding for partner organisations, including specialist therapeutic services, needs to be embedded to support the model being assessed as embedding change. Which is a mild way of saying, 'It's not going to work unless we're properly funding these key partner organisations'. From your perspective, or your experience, can you speak to why he might be pointing to that as an area to highlight as an ongoing focus?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I think it's about assurance for, particularly SASS and Laurel House, that, in terms of ongoing recruitment and permanent staff and all those sort of things, that they have the clarity around what they're being funded to therefore what they can put into the Arch centres.

CHAIR - In your observation or in what you're aware of, is the funding sufficient for those services, or are you aware that they're potentially requiring additional support there to fully partner with you to do the work?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I don't want to speak on behalf of them, obviously.

CHAIR - No, I'm asking about an observation.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - But I'm sure in any agency, they'd probably always want to put more staff in there if they could. I'm not aware of instances where we haven't had the support service staff there available for us either though.

CHAIR - And what does the staffing cohort look like from your side of it, from the department's side? What's the quantum?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - It varies. I can get you those numbers. In the south, there's two sergeants and around eight investigators. I'll get you specific numbers but I'll give you 'around' numbers there. So, that's in the south - they're the sex crimes investigators that are there. Also, we have other sex crimes investigators out at Glenorchy station as well, which is where they're located. From a room perspective, there isn't enough room at the Southern Arch

to put them all there. Whereas. in the northern district, in Launceston and also in Burnie, we have all of our sex crime investigators at each of those two locations.

CHAIR - Is it problematic that you have to split them up in the Hobart location across two? Is the idea that one day you would have a facility that could accommodate them all, or do you see it as potentially beneficial to have them located elsewhere?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - There's both. In somewhere like Launceston, it makes sense having them all together because the police station is literally across the road, so from the point of view of a victim/survivor, of having different options to go to, it doesn't really make much difference from a travelling point of view. Whereas, I suppose, in the south of the state where we have the Arch in Hobart, and then we have the detectives available in Glenorchy as well - and there's soft interview rooms available there, as well - it gives victim/survivors just another option. If they don't want to travel to town - if they can't for whatever reason - or if they're just engaging with one service - if they're just engaging with us and not utilising any other services - then Glenorchy might be a good spot for them. It's a mix I suppose.

I always want to make sure that I have sufficient staff at the Arch, so if someone walks in there, there is all always a response available for them, and that's really important.

CHAIR - Indeed. You mentioned that Glenorchy has the soft interview rooms available with all the appropriate recording equipment and all the specialist approach that is available at the Arch centre in the city, the same is replicated?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Correct.

CHAIR - Excellent. And what about the partnership with the partner organisations? Are they able to be present in the Glenorchy location, too, or how do you then tick-tack across those partner organisations, if they're not co-located in the way they are at the Arch centre?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - What we might do there, if we're going to engage with more than one service - so, if it's more than us - we might take that victim/survivor into Hobart if that's what they're wanting. But some don't want that, and some are just satisfied to tell their story directly to police, and if that's the case, and they're in Glenorchy, then that's what we would do.

CHAIR - Members have other questions on the Arch centres?

Mrs GREENE - Thank you. Just further to the line of questioning there from Ms Webb and Ms Lovell, have any of the partner organisations raised concerns about workload, or capacity, or staffing to meet demand, and if so, what action's been taken to address that?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Certainly - and I suppose I get it at the SteerCo level, the feedback from SASS and Laurel House. I haven't had any direct conversation to say, 'We're overworked and we can't meet capacity', but I certainly know they are well engaged, the staff there, and do an amazing job. No one's come to me and said, 'I need to put five more staff on tomorrow to meet capacity', but equally, they're working really hard.

Mrs GREENE - Thank you. What happens on a weekend or after 5.00 p.m.? Are victim/survivors still getting specialist support services after hours?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yep, absolutely. If there is a call-out for a sex crimes investigator, and it's appropriate, then that they become an Arch client, then we will access those spaces after hours.

