



2026

JOINT SESSIONAL COMMITTEE

Recommendations made in the Final Report of the
Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in
Institutional Settings

THIRD INTERIM REPORT

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

Hon Meg Webb MLC (Chair)

Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC

Hon Sarah Lovell MLC

House of Assembly

Ms Cecily Rosol MP (Deputy Chair)

Mrs Jess Greene MP

Ms Jane Howlett MP
(from 11 August 2026)Mr Roger Jaensch MP
(until 4 November 2025)Mr Marcus Vermey MP
(from 4 November 2025 until 11 August 2026)

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this Third Interim Report on behalf of the Joint Sessional Committee scrutinising implementation of recommendations in the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

This Third Interim Report has been prepared to cover evidence taken by the Committee in the period from June 2025 to June 2026. Having pivoted from directly assessing the Government's progress in implementing each Commission of Inquiry recommendation in detail in the Second Interim Report, the Committee now focuses on aspects of its Terms of Reference associated with its other oversight responsibilities.

Evidence reported on in this Third Interim Report

- Scrutiny of the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2024-25, including on:
 - The format of the initial annual report and plans for subsequent annual reports based on an Implementation Framework.
 - Funding for the Office of the Implementation Monitor.
 - Areas of potential concern in progress of Commission of Inquiry recommendations, such as Ashely Youth Detention Centre, Out of Home Care, reprioritisation of recommendations, and resourcing.
- Scrutiny of the Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, and DECYP leadership, including on:
 - Budget, resourcing and revised timeframes for implementation of Commission of Inquiry recommendations.
 - Concerns relating to funding for JCP Youth BEAST Program.
 - Safety at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
- Scrutiny of the Office of the Independent Regulator Annual Report 2024-25, including:
 - Progress on further developing the work of the Office under its legislated functions.
 - Reportable contact data and trends, with concerns identified relating to Ashley Youth Detention Centre and Out of Home Care.
 - Identification of the need to include Tasmania Police in the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Scrutiny of *The Independent Review into the actions taken in response to the information and concerns raised by the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings*, Part A and Part B (the 'Woolcott Review'), including on:
 - Future oversight of the implementation of recommendations made in the Woolcott Review.

- The regulatory and legislative framework and processes for handling misconduct in the State Service.
- Proposal to establish a Commissioner of the State Service.
- Training in ethical decision-making, integrity, and conflict of interest.
- Model litigant obligations of the State.
- Access to independent legal advice by oversight agencies.
- Scrutiny of DPAC Secretary, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, on the Government response to the Woolcott Review.
- Scrutiny of the Hon Guy Barnett, Attorney-General and Deputy Premier, and Department of Justice leadership, on the Government response to the Woolcott Review.

This Report is a public record of scrutiny undertaken and includes 36 findings and 11 recommendations relating to matters arising in the evidence.

The Committee anticipates that its next interim report will focus on scrutiny of the 2025-26 annual reports from relevant entities. The Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor annual report for 2025-26 will be the first in which the Monitor provides detailed analysis and assessment based on his Implementation Framework. The Committee will also conduct further scrutiny hearings with all Ministers who have responsibility for implementation of Commission of Inquiry recommendations, particularly in response to the Monitor's findings.

In conclusion, I extend my thanks to Committee members for their careful work in finalising this Third Interim Report – Hon Sarah Lovell MLC, Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC, Cecily Rosol MP (Deputy Chair), Jess Greene MP and Marcus Vermey MP (who has since resigned from the Committee). Jane Howlett MP is welcomed as a new Member of the Committee.

Finally, the Committee takes this opportunity to provide its sincere thanks and acknowledgement of the work of Committee Secretary Ms Jenny Mannering and the support of Ms Allison Scott, Assistant Committee Secretary.



Hon Meg Webb MLC
Committee Chair
27 August 2026

FINDINGS

The Joint Sessional Committee made the following findings:

Office of the Implementation Monitor

1. The Implementation Monitor noted the increased scope of the work of his office and the need for an ICT solution to enable appropriate handling of sensitive and confidential information, and further resourcing for the evaluation functions of his office.
2. The Implementation Monitor made a submission for the 2026-27 State Budget requesting an increase in funding. This request was not met.
3. The first Annual Report of the Implementation Monitor was produced prior to the development of an Implementation Framework and is based on progress reported by Government, however that progress has not yet been critically analysed by the Monitor.
4. The Implementation Monitor is concerned about the progress of implementation of recommendations in relation to Ashley Youth Detention Centre and Out of Home Care.
5. The Implementation Monitor noted the regular presence of oversight bodies at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the significant investment in a range of measures to make the Centre safer, however was not able to say unequivocally that children at the Centre are safe.
6. The Implementation Monitor recognised the potential need for reprioritisation of timelines for some recommendations to facilitate more effective implementation.
7. The Implementation Monitor emphasised the importance of sufficient ongoing funding for the implementation of recommendations, noting *“the real funding is in front of us, not behind us.”*

Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth

8. Funding for implementation of Commission of Inquiry recommendations declines over the forward estimates of the 2025-26 State Budget.
9. The Minister and Department for Education, Children and Young People indicated the budgeted funding for implementation of Commission of Inquiry recommendations has and may continue to change due to changes to timelines of some recommendations and ongoing review of funding requirements for others, with the expectation the Government will agree to future funding requests.
10. The Department for Education, Children and Young People has been increasing the child safety workforce, however they have identified a further 40 FTE child safety officers are required to fully implement the Commission of Inquiry recommendations.
11. JCP Youth’s contract requires monthly meetings with the Department, quarterly reporting on outcomes and risk management, and annual reports. An evaluation of the program is required to be undertaken within the three years of the contract period, and procurement processes for this evaluation were underway at the time of the hearing.