Mrs GREENE - And are there any barriers to information-sharing between Tas Police and child safety, and your partner organisations?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD -No, and that's the key to Arch. It's the physical location, it's the open-door policy, and it's when a client walks in and we're concerned about a child, it's following up on that, it's finding out history through other areas - the information-sharing is the key.

Mrs GREENE - Just finally, I know that previously there'd been an issue in the southern Arch where, I believe, child safety wasn't always present. Do we have a child safety presence full-time in the north, north-west, and the south now?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - That's some work that DECYP are currently undertaking. The DECYP model has changed in how they commit to Arch. They are present, but not in a full-time capacity at the moment. Currently, I know they're working through a recruitment process, and also, what does their new model look like.

Mrs GREENE - Can you explain that a bit more on what the gap is and why that gap's been allowed to happen for so long?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - That's a DECYP decision and I don't want to speak on behalf of them. I know that they are changing their model and putting their resources where they're most needed at the time, which has limited their ability to be at the Arch in a full-time capacity.

CHAIR - We'll follow it up.

Mrs GREENE - Yes, we certainly will. I think that that's really quite disappointing. I think that the model that we had is the gold standard, and having information sharing and all of the agencies there around the table. I don't think there's been a lot of transparency around that particular issue. Thank you for highlighting that today.

CHAIR - Staying with the Arch for a tiny bit longer. One of the other things that's noted in the Implementation Monitor's annual report is around the community engagement strategy that's now in place to strengthen the connections with vulnerable communities and cohorts. I'm interested to hear how far progressed is that strategy from being implemented and what, if anything, are you noticing as a result of it? Are you measuring the impact it's having?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Through the minister, I might start that one because it actually goes some way to answering one of the first questions you asked with feedback from the monitor. This was a particular area that the monitor and his team had feedback on. We wanted more evidence about how we were acquitting 16.2 in particular with community engagement. That was, in particular, with sporting clubs and so forth, how we were using our community engagement division to actually do that. But I'll let Rob, they were to Rob, so I'll let it go to him, but it was just pertinent.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes, there's an overarching community engagement strategy that is in place, but then there are individual plans for different community groups underneath that. Plans in place at the moment include multicultural plans, LGBTIQA+, sporting groups and organisations.

CHAIR - Can I just check too, are these community engagement strategies department-wide, or are they specifically for the Arch program itself?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - No, department-wide. I suppose they're a police engagement strategy getting out to these different parts of the community, but one of their roles is to talk about all things Tasmania Police and that includes the Arch and what's available at the Arch. But it's also about the connections as well, so when someone's not sure of something, the community engagement for some of these groups is a really good 'in' for them. It's a trusted person. They know they can call from the various community groups, and they will regularly talk about the Arch and what's available at the Arch. It's really an awareness strategy as well and explaining what it is.

CHAIR - And what do we do to measure or monitor whether or not those vulnerable cohorts or communities are engaging with the Arch centre, for example, to the extent that we would, on a population level, expect them to?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - In terms of stats we keep at the Arch would be one thing, and certainly this would be something we would look at there as well. Sexual orientation is one of the things that we record when people come into the Arch. If we're seeing an uptick in that, we'd be saying, 'Look, is our awareness working here?' Or, if it's low, what do we need to do? And, certainly, we haven't seen high levels of reporting from multicultural communities, but we know offending occurs there and so, a key part of our community engagement work is to continue those awareness strategies.

CHAIR - Finally, before we move away from the Arch centres, the other thing I was interested to hear about - that I imagine is happening and you might like to speak to - is the degree to which other jurisdictions are looking at our model and the success we may be having with it, and what sort of interactions you're having with other jurisdictions around them looking for good evidence that they might then implement in their jurisdictions.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Arch certainly is what I would call a gold standard in how we can support victim/survivors, and the interest from jurisdictions around the nation and also globally has been really significant, whether it be just information sharing - but the amount of tours and visits that we do and I think we would have done close to nearly every Australian jurisdiction by now coming to look at it and learning from what we do. It is certainly held in really high regard. But also, I'm not here to say it's perfect, it's an ongoing learning thing for us, Arch. It's really new territory still and there's lots of room to get better and better.

CHAIR - Are you aware of then other jurisdictions who may be off the back of looking at what we've done and learning from it, looking to implement similar models in their jurisdictions?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes, certainly in the feedback I got when people leave, is, 'Okay, how do we do this in our jurisdictions?' I don't know of any specifically that are actually -

Deputy Comm HIGGINS - No. At the start we had a team that went out and looked around the country before we set up the Arches to try to learn from others, so there are other states that had similar multidisciplinary sorts of models in Victoria, South Australia - slightly different ones. They all have slightly different ways of doing it depending on the makeup of their community, but the services that are able to be provided with each. The one that that we chose was the model we have now and now we're a couple of years in, particularly into the southern one, that jurisdictions are coming to look from those as well about okay, well that's slightly different to ours. How does that work? The smaller jurisdictions tend to be the ones that look more closely because they're better able to probably replicate it, ACT and South Australia in particular. It'll be interesting. It'll be good if they do take it up, it means our model's working well, but I think we might be early in the piece.

CHAIR - That's really pleasing. Good leadership. Thank you.

Ms LOVELL - I want to go to recommendation 9.30, which the Implementation Monitor has noted as embedded change, which is really positive, but I just note that he - and this is one of the things that came up in the evidence that he presented to us a couple of days ago was there's still a level of concern around finding ways to meaningfully address the issue of child sexual exploitation of children living in care. And I note the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act* sits with DECYP and there's a review, I believe, coming up with that, and your department's minister has expressed an interest in being involved in that review because of some difficulties around sections 95 and 96 of the act. I was wondering if you can speak a little more to that in terms of what are some of the challenges with those sections in the act and what are some changes that you would like to see through that consultation process?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks Ms Lovell. I will pass to Tasmania Police.

Deputy Comm HIGGINS - Those two particular sections don't relate to exploitation within the home though, that's the concealing and harbouring and so forth. I spoke about this at the commission at the time because this legislation has been in for some time and the difficulty with using it and the Independent Monitor is, is absolutely right. It's having to work together with DECYP, DPP and ourselves to actually work through that. We have provided extra training to our staff to try and get that level of comfort up about using the legislation. We did that during the commission of inquiry. I'm not aware if there have been any charges since that time. I haven't looked, but I'm not aware at the moment, but I certainly do share that it is still difficult and it's not a proven that we actually can do it well yet. It's embedded as far as our training and our understanding and the ability to use the legislation, but has it been tested through the courts?

Ms LOVELL - I think that's the point he's making is the training's been embedded and that work has been really positive, but still those charges are being infrequently used and there are some difficulties around them. Do you have any, I guess, more on what sort of difficulties or why they might be being infrequently used?

Deputy Comm HIGGINS - Just because they're being infrequently used it doesn't mean that they're not being considered. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's actually something that's

prevalent to be used to be prosecuted, particularly whether, and I was talking to the deputy secretary at DECYP yesterday about this and other things that we regularly meet up about, and it's really around the safety of the children that are in care and how we work to get them. It doesn't necessarily mean charging people, it means putting the child at the centre and working out the best wraparounds for them, so if it's getting them out of a house and environment, because we're talking about someone who wasn't particularly young, but certainly a young person, and the challenges for them being more transit in moving around when they're in the guardianship of the secretary of DECYP, and the challenges that presents. This is something we're going to have to work through because is an ongoing challenge when, essentially, the secretary of DECYP is the parent, for want of a better term.

CHAIR - Legally they are.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - They are, and what that actually means and what control they actually have in the community, and I'm not speaking for Ginna Webster, but I'm having an understanding of working there as well for last year, that it's how we're able to support them as a team. So, Tasmania Police might have reluctance to do by themselves because as you've highlighted after hours there tends to be only us. What does that mean as far as someone from child safety coming out? And we talked about an instance in Burnie, without going into the full details, where child safety did come out, which is fantastic, which it meant that they gave the officers the comfort - it was the middle of the night - the comfort that they actually had some support to work through this. Did they apply these ones? No, that wasn't what they were looking at, but they were looking at the safety of a younger person who was in that, certainly over ten, and how they could actually best encourage them back to a better environment, which is what actually happened, in this case. It didn't necessarily happen really well straightaway, but it happened once they were joined up.