12. JCP Youth conduct nighttime patrols and maintain a software program to enable JCP Youth staff to monitor young people, and during such patrols may take young people into their care overnight. It is the Government's expectation that parental/guardian consent would be obtained when children are taken into care overnight, including Departmental consent for children on Care and Protection Orders.
13. In alignment with Professional Practice standards, the Department for Education, Children and Young People expects that records are being kept of JCP Youth nighttime patrols and engagement with young people, including parental/guardian consent for children taken into care overnight. However, DECYP has undertaken no specific auditing of JCP records relating to these activities.
14. The Department for Education, Children and Young People report body scanners are used regularly at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, however there is no current auditing of their use and compliance with relevant policy and procedures.
15. The Secretary of the Department for Education, Children and Young People has directed the mandatory use of body-worn cameras by relevant Ashley Youth Detention Centre staff, however implementation will depend on procurement of sufficient cameras and finalisation of industrial negotiations.
16. Use of restrictive practices, including isolation, at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre must be authorised and documented according to policy.
17. At the 8 December 2025 hearing, the Department reported Ashley Youth Detention Centre had been in full lockdown on three occasions in the previous six months as a result of major incidents, and rolling lockdowns due to insufficient staff had been implemented a number of times. However, in answers to questions taken on notice, the Minister reported seven centre-wide lockdowns from August 2025 to the beginning of February 2026. The Department provided no data on the breakdown of the categories of these lockdowns.
18. There is a lack of transparency and clarity on the frequency, length and cause of lockdowns of units, rather than centre-wide lockdowns at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
19. Regardless of the reason for a lockdown, the detrimental impact on children and young people at Ashley Youth Detention Centre is the same, and is of significant concern.

Office of the Independent Regulator

20. The Independent Regulator suggests Reportable Conduct Scheme data and increasing engagement with Office of the Independent Regulator forums and online educational materials provide strong indicators children are becoming safer in Tasmania.
21. The Independent Regulator remains concerned about the level of physical altercation between youth workers and young people at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the lack of timely closures of investigations of reportable conduct matters.

22. While there are indications the Department for Education, Children and Young People is taking action to address concerns about physical altercations at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, concerns remain about the adequacy of de-escalation training for staff.
23. The Independent Regulator reported inadequate feedback and follow up with staff after Incident Review Committee assessment of physical altercation incidents at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
24. The Independent Regulator identified that reportable conduct incidents may be under-reported or not investigated in the Out of Home Care sector due to the use of sub-contractors. The Independent Regulator identified this as an area requiring legislative change.
25. The Independent Regulator expressed concern about potential under-reporting of reportable conduct from the Department for Education, Children and Young People in the Out of Home Care sector.
26. The Independent Regulator expressed concern about the low number of Department for Education, Children and Young People foster carers who have attended available training on the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
27. The Independent Regulator continues to urge Department Secretaries to develop child and youth safe action plans in compliance with the Child and Youth Safe Framework. The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, the Department of Health and the Department for Education, Children and Young People have submitted action plans to the Office of the Independent Regulator for review and comment.
28. The Independent Regulator stated Tasmania was an early adopter of the Child and Youth Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct schemes and has shared experience and knowledge with interstate partners.
29. The Independent Regulator notes the need for legislative change to ensure Tasmania Police are covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme, backdated to 1 August 2025.

The 'Woolcott Review'

30. The Government will refer some Woolcott Review recommendations to the Implementation Monitor for oversight and reporting. Mr Woolcott understands the Parliament also has the power to refer recommendations to the Monitor.
31. Any Woolcott Review recommendations not referred to the Independent Monitor for oversight will be reported on through a public mechanism coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
32. The Head of State Service stated the Woolcott Review recommendation to establish a new role of Commissioner of the State Service is being considered in the context of other machinery of government changes within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, including the intended creation of a new unit called Workforce Tasmania.

33. Heads of Agencies are determining which state service management roles will be included in the ethical decision-making, integrity and conflict of interest training recommended by the Woolcott Review.
34. The ethical decision-making, integrity and conflict of interest training recommended by the Woolcott Review is expected to be delivered by the Integrity Commission in 2026-27. Departments are expected to fund this training from within their current budgets.
35. The Government has not supported the Woolcott Review recommendation to establish an office in the Department of Justice to oversee compliance with Model Litigant guidelines. Consideration is being given to how reporting requirements can be developed to deliver a similar intent.
36. The Woolcott Review identified the current requirement for statutory oversight entities to seek an exemption under the Treasurer's Instructions to procure independent legal advice is a barrier to self-determination. The Government agrees in principle with the recommendation on this matter and is consulting with the independent oversight entities on a model for greater self-determination in obtaining independent legal advice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Sessional Committee recommends that the Government:

1. Prioritise the closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
2. Fund the Office of the Implementation Monitor in line with the Monitor's budget submissions.
3. Fully deliver on its commitment to fund Commission of Inquiry recommendations.
4. Commission an independent review of reporting, monitoring and oversight of contracted providers of child safety and youth justice services.
5. Employ sufficient Child Safety Officers to ensure every child engaged with Child Safety Services has an individual case manager.
6. Legislate to ensure the Reportable Conduct Scheme applies to sub-contractors in the Out of Home Care sector.
7. Ensure department-managed foster carers undertake training on the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
8. Ensure all Ashley Youth Detention Centre staff undertake de-escalation training and receive regular refresher training.
9. Develop and implement structured processes for feedback to staff following incident review at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
10. Ensure all Departments prioritise and fund ongoing delivery of the Woolcott Review recommendation for ethical decision-making, integrity and conflict of interest training.
11. Give full effect to the intent of the Woolcott Review recommendation to allow independent oversight bodies to seek independent legal advice, as required, without barrier.

ABBREVIATIONS

APS	Australian Public Service
APR	Awareness, Protection, Resolution
AYDC	Ashley Youth Detention Centre
CPO	Care and Protection Order
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSO	Child Safety Officer
CSS	Child Safety Services
CYPF	Children, Young People and Families
CYSOF	Child and Youth Safe Organisation Framework
DECYP	Department for Children and Young People
DOJ	Department of Justice
DPAC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
DPP	Department of Public Prosecutions
DPFEM	Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management
FSC	Family and Sexual Violence
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour
IRC	Incident Review Committee
OIM	Office of the Implementation Monitor
OIR	Office of the Independent Regulator
OOHC	Out of Home Care
OSG	Office of the Solicitor General
RoGS	Report on Government Services
SSMO	State Service Management Office
TI	Treasurer's Instruction
TSS	Tasmanian State Service

CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

1. The Joint Sessional Committee was first established in the 51st Parliament of Tasmania in June 2024 to inquire into matters relating to 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. The Committee was dissolved at the prorogation of that Parliament in June 2025, and re-established in the 52nd Parliament of Tasmania in September 2025 following the 2025 state election.
2. On 9 September and 25 September 2025 respectively, the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council resolved that a Joint Sessional Committee be appointed, with power to send for persons and papers, with leave to sit during any adjournment of both Houses, and with leave to adjourn from place to place to inquire into and report upon matters related to 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, including:
 - a) the Tasmanian Government's response and plan to implement the Recommendations
 - b) the Tasmanian Government's progress in implementing the Recommendations
 - c) outcomes related to implementation of the Recommendations, both partially and fully implemented
 - d) monitoring progress reports provided to Parliament, as provided for by Recommendation 22.1 by the independent Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor
 - e) overseeing the performance and proper execution of functions of the Commission for Children and Young People, as provided for by Recommendation 18.9
 - f) any other relevant matters that either House may refer to the Sessional Committee; and
 - g) any other matters incidental thereto.
3. The Committee was authorised to receive all evidence, submissions and related correspondence and papers received by the Joint Sessional Committee inquiring into the Tasmanian Government's response to child sexual abuse in institutional settings from the Fifty First Parliament.
4. The Membership of the Committee is as follows:

Legislative Council

Hon Sarah Lovell MLC

Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC

Hon Meg Webb MLC (Chair)

House of Assembly

Mrs Jess Greene MP

Mr Roger Jaensch MP

Ms Cecily Rosol MP (Deputy Chair)

5. On 14 April 2026, the Committee tabled its Second Interim Report (Part One) and on 19 May 2026, it tabled its Second Interim Report (Part Two). The Second Interim Report reported on evidence received by the Committee between June 2024 and June 2025.
6. This Report is the Third Interim Report of the Committee.
7. On 6 October 2025, Hon Meg Webb MLC was elected Chair and Ms Cecily Rosol MP was elected Deputy Chair of the Committee.
8. On 6 October 2025, Mr Roger Jaensch MP requested he be granted a leave of absence until 4 November 2025. The Committee granted this request.
9. On 4 November 2025 Mr Marcus Vermey MP was appointed to serve on the Committee in the place of Mr Roger Jaensch MP.
10. A meeting attendance record for the current reporting period is provided as Appendix A.
11. On 27 October 2025, the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor presented his first Annual Report 2024-25.
12. On 3 November 2025, Hon Robert Benjamin AM SC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, accompanied by Kathleen Cooper, Director and Ella Phillips, Policy Officer, Office of the Implementation Monitor, appeared before the Committee to provide evidence in relation to the Annual Report 2024-25.
13. On 4 November 2025, the Office of the Independent Regulator tabled its Annual Report 2024-25 in Parliament.
14. On 8 December 2025, Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, appeared before the Committee. The Minister was accompanied by:
 - Ginna Webster, Secretary
 - Jenny Burgess, Deputy Secretary – Strategy and Performance
 - Peter Whitcombe, Deputy Secretary – Child Safety and Youth Justice
15. On 5 February 2026, Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, appeared before the Committee to provide evidence in relation to the Annual Report 2024-25 of the Office of the Independent Regulator. Ms Coe was accompanied at the hearing by Allison Waring, Principal Solicitor, Office of the Independent Regulator.
16. The Independent Review into the actions taken in response to the information and concerns raised by the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (the 'Woolcott Review') was tabled in two parts - Part A in November 2025 and Part B in December 2025.

17. On 12 May 2026, Peter Woolcott AO and Radha Thomas appeared before the Committee to provide evidence regarding the Woolcott Review.
18. The [Tasmanian Government response to the 'Woolcott Review'](#) was released on 26 March 2026.
19. On 26 June 2026, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, appeared before the Committee. Ms Morgan-Wicks was accompanied by Courtney Hurworth, Chief Reform Lead, Keeping Children Safe and Amanda Russell, Deputy Secretary, State Service Management Office, DPAC.
20. On 26 June 2026, the Hon Guy Barnett MP, Attorney General and Deputy Premier, appeared before the Committee. Mr Barnett was accompanied by Kristy Bourne, Secretary and Bruce Paterson, Director Strategic Legislation and Policy.
21. On 11 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP was appointed to serve on the Committee in the place of Mr Marcus Vermey MP.
22. This Report provides an overview of evidence received between September 2025 and June 2026 regarding the Tasmanian Government's progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry.
23. The Hansard transcripts of these hearings are available to access via the [Inquiry webpage](#). The transcripts should be read in conjunction with this report.

EVIDENCE

HON ROBERT BENJAMIN AM SC, CHILD SAFETY REFORM IMPLEMENTATION MONITOR

On 3 November 2025, Hon Robert Benjamin AM SC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, appeared before the Committee to provide evidence in relation to the Annual Report 2024-25 of the Office of the Implementation Monitor. Mr Benjamin was accompanied by Kathleen Cooper, Director and Ella Phillips, Policy Officer, Office of the Implementation Monitor. The full transcript of this hearing is available to access via the [Inquiry webpage](#).

The role of the Implementation Monitor is as follows:

The Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor (the Monitor) is a new independent statutory role. It was established under Section 5 of the [Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Act 2024](#).

The Monitor is responsible for monitoring and reviewing how the Tasmanian Government and its agencies deliver child safety reforms. The Monitor will be supported by a small team to independently monitor, oversee, evaluate and report on the Government's implementation recommendations.

The Monitor will report to Parliament each year on the progress of the child safety reform recommendations. This report will include independent evaluation of how effective the measures and actions taken have been, especially around safety of children and young people in government and government-funded institutions.

To track the implementation of the Government's Child Safety Reform Agenda, the Monitor will engage with:

- government
- community sector organisations
- children and young people
- advocates for child safety
- people who have suffered child sexual abuse.¹

The First Annual Report 2024-25 was published on Monday 27 October 2025. The [Annual Report 2024-25](#) and the [Companion Document: Appendices](#) can be accessed via the following link: <https://oim.tas.gov.au/annual-report>

The Office of the Implementation Monitor (OIM) developed an Easy Read Guide to help read the report which can be accessed via the following link: <https://oim.tas.gov.au/annual-report>

The OIM also developed an Implementation Framework. The Framework sets out how the OIM will monitor, review and evaluate the Tasmanian Government's implementation of recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry and other related child safety reviews in a consistent, transparent and meaningful way. The Framework can be accessed via the following link: https://oim.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/837178/FINAL-Implementation-Framework-v.-1.pdf

¹ <https://oim.tas.gov.au/about>

The Monitor provided context to his first Annual Report, noting that it had been developed in advance of the Implementation Framework, and anticipating that future Annual Reports will be considerably different:

Mr BENJAMIN - ... This year, my annual report has taken the opportunity, in the absence of a framework, to highlight what is working well and bring everyone up to date and up to speed about where we are. Bear this in mind: the report is the figures and the status as was in about April or May this year [2025], because I had to do it as at 30 June, so as you may have noticed, some things have happened in the meantime which will have impacted on that.