So, that's an example where having that after-hours service from another agency to support police in doing it really does help, because our staff are not the experts on all - I know we often use them for that, but they're not.

Ms LOVELL - Well, it's difficult because it's finding that balance right between prioritising the young person's safety but doing that in a really child-centred way where they're having some autonomy and some decision-making in that process themselves.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Yes, and the older that they get, while still being under 18, the more worldly they become, and the more they want them to understand the why. Which is probably more in this case that that certainly is. But going back to your - so outside 95 and 96 -

Ms LOVELL - Yes, just in terms of being involved through that review process, what are the sorts of things that you would like to see change with those parts of the act?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Well, it's not necessarily the ability to charge more people, because that isn't necessarily going to help the young people that we're trying to help - and can, quite honestly, push them back towards the ones that we don't want to be or with. So, it's really that the ease in being able to use it. There are, I call them 'points of proof,' I can't remember exactly what each one of them were for each one of those charges, but it's not that easy to actually prove those charges. There are elements within it that, just because a person has a young person within a house and they're supposed to be somebody else, doesn't mean that it

fulfils harbouring or fulfils concealing. And that will be the challenge. I think everybody will look back at the police, 'Why he didn't charge with that for those particular charges?' The simple fact is it's not that easy. And, I guess, having a greater comfort in using legislation, I know legislation has been around for a long time, don't get me wrong, but the greater comfort in being able to apply it is what we're trying to achieve. I mean, we can talk about it, but we're not the ones actually doing it. It's 10 o'clock at night or two in the morning, so we have to be able to give our staff that comfort that they can use it or that they have the ability to phone a friend to find out how to actually apply.

CHAIR - It's really positive to hear about sort of partnership working like that. It's supportive of everyone doing their particular role well, isn't it? We've learned that from the PACER teams even, haven't we, actually? Another good example of where everyone with their own skill sets and own responsibilities working together delivers a better result, ultimately all round. That's editorial comment rather than a question, Minister, apologies for that, but good recognition of your team.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Webb, I might just sort of back in your comment there; there was a review done into the role of police officer by the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA), and one of the, I suppose, the key findings is the police, and Tasmania Police, particularly in the context of the review, are hugely flexible, adaptable, massively capable. But in some ways, it's important that we are setting up structures so that there are other supports around, or with police such as, you mentioned, specifically PACER, and in the child and youth safety, youth justice space, that's probably one of the other big opportunities. So, the ANZPAA report's obviously been handed down, provided to government and it's, I suppose, a broader piece of work, but for committee members just to be aware of, as members of parliament in general, the opportunities for our agencies to work more closely together off the back of what's the role of a police officer question, I think is a really pertinent one.

CHAIR - Indeed. Agreed there, particularly in the responding to youth space, I think, is ripe for partnering.

I'm going to go to a couple of other specific areas in the recommendations just to get some extra commentary, if I could. I'm looking at 16.03, and the Implementation Monitor has got that noted as completed, and it's to do with specialist training - specialist training arrangements that you've put in place around sexual abuse matters. The comment that the monitor makes in that section is that:

> Whilst investigative practices have been strengthened, further reporting on the number and percent of police across operational areas who've undertaken the training and sustained evidence over time of the effectiveness of this will be required to demonstrate embedded change.

Which is why it's completed but not yet embedded. Can you speak to what you're doing to be able to report on the number and percent of police who are doing that training and also how you're going to be measuring the effectiveness of it?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Through you, minister. So, we established what we call the SARIC course, the sexual assault response and investigation course, which is the equivalent of a detective's course for our investigators that want to work within sex crimes areas. It's a specific course with its own standalone curriculum that teaches all things how to manage and

investigate sex crimes. It's also about teaching them trauma-informed practices. There's presentations from support groups and other agencies. There is specialist interviewing training and when it comes to interviewing children, as well. It's understanding things like grooming and which children are at risk. So, there is a particular course that we have for it, which we require our sex crimes investigators to undertake. And I think we've had around 60 complete that so far.

What we'll look to do in the future is how we incorporate that into investigative courses in general. So, when someone is becoming a detective, this is part of the core work. We don't want to make it so specialist that others don't have the skills because all police will deal with victim/survivors, and we want everyone to have the most reasonable experience they can have. We're looking, at the moment, to how we keep the curriculum as it is, but incorporate into others so it is spread further across the organisation.

CHAIR - What stats do you have at the moment, then, about participation in that and about coverage?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I'll bring that up now. Top of my head, I thought it was around 60 that had completed it. We'd run two courses.

CHAIR - Do you get a good spread statewide?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yeah, we do. We make sure of that - so our investigators who are all across the state are doing the course.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - All our recruits do get a level of training and the specialist interviewing, as well, so vulnerable witness interviewing, not to the degree that the specialist staff are doing. So, in the first instance, if needed, if someone came to the station they're able to at least speak to somebody to then either build up a rapport, and that might be the case, or to bring a specialist in to then take it over.

It's important that, and I think that's lost on our staff sometimes, the level of training they do have, and they're very good at it. There's that comfort level and, I suppose, anxious being they don't want to mess it up, they want to make sure they give the right experience, but sometimes that person will build a rapport with the first person they see when they come in the door. It's important that our staff know that they can do that, they can do their job and work it through if need be.

Mrs GREENE - The Implementation Monitor has acknowledged the damage that has been done to community trust following serious police misconduct, and emphasised that real reform must be demonstrated in changes through practice and not simply through the completion of recommendations. What are victim/survivors telling you about - essentially whether has Tasmania Police actually changed? Because we want people to feel believed and supported when they report. What concrete things can you point to where there's been improvements?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Perhaps, through you, minister, I might take this one. I think we can always do better, and earlier this week and a couple of weeks ago, we've had our scrutiny hearings through another parliamentary committee. But when I see the level of reporting and the numbers of increased in reporting over the last three to four years, I think that

is actually saying people will come forward and call out behaviours, whether it's an officer that's involved in family violence or in sexual misconduct or serious misconduct, there has been an increase in reporting and an increase in the number of people, number of officers that have been involved with victims more willing, or more comfortable, to actually come forward where they may not in the past. This is an area we're certainly still learning in.

The Arches we use for support, more so. If it does have an element of sexual assault in it, it will most likely work with our Professional Standards investigators and the Arch support systems to actually get the best outcomes for that victim/survivor. But the feedback that I've received in what I've seen in the evidence is that there are people more willing to actually report and come through.

Now, that might be through - it's safe to say it is very new so I'm not going to use that as an example of this - but we have an online reporting for Professional Standards as well, which has been operational now for a couple of years, and the increase in reporting in that for all sorts of matters has been significant, so people are willing to actually use that and that's not necessarily anonymously, that can be either way, but behaviours are called out, the community don't accept things like this and nor should they that in relationships it'll either be a third party that will come forward to Tasmania Police, whether it's Professional Standards, whether into a police station or whether to me - I get a lot of correspondence, calls and emails and so forth as well, because I'm one of the mechanisms for people to be able to make contact, that something will be done.

Also, the Integrity Commission receive reports as well, and they will then report them to me, they'll come to myself, which then goes through to Professional Standards to actually deal with it. That's in relation to involving police where it could involve police as a victim, it could involve police as the offender, or it could be both parties. That's where it's not clear at the start and it's worked through.

It's certainly something that we are continuing to learn with, but it's something we're getting better at, especially with our oversight with our Family and Sexual Violence Review Committee as well, which is chaired by Ginna Webster is the independent now. She took that on for a couple years when Deb Bailey - it changed over when she moved interstate. So, that's an important mechanism as well. That's oversight that the rest of the public doesn't actually have. That's something - we hold our staff to a higher account and we should.