...

Mr BENJAMIN - Next year my report will take a more critical view. So, when I say things in my report, that's what I've been reported on, and I'm setting those as standards for which I will hold government to account in my next report. So, a lot of the things you'll read and think, well, that's not right; well, it's what I'm told. If I've got a baseline, I can then make formal findings one way or the other. I'm hoping to use that to enhance the reform process.²

The following context was provided around the funding of the OIM:

CHAIR - ...I note that in the report on page 15, you talk about the fact that the budget was provided for the 2024-25 financial year, and you had originally been with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC), now switched to the Department of Justice, I believe. I'm interested to unpick that a little bit, about when we are scrutinising spending, are we to look for the funding for your office in the DOJ budget?

Mr BENJAMIN - It will be in the DOJ budget, yes.

CHAIR - In terms of the formation of this interim budget which is coming down this week, or looking ahead to the May budget next year, is your office consulted by the government on what will be required to fully fund your office to do its task?

Mr BENJAMIN - The budgets were set before I was appointed.

CHAIR - Over the forward Estimates or how far ahead?

Mr BENJAMIN - Well, it was set in the 2024-25 budget and that carried it through to 30 June of this year, and that was adequate for where we are at the moment. I had a look at the budget, which didn't go anywhere for other reasons, and I will be interested to see where it goes now; and I haven't been consulted in respect of that, but I've been assured by government that should my resources be inadequate, they will support additional resources.

...

CHAIR - I'm just interested, though, looking ahead, will you be putting in a budget submission to the government for the budget that will come down in May next year, which will be the 2026-27 budget? Will you put a budget bid in for your office outlining what you expect?

Mr BENJAMIN - I think I will need to, because next year the work is likely to change. I'm likely to have the Woolcott report delivered. We've had the Professor McCormack and Snell report on freedom of information and personal information protection, and there's a couple of others floating around. So I will be looking at - if I'm going to make a submission, I want to make it

² Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, p. 4.

*based on where we are and where we're going, so it's likely or possible that I will make a submission, but I will wait and see what the level of work is likely to be.*³

The Committee wrote to the Office of the Implementation Monitor on 10 November 2025 with the following question taken on notice: Will your office put in a budget submission to the state government to request the funding required to undertake the statutory role? If not, how will your office make requests for appropriate budget allocations?

On 16 February 2026, a response was provided to the Committee:

My office wrote to the Hon Guy Barnett MP, Deputy Premier on 23 January 2026 and enclosed a budget submission for his endorsement. Current funding for my office is insufficient to support me to fulfill my role and meet my obligations under the Act. The request for additional funding has been made with careful restraint, capturing only what is absolutely necessary to put my Implementation Framework into effect, which I am legislatively required to do.

*The establishment of my office represents a major opportunity to bring about significant change for Tasmanian children and young people and our community. The next three years are crucial for ensuring the success of this oversight role and I am deeply committed to performing my functions in a way that adds genuine value to the reform agenda, including by providing meaningful insights into the effectiveness of the reform in achieving its desired outcomes. Accordingly, the submission was made with restraint and seeks to sustain the current workforce of 6.0 FTE plus an additional 0.4 FTE. In addition, I require an ICT solution to enable appropriate handling of sensitive and confidential information and an allocation to support the evaluation functions of the office. This enhanced capability is particularly pertinent given the prospect of additional child safety recommendations being referred to my office pursuant to section 13 of the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Act (the Act), such as from the independent report of the Woolcott Review.*⁴

The Committee notes that, during Budget Estimates in June 2026, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to funding the Office of the Implementation Monitor so it can effectively and efficiently monitor, evaluate, and report on child safety reform, and ensure it results in meaningful, lasting reform for children and young people.⁵

During the hearing, the Implementation Monitor flagged some areas where he could foresee problems arising:

*But I think I can see some problems ahead: Ashley's one, out-of-home care is another. There are other areas where problems are likely to arise, but I'd like to see what government plans to do with that. I think in my report I talk about three things which concern me: one is resources - and not resources for me, but resources more broadly; secondly, the possibility of reprioritisation; and thirdly, deferring certain work.*⁶

³ Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, pp. 6-7.

⁴ [Letter](#) dated 16 February 2026 to Hon Meg Webb MLC, Chair, Commission of Inquiry Scrutiny Committee from Hon Robert Benjamin AM SC.

⁵ Hon Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 1 June 2026, p. 55.

⁶ Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, p. 8.

Closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre

In relation to the closure of AYDC, the following evidence was provided in terms of staffing and safety of children and young people:

Ms ROSOL - You mentioned earlier one of the issues that you think you might see issues with in the future is Ashley Youth Detention Centre. We know that the government has been saying for a long time that they're going to close it. They're way behind. They've gone over their own timeframes for committing to close it and their own commitment. We know that the new youth justice facility, the planning approval process is happening and that's in train. What other factors do you think are contributing to Ashley Youth Detention Centre still being open and stopping progress in that?

Mr BENJAMIN - It's such a big process. I mean, if you look at the recommendations about Ashley Youth Detention Centre, it has, I think, 39 parts to it, and it's a great, big jigsaw puzzle. It's not just the detention centre or a safe facility; it's bail facilities, it's broader facilities that need to be created. The government, rightly, is anxious and moving I think as best as they can into building something, a core, but it's building around the core. I speak to [DECYP] ...

...

Mr BENJAMIN - ...I see they have some really good people on board now. It's changed in the last 12 months. I see they're talking about the people who are going to be at that centre and its model of care and how they will think it through.

...

It's the way, I believe, we're aiming to go, perhaps the start of the way we're thinking to go, but then we have to build the other bits. Where do you put the young people and children who've done something very mild where they're going to be safe? I feel great sympathy for the magistrates when something comes up before them and it's a semi-serious event: do you send the child back into the community - sometimes a community where the child is not safe - or do you send the child to Ashley? That's a really difficult decision for magistrates to make. Sometimes it's the lesser of two evils. So it's the broader picture, which is going to be, I believe, the harder one and I see that as being the more difficult one to deal with ...

...

Mr BENJAMIN - That's the extra work, but that's happening. I'm having conversations at DECYP in relation to that. I'm talking about how it can be done and they're telling me what they're doing, and it's starting. Culture change is not easy, and it's the change of the thinking and the change of the behaviour that will drive and implement and embed these reforms.

...

CHAIR - On that, is it of concern to you that the approach to youth detention described in the recommendations from the commission of inquiry report is very different from what's now being proposed at the Pontville site, as in it's not the small home-like environments in the community; it's still fairly distinctly a youth detention centre at arm's length from the community? I know it's closer, for example, to Hobart than Ashley was and it's probably closer to a major centre than Ashley was, but it's still very much a detention centre, not a small home-like environment embedded in the community. That was the description that we were working towards, I thought, from the COI report.

Mr BENJAMIN - It's a hard job to do. It has to be a safe place for the young people. It has to at times be a safe place from the community's perspective in relation to serious crime. I've looked at child detention centres in almost all Australian states and territories. I've looked at them in Ireland and in Scotland, and they all have the same basic structure. The way you get people out of that detention facility is the outlying services, and you won't get all those young people out of that place.

CHAIR - You do also recognise, of course, because you were a member, you're a commissioner on the commission of inquiry and you made that recommendation with a particular description in it, and there were reasons for that, and it is very much that an environment also does create certain cultures and mindsets and can be difficult in itself to break from mindsets once they're established. My question is really about: what level of concern do you have that we've strayed from the recommendation in terms of the model of that youth detention centre?

Mr BENJAMIN - The commission of inquiry recommended a secure facility. I think in terms of secure facilities, it will be state-of-the-art - as close as you can get to that. So, from my perspective, and I'm open to be persuaded otherwise, I believe it meets those requirements.

...

CHAIR - Can I also ask about: is it your expectation, or would you be concerned if key staff from the existing AYDC were to be moved down and into that facility once it's operating, or would you expect to see it with a freshly staffed team on board?

Mr BENJAMIN - That will be an operational matter for DECYP, but I've spoken to them about that.

CHAIR - Do you have a view on whether that's desirable? Not desirable? What things would they need to be mindful of?

Mr BENJAMIN - It depends on the staff. A good example is the principal of the Ashley School, who I understand is a very, very good principal. Very fine. Why wouldn't we have that expertise brought down to the new facility? So, it's almost on a job by job, person by person. I'm sorry I mentioned him, but he just does such a good job. That's a good example. I would expect there will be a significant change of staff, the extent and nature of that will be determined, I think, over the next year or so because if we're building the place, we have to build the capacity and the people around it at the same time.

CHAIR - Yes, and you'd understand that because of the comments in the commission's report, reflected in the recommendations about the difficulty of not sufficiently qualified youth workers, for example, and also questions over the qualifications and capabilities of leadership at the AYDC facility, we certainly wouldn't want to see that replicated in a southern-based facility. That's where my question is coming from about transfer of staff or transfer of leadership from one facility to the other. Even if the Pontville facility is vastly better in terms of its practical arrangements and its environment, if we bring a staff and a staff culture - and the problems that were identified in the commission's report - into that new environment, we'll see the same outcomes, I would imagine.

Mr BENJAMIN - You can't set up another smaller Ashley, that's absolutely clear.

CHAIR - What will you see as being important then from the government's point of view, in terms of staffing?

Mr BENJAMIN - The building of a structure, a staffing structure, and the thought processes which I know are underway at the present time about how we staff that centre. Who we use to staff that centre, the level of expertise of that staff, whether it's at a low level or a high level, that is something I intend to monitor and keep my eye on. We have time in the next two years or so to recruit appropriate people to do that, but that has to be funded properly.

We're hoping to drive it down. I mean, if we build a youth centre there with 16 beds, my hope is that most of those beds aren't filled.

CHAIR - I think we share that hope.

Mr BENJAMIN - But at the same time, we're going to have Ashley likely operating until that time - although hopefully some of the other things will start to drive down the numbers in Ashley through bail facilities and broader facilities - but you've got to have sufficient beds there to cope with a changeover. Recruitment, thinking about what people do, thinking about the model of care, are all essential to make that a new child-centred, trauma-informed organisation.

CHAIR - I absolutely agree. We would all agree with the theory of that. We would all be very interested to see how that plays out in practice and hopeful that your oversight of that is going to deliver a good outcome.

...

Ms O'CONNOR - From your earlier answer, it sounds like the timeframe for the opening of the new therapeutic youth detention facility is about two years from now.

Mr BENJAMIN - Yes, I would assume that.

CHAIR - As a former commissioner of the commission of inquiry, you know that some of the most confronting and distressing evidence that was given to the inquiry was from former detainees of Ashley Youth Detention Centre. There's a lot of eyes on Ashley now. I guess the question fundamentally is, are children and young people who are there safer now than they were as a consequence of the commission of inquiry and a real focus on what's happening and has happened in Ashley?

Mr BENJAMIN - That's a really hard question, can I say. I hope they're safer. I know that enormous resources have been put in there to make sure they're safer. I know that the good youth workers are under pressure there, and we have to have good youth workers in there. I know in my meetings and regular meetings with the independent regulator and the interim children's commissioner that they're up there all the time and watching things. I also know from my discussions through the Ombudsman's office with the custodial inspector and the OPCAT inspector that things are better, but then we see things arising in recent times which cause you to worry whether it is better or not.

I'm anxious to see something put in place, but something different put in place to make it safer. You can get the little bits, but it's getting the whole process put in place which is the real art form, I guess.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, because part of it is the fabric of the place and part of it is about whether or not hiring processes have changed. I gather that even though there's lots of statutory eyes on Ashley, we can't be certain it has moved past its abusive -

Mr BENJAMIN - That's why I gave you the frank answer that I gave you. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, thank you.