It doesn't always sit well with some of our staff, we hold them higher account, but I think, as police officers, that should be expected. That is not unreasonable, and we make no apologies for that. That committee, and particularly the chair, will make the commissioner and I feel uncomfortable with some of the conversations sometimes about some processes that we are having in place and how we can better support victims moving forward. It's not a decision-making body. The DPP will do our prosecution authority and then the prosecutions, and the family violence needs to be still through the *Family Violence Act* but it's the committee itself that will pick these things really apart to work through best strategies to support people.

Mrs GREENE - Thank you, and what type of training's happening to ensure that Tasmania Police are being trauma informed?

Dep Comm HIGGINS – We have mandatory training, actually, and this really comes at the back of the commission of inquiry, which is to all staff. We have our specialist training that

Assistant Commissioner Blackwood spoke about as well, but it's embedded in our recruit courses right through our general detective training, promotional processes through the senior constable, sergeant and inspector, through the ranks as well, and it is a learning curve for us still, there's no doubt about that. It's something that we can only get better at as we are more informed through the research then get feedback from our clients.

Mrs GREENE - You said there that it's a learning curve, and I guess we're talking about culture within Tas Police, what's been the barriers?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - The barriers to change, is that what you mean? No, I think we have a workforce that's largely very willing to change. They want to do better. They joined Tasmania Police to actually serve the community. So, the actual culture itself as far as a culture of reporting and culture of calling out behaviours, I think that is evidenced in our changes since Abacus came in and certainly post commission of inquiry people more readily to call behaviours out in the workplace. We explained that with our Abacus: we have internal reporting, we have external reporting. So, an external report would be called a 'complaints' and it'll be complaint level 1, level 2 or a level 3; anything in level 3, whether it's internally reported or externally reported by someone in the community, will also be reported to the Integrity Commissioner as well for that greater oversight.

There has been significant cultural change over the last decade and there's been more significant change over the last four to five years with how we look at things and our behaviours and our training and even the notion of being trauma informed - it is not something I was trained in as a detective a long time ago now, so it's very different.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Through you, minister, I might just add in terms of when I'm talking about complaints against police here, I'm not talking about a victim/survivors' experience and sometimes potentially feeling dissatisfied. What is really difficult is in believing a victim's story, but then, as investigators, having to ask really difficult questions in preparing what is a brief and if the victim/survivor is wanting that matter pursued through the courts and gain the right amount of evidence, there's that.

But then there's also the really difficult part when we have to explain there isn't enough evidence for charges. Now, generally, for really serious matters, we'll refer it to the DPP for their advice first. Then you'll have some victims feeling that they weren't believed because we're not proceeding with charges, and it's not the case at all. It's about the level of evidence available and the likelihood of conviction and all those other things. That is really difficult on everyone involved. It's difficult on the investigators, but so much more so on victim/survivors when they hear that 'Okay, well, I've put myself through all of this and there are no charges', feeling that isn't trauma informed, but it's the evidence system we work in.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - A third of our matter and complaints come in internally, which is quite significant, really, and we report on those - that will be in a few months' time, we'll do our 2026 reports as well to see what changes have been over the year before. But that is quite significant. Our values we'd had for many, many years and in late 2022 into 2023 when the commissioner and I went to do our positions, we decided we'd relook at our values. Our current values have been - I'm looking at the parliamentary values behind here - have been built the ground up, so our staff have actually informed what they wanted the values to be. Our accountability, integrity, respect and support is something that is well and truly embedded now and staff will talk about it and we'll write it back in reports to you on how and whether they've

adhered to it, how somebody hasn't, and it's important, I guess, there that they are identifying with those values.