Mr BENJAMIN - That's why the broader issues have to be addressed sooner rather than later, which is the bail facilities. So somebody who shouldn't be there isn't there, but they're not sent somewhere which is not safe. ...

CHAIR - ... In relation to the measures that are being put in place in AYDC currently toward that end of making it a safer environment in the short-term until we close and that new facility is open, do you have oversight over - or any line of sight on - the measures being taken now to make that environment safer, and have you been looking into that as part of your assessment of recommendations?

Mr BENJAMIN - That's very broad. I meet with the Interim Children's Commissioner and the regulator on a regular basis, and this is a significant feature of what we talk about. It's informal and we're going to make it formal into the future. I don't know that me turning up at Ashley every week or every fortnight is going to help because we have the custodial inspector, the children's commissioner and others turning up there. It's very regularly and thoroughly monitored. We've got additional CCTV cameras there.

...

CHAIR - ... Where I'm coming from with that is, I'm aware of new CCTV cameras and body-worn cameras being operated, and new policies about how things should be done, reported and investigated; mechanisms like an incident review committee that's supposed to meet at a certain regularity to review things.

However, I'm also aware, through it being brought to my attention, privately, that many of these things don't necessarily operate - or are not necessarily complied with - in the way that it looks on paper like they should be. I'm interested in, at this present point in time, while we're in this intervening time of Ashley being open before the new facility is ready, how are we ensuring that those measures - all that money being poured in and all those measures towards a more safe environment - are actually, in practice, being adhered to, and delivering that safer outcome? I'm wondering what your line of sight is on that.

Mr BENJAMIN - My line of sight is through the independent regulator, through the children's commissioner, through the custodial inspector, and through the OPCAT inspector. That's the only way I can do it.⁷

Out of Home Care

In relation to out of home care (OOHC), Mr Benjamin was asked for more information about the concerns he had in that area. One concern he highlighted was the timeline for outsourcing the provision of out of home care to the non-government sector (Recommendation 9.2):

Mr BENJAMIN - As far as I'm aware, the capacity in the non-government providers isn't sufficient at the moment to meet the needs. It is capacity-building which has to take place. There's no point handing children over. Of course, you have to look at the individual child, where they are and how they're managing. It's complex and the capacity issue and that other

⁷ Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, pp. 11-17.

complexity is going to slow that down. Again, to do it properly is needed, because we're talking about how we look after human beings and young, vulnerable human beings.

Ms ROSOL - *Is that capacity for children in packages or children with carers.*

Mr BENJAMIN - *It is the out-of-home care group. I'm not clear where the problem arises. I've asked about and I've been informed that there is likely to be a problem in that area, which I like. I like people to tell me that this is going to be a difficult area, and I will be investigating that over the next few months in that particular area. ...*

Ms O'CONNOR - *This goes in part, doesn't it, to your concern about prioritising workforce? Where does that workforce come from? Do you think there's a role here for UTAS to step up? Is there something more TasTAFE could be doing? Is there something we're not seeing here or driving, or do we have to import?*

Mr BENJAMIN - *I'm seeing it from a much higher level. I'm seeing every state confronting the same problems that Tasmania is confronting. I'm seeing states with a lot more resources than Tasmania who can afford to outbid you on these people. The best way to get these people, frankly, is building capacity in Tasmania.*

Ms O'CONNOR - *Through education and training here and skills development here, yes.*

Mr BENJAMIN - *Because Tasmanians are likely to stay here, because we stick if we've got a job, and having a job in Tasmania is a really important social structure. One, I think we'll have difficulty importing; and two, if we can train our own people, it will be better because they're likely to stay here and stick with the job.*

It also means, particularly for a young person, if I've learned nothing from the commission of inquiry, if you as a child have one responsible adult, just one, to care for you and they stick around, you have a good chance of succeeding in life. If you don't have one responsible adult to stick around, then life gets pretty hard and pretty dismal when you're very young.

So, if we get people who are Tasmanians and do stick to the job, I think we will get better results. It's that micro level where you can make a difference, I think.⁸

Reprioritisation of Recommendations

In relation to reprioritisation and sequencing of recommendations, the following evidence was provided:

Ms LOVELL - *... I wanted to ask you a little bit more about something you've mentioned a couple of times around reprioritisation. I know we've had discussions about that and timelines that were set by the commission and that there may be some changes that would be beneficial. Just wondering if you can talk a little more about that, and particularly whether you've had or started any of those conversations with government around what that might look like, and whether there's an openness to that. You might not be at that stage yet.*

Mr BENJAMIN - *I don't think I'm at the openness stage.*

...

⁸ Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, p. 31.

Mr BENJAMIN - But when you read the report, particularly in the beginning, it says the timelines are set in those three tranches, but the commission recognised that some of those timelines may need to change, and as I've said, getting it right is more important than timelines.

So in terms of reprioritisation, where I've been talking to the agencies about when they can get things done, how they can get things done, and in the coming year I'm going to invite them to give me the timelines they think are reasonably achievable and under the current funding. That way I can hopefully next year report not only against what's been going on, but also when the timelines are likely to be achieved, and what my thoughts are about those timelines, and also whether I accept that that's a reasonable approach to adopt by government.

*If I do those sorts of things, I will probably talk to survivors groups - not probably; I will talk to survivors groups - and I will talk to some of the non-government agencies to get their views. Now that I've got the baseline, I can start fixing that up. It's interesting: the national royal commission, we have no timelines on that at all. On the Weiss report, I have no timelines, although it looks like it's been done in a group lot. On the education report, there's only one or two outstanding on that, and also one or two outstanding - if that's correct, by the way - one or two outstanding on the education report and the health report. I'd like to have some structure in terms of that.*⁹

And further:

Mr BENJAMIN - ... We do talk to the agencies and they are talking to us about reprioritising different things. Often you're looking at the systemic approach that you need to do something before other things get done, and that may well be one of those. I have my focus on finding an answer to a problem that I wasn't asked, rather than answering the question. So yes, we're open to reprioritising and I'm happy to seek reprioritising to bring things forward which may not need to be done until 2029 but bring it forward to make sure that the real change comes about.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm really pleased to hear that. It's been a recurring theme during this committee's life where key stakeholders are worried and this goes back to your three concerns about reprioritisation. Four years is a lot of time for a change of government or a change of politics or a worsening budget situation. There's a whole lot of risk here in making sure all the recommendations are delivered.