Mrs GREENE - Thank you. Just one final question, if I can, and you've already touched on it very briefly. One of the most difficult things for a victim/survivor is the length of time that it can take for a police investigation. Because we know that these delays can have an enormous impact while people are waiting to find out if there will be charges or not, what's the current average time taken by Tasmania Police to investigate allegations of child sexual abuse from the initial report right through to a decision about whether a charge will be laid?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I can answer that, through you, minister, I don't have a particular time for that. I'd probably be better off to talk more through process. Every individual case is different, and in terms of the investigation, we will work at a pace that is in line with the victim/survivors' needs and wants. I think that's a really important part because someone might come in and make an initial statement and then decide I can't do this at the moment and I'm going to put this to the side for a while. So, that's what we will do. In terms of advice to the DPP, so when the investigation is complete, we'll prepare the file and, depending on the level of charges, we might be seeking advice from the DPP about charges. I can say that their turn-around times are definitely improving. We have regular conversations with them, too, particularly where there are other factors that need an answer quicker, and it might be statute of limitations and things like that. But there's certainly - it is a long process, but in particular, I suppose, once it gets into the court system, that is a long process.

Mrs GREENE - Thank you, and just finally as well on forensic evidence. We know that there's been delays there before because they're also under-resourced. What's the timeframe or turnaround if you're waiting for forensic evidence now? Has there been any improvements in that area?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I don't have specifics, but I know there has been improvements in turnaround. And again, we can always prioritise matters, and if - number of reasons why we might make a certain forensic sample a high priority because one, we know there's DNA there and we need to identify the offender due to community risk and things like that. We can always change around priority listings there.

CHAIR - We'll move on to another area of questioning from Ms Lovell.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to go, minister, to one of the recommendations in the Weiss report, recommendation 3, which is around community engagement - and particularly with sporting groups. And I know that there's been the Tasmania Police Community Engagement Strategy developed and the community engagement command established. I just wanted to ask if you could speak to - or the police could speak to some of the practical initiatives that have been noted here. Particularly with sporting organisations and community groups? Then I had some questions about funding, but might start with that first.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I can answer that one, and through you, minister. Yes, sporting groups have been a key priority area for our community engagement command at various levels. So, a whole-of-sporting-club level is certainly where we're trying to get the awareness out of what community engagement do, but also ensuring they're developing safe practices in their place. But also notifying about different reporting pathways.

We have - I don't know if you've seen Poli, the community engagement outreach van, will go regularly to different sporting events, and be there engaging with the community, whether it be at the football, the hockey centre and all those sort of places.

We have regular engagement with Sports Integrity Australia as well, and they're really key body to engage with who are in with all the sporting clubs and talking about those safe practices and reporting. So, it's been a really important area of that command.

Ms LOVELL - And what sort of evaluation or monitoring are you doing of the reach of the command? How many clubs you're engaging with? Are you meeting the demand that's there? Are there others? Are there gaps in that?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - The demand is really high, and certainly we go to as many as we can, but when the community engagement area can't actually go, we'll try and feed it out to the relevant districts if they're available to attend as well, because we can't be everywhere. I think since - over the last 12 months there were over 1100 different engagements that the community engagement command did, and I don't have it in front of me, but we do have a total breakdown of - whether it's a sporting group, multicultural, other groups -

Ms LOVELL - Would you be able to provide that information to the committee? I'd be interested in particularly - 1100 engagements, is that with different clubs or is that, you know, could that be multiple engagements with the same club?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - I can break it down. So, it's not 1100 just for sporting. That was what the community engagement area data –

Ms LOVELL - Across the community.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes, but I can get you that breakdown.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, that would be excellent. Is it on a - like, is the command proactively reaching out to clubs, or is it dependent on them coming to you for that level of engagement? Who starts that?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Both. It's probably the easiest way to answer it, and particularly at the sporting-body level is where we'll engage that higher level. So, there's a really strong awareness of us, and then how to make requests. So, we don't always know what the clubs have got on and what they're doing, so the request then comes through -

Ms LOVELL - It might be like Football Tasmania or Basketball Tasmania.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes. Exactly right.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, great. I do note that the monitor says particularly that funding of the community engagement command will be crucial to the ability of the unit to be able to reach different sporting and recreational organisations across the state.

Can you outline what the funding arrangements are currently, how long that's, I guess, secured for?

CHAIR - Will it be affected by any cuts?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Through you, minister. The funding has changed. Community engagement commands - so we have our community engagement command within our community, education and training commands now, as a division within it. So, Commander Jo Stolp, who's the person who oversees that - and she's the one that set up the community engagement commands, so she's building on that work as well. So, there was a combined $1.8 million in initial funding that was provided. In the 25-26 budget we had a further $800,000 and there's not funding allocated for this current one -

Ms LOVELL - Sorry, $1.8 million combined - sorry I interrupted you then - combined what?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - That was provided towards the implementation of all five recommendations for Weiss.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, okay.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - So, it's them broken down.

Ms LOVELL - How much of that was to this recommendation, do you know?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - So, $800,000 to begin with.

Ms LOVELL - 800,000, yes.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - And there's no further funding in this current financial year -

Ms LOVELL - Okay, is that problematic?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Which is why we [inaudible, timestamp 10.38.12].

Ms LOVELL - Okay, so essentially that funding will have to be found from elsewhere within the current budget?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Partly, but we are building on the relationships and the structures we have within our education training portfolio, and they're within that now, as a division, not separate, not taking on the work, but they're - the people who were doing community engagement are a division within that now.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, and do you know how much of that budget is allocated to this command specifically?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - No, I don't have the data.

Ms LOVELL - Are you able to provide that? Can you check that on notice?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - It's not really broken down that way, I think we've spoke about this, but the money we get for the policing is largely all salaries. So, outside that it, it will come from within that training command.

CHAIR - Has the size of the team changed with that shift?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - The commander - we reduced one commander, and that commander now has the Academy and community engagement.

CHAIR - But the number of officers who are involved in the engagement has stayed the same?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - No, they're the same. We've maintained that one the same.

Ms LOVELL - Is there any intention to change that at all, or is that how you see it moving forward? Just conscious of the Implementation Monitor's comment particularly on this, and I think he is quite deliberate about what he comments on in his report.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Without further funding that won't be changed.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, would you like to see further funding?

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Yes, we'd always like further funding.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, I'm sure you would.

CHAIR - Has there been any particular impact, in terms of the way the team works or the sorts of engagements that can happen? Has there been any impact from the switch into the other area, from a standalone area into the education area?

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Through you, minister, no, there hasn't - all the staff, inspector and sergeant, and the constables in that team are doing exactly the same work, and doing an amazing job.

Dep Comm HIGGINS - Very passionate.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - The value we see out of things like Cuppa with a Cop and things like that that they go and do, they are a small group but the value they bring to the organisation - we talk about community, trust and all those sort of things, they do an amazing job.

CHAIR - I bet you've got a line up of people keen to move into that space.

Asst Comm BLACKWOOD - Yes, it's a good space. It's the happy policing part, isn't it? People want to see you. Yes, it's really good.

CHAIR - Yes, indeed.

CHAIR - Right, I'm just going to have a look around committee members to see if there's other areas to go to. Any others on the Weiss? Is there anything further that minister, you or your team wanted to speak to in terms of the Weiss recommendations that we didn't cover with that area of questioning?

Mr ELLIS - No, that's okay, unless there's anything else that Tasmania police wanted to add?

CHAIR - Okay, then I think we seem to have members who have reached the end of their list of questions. So, I'm happy, minister, if there's any areas - you mentioned at the beginning you had some comments that you didn't necessarily go to. Have we covered all the areas you wish to cover across our time this morning, or did you have further comments you wanted to make?

Mr ELLIS - No, that's fine, Ms Webb. Thank you.

CHAIR - Okay, well, it's been a good session, and we appreciate the time made available by you and by your team here. I need, of course, to remind people that the evidence that's been provided at the hearing today is protected by parliamentary privilege. I take this opportunity to remind you that comments that you may make to the media, or others outside of the room, even if you repeat what you've said here, will not be protected by that privilege. Do you understand that?

WITNESSES -Yes.

CHAIR - Thanks, again, minister, we appreciate it, and thanks to the team here.

The witnesses withdrew.

The committee adjourned at 10.42 a.m.