Mr BENJAMIN - Most of those times were set in about April or May 2023, which is a long time ago. The report itself recognises that there will have to be rejigging of that and leaves that open to the independent monitor to be a significant part of approving or not approving, I think that's the wrong word, but facilitating or not facilitating that outcome.

Ms O'CONNOR - If there was a recommendation or an area of recommendations within that stage 3 implementation timeframe, is there any area of public policy as it relates to children and young people through the recommendations you might like to see brought forward?

Mr BENJAMIN - There are a couple, I think. Was it in relation to the out-of-home care? Probably the best one is the workforce strategy. I mentioned that in my report when I was looking into the future, that unless we have the workforce, this can't be done and to bring some of those aspects back into an earlier time would be a better outcome.

⁹ Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, pp. 9-11.

CHAIR - This committee certainly heard evidence in previous public hearings, and I know that you've engaged with all the evidence presented to the committee that's in the public domain, and you would have seen in some of the transcripts, in particular with some stakeholder groups that the out-of-home care area was one where there was the sequence and timing of certain recommendations coming into play did not seem to necessarily make sense, that there seemed to be ones that were far down the track that really needed to be brought forward in order to help others.

That certainly, from what we heard from relevant stakeholders, an area that I would encourage you to look at as well and engage with stakeholders about the sequencing of recommendations relating to out-of-home care. Out-of-home care to some extent is a bit of a poor cousin across this and it's been kicked down the road quite a long way. It is a challenging area, I know; but it's one to think of, if I may say that, for resequencing.

Mr BENJAMIN - I am thinking about it, and the fact that you've mentioned it will focus it in my mind a little bit more intently. But all those dates have to be fitted in, in an effective way.¹⁰

Resourcing

In relation to the necessity of funding for the long term, the following evidence was provided:

Ms ROSOL - I wanted to come back to resourcing, because we talked about it earlier and it was a recurrent theme through your report about funding, the importance of funding, the necessity of funding for the long term and prevention. A quote from it was at one point you said that you think that, 'Recent hiring restrictions on non-essential staff and uncertainty around the State Budget quite possibly have impacted culture.' We've talked about the importance of culture and culture change here today.

I understand that what you've done so far is the audit and the baseline. Are there any recommendations that you are concerned, with the information that you have now, are being impacted by insufficient funding and budget issues?

Mr BENJAMIN - Not at present, but ask me this time next year.

Ms ROSOL - That was my next question.

Mr BENJAMIN - That was it. I'm seeing a lot of work done. To be fair to government, they are really working hard, both at the political level and at the State Service level, but I would like to see where the funding, if it's reduced, how it impacts, and then I'm in a position to report on some, but perhaps not all, of that next year.

Ms ROSOL - There seemed to be a shift in the government's language around the time of the budget that was handed down but then not passed in May. They started to talk about the commission of inquiry funding as if it was in the past and saying that we have the budget problems now partly because of commission of inquiry costs. I just wondered what you make of that change in language. I felt it was concerning that the language had shifted, and they were talking about funding as a past thing. What do you make of that shift in language?

Mr BENJAMIN - I didn't notice that language. I did notice the suggested reduction in funding, and I was going to, if the budget had passed, have a look at that and make some comment. I will wait and see what happens on Thursday. I don't like punching at shadows. I like punching

¹⁰ Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, pp. 19-20.

at reality, but, doing that in the sense of, well, how is it going to affect this particular program? Is it going to put it back, how it's going to affect the priority of children?

So I can't answer that question directly, but I will say something if need be, and as I've said in my report, and as I say publicly: the child has to be the centre. The child has to be prioritised. We have to drive those numbers down. And as a reminder, ongoing funding is important, because I think the real funding is in front of us, not behind us.¹¹

Findings

1. The Implementation Monitor noted the increased scope of the work of his office and the need for an ICT solution to enable appropriate handling of sensitive and confidential information, and further resourcing for the evaluation functions of his office.
2. The Implementation Monitor made a submission for the 2026-27 State Budget requesting an increase in funding. This request was not met.
3. The first Annual Report of the Implementation Monitor was produced prior to the development of an Implementation Framework and is based on progress reported by Government, however that progress has not yet been critically analysed by the Monitor.
4. The Implementation Monitor is concerned about the progress of implementation of recommendations in relation to Ashley Youth Detention Centre and Out of Home Care.
5. The Implementation Monitor noted the regular presence of oversight bodies at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the significant investment in a range of measures to make the Centre safer, however was not able to say unequivocally that children at the Centre are safe.
6. The Implementation Monitor recognised the potential need for reprioritisation of timelines for some recommendations to facilitate more effective implementation.
7. The Implementation Monitor emphasised the importance of sufficient ongoing funding for the implementation of recommendations, noting "*the real funding is in front of us, not behind us.*"

Recommendations

The Joint Sessional Committee recommends that the Government:

1. Prioritise the closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
2. Fund the Office of the Implementation Monitor in line with the Monitor's budget submissions.
3. Fully deliver on its commitment to fund Commission of Inquiry recommendations.

¹¹ Robert Benjamin AM SC, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 3 November 2025, pp. 24-25.

MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, HON JO PALMER MLC

On 8 December 2025, the Minister for Children and Youth, Hon Jo Palmer MLC, appeared before the Committee. The Minister was accompanied by:

- Ginna Webster, Secretary
- Jenny Burgess, Deputy Secretary – Strategy and Performance
- Peter Whitcombe, Deputy Secretary – Child Safety and Youth Justice
- Shane Murdoch, Director – Custodial Youth Justice Services

The full transcript of this hearing is available to access via the [Inquiry webpage](#).

The Minister provided an opening statement, outlining progress made and current priority areas, as well as consideration of the timeframes for implementation:

I would like to recognise the enormous work that has been done to implement such crucial reform. Staff in my department and across government are working every day to ensure the rights of children and young people are upheld in all they do, to influence decisions that affect them and to be safe from harm. Our key achievements to date include: approving the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Curriculum for students from Prep to Year 6 with an implementation plan in development; establishing key teams in the new Office of the Chief Practitioner, commissioning the new Justice information System, YJ+; providing awareness, de-escalation and protection training to all youth workers at AYDC; and launching an internal online hub to make child and youth empowerment resources available to the whole department.

Going forward, our priorities are progressing key enablers of youth justice reform including: both diversionary and early intervention services reform and undertaking a substantive review of the Youth Justice Act; establishing a carer register for all types of carers in the out-of-home care setting, progressing detailed design and applications for the new Tasmanian youth detention facility, including Aboriginal co-design; ensuring every child in care has a case manager and individualised care plans; implanting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle; and coordinating a cohesive whole-of-agency and whole-of-government approach to addressing harmful sexual behaviours.

I would also like to briefly address the topic I know may be front of mind, being the changed timeframes of a selection of recommendations. The department and I have been engaging proactively with the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, Robert Benjamin, and through our discussions he has urged us to ensure we don't compromise quality for arbitrary timeframes. The implementation monitor has a critical role in oversight of our efforts and we take his views extremely seriously.

The commission of inquiry report itself acknowledges that the timeframes were provided as guidance. Both the commission and the implementation monitor have been clear that what matters most is delivering high quality, lasting reform that keeps children safe. Two years into the reform, agencies now have a clearer understanding of the scale and the interdependencies involved in delivering the most significant child safety reform program in Tasmania's history, which has informed some necessary adjustments to timeframes.

At a whole-of-government level, of the 191 recommendations 57 have been finalised, 13 will be achieved earlier than the commission recommended, and 94 remain on track for delivery by their original timeframe. There are 27 recommendations whose timeframes have been extended. Of the department's 70 recommendations, there are 19 whose timeframes have been extended, 18 of those belong to the Children and Youth portfolio and one to Education.

Extending the timeframes for these recommendations reflects the momentous work currently underway on major interdependent reform programs, including the delivery of the new Tasmanian youth justice facility, the need to progress consolidated packages of reform related to out-of-home care and crucial amendments to the Youth Justice Act. This change also reflects the shift to progressing broad programs of work over individual recommendations, recognising the overlap of projects and the interdependent recommendations, identifying work by its impact instead of its number of holistic and practical.

Moving timeframes further into the future is not a decision that the government takes lightly. We understand the urgency to make change. There are many reasons for a timeframe to move forward, and each recommendation has been considered carefully. In some cases, the timeframe changed because the community told us they needed more time for consultation. In other cases, our attempts to accelerate a process have not been successful, and in some instances the recommendation is impacted by national issues. We remain deeply committed to delivering meaningful, real change, and not treating this as a tick-a-box exercise.

Our goal is to rebuild the community's trust, keeping children at the centre of all we do and achieve true reform as we work to ensure young people feel safe and are safe in all Tasmanian state government institutions.

In closing, every Tasmanian child is entitled to the best start in life. Every Tasmanian child has an inherent right to feel safe, be well, to be known, and learning. I want all Tasmanians to know this government is listening and is acting. I thank the staff who are working very hard every day to implement these changes.¹²

Budget, Resourcing and Revised Timeframes

In relation to resourcing for child safety and youth justice, the following evidence was provided:

Ms ROSOL - ... *I understand resourcing is a significant issue for funding for Child Safety Services and Youth Justice. Looking at the Budget over the next four years, the forward Estimates, the funding across Child Safety Services and Youth Justice decreases, and rounding to the nearest million, this financial year it's \$197 million for Children and Families; next year it's \$192 million, so a decrease of \$5 million; the following year it's \$182 million; and then by 2028-29 it drops to \$178 million, so a significant drop of \$19 million across the four years. It's similar in Youth Justice - it drops \$27 million, a slight uplift to \$31 million, then \$29 million and then \$18 million in four years' time.*

I'm trying to fit together commission of inquiry recommendations being implemented. We know significant funding is needed for them, and while you're working to implement the recommendations, the Budget is scheduled to decrease over four years. Can you explain that decrease and the impact it will have on implementation of commission of inquiry recommendations?

Ms PALMER - *Absolutely, and I will pass to my secretary and deputy secretaries in those relevant spaces. It's been reported to me that one of the things around the Budget is that it was a little bit initially like designing in the dark. We weren't exactly sure what resources would be needed, what FTEs would be needed, and what some of these complex bodies of work would require. So we were trying to allocate money in the budget around what we thought we might need and when we might need it. Some of that has changed as we've moved through this process. I will hand to the secretary to talk in detail around that.*

¹² Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 2-4.

Ms WEBSTER - Where we've got to is we now have a greater understanding of the cost of delivery and where we need to put our budget to deliver some of the recommendations. I can talk through some of the issues in Child Safety and Youth Justice. Some of that will be some of the programs that finish. There was a \$15 million allocation to out-of-home care; I think it was \$9 million this year and then \$6 million next year for out-of-home care, and then there was baseline funding for out-of-home care as well. There's some funding for two years around the transition to independence and then some funding for foster and kinship carers.

Some of the work that needs to inform future funding, particularly in Child Safety, is being undertaken by the Uplifting Care project. So there is an opportunity for us to go back to government and say, 'This is what we need to implement'. There's a lot more flexibility now for me as secretary to be able to move resources and place them into the areas we need to, to get the recommendations done. Some of that explanation is those short-term funding allocations that drop off. That doesn't mean to say that we wouldn't go back and ask for additional funding.

Ms O'CONNOR - There is no additional funding anywhere, with respect. ...

Ms WEBSTER - ... As well as the Youth Justice investment, there are also some programs that will be ramped up. Then as we're looking at making improvements in diversion and bail support, those things, we will need to go back and say, 'This is what we need to deliver these services'. I was around when we developed that initial budget for the commission of inquiry, but in a different portfolio, and it was very much about making sure we did those first lot of recommendations and implemented them with integrity. We're now onto the second and third lot of recommendations to implement with integrity and with some sustainability.

The clear message is the government has committed to implementing the recommendations. Our job is to work through and be very clear about those recommendations and what the long-term sustainability of the child safety and youth justice sector is.¹³

And further:

Ms O'CONNOR - ... I'm trying to understand the process that led to these cuts across the forward Estimates. Was that, noting what the secretary said about it being a recalibration of understanding what the costs would be of delivering on the recommendations. Were these funding adjustments or cuts based on the advice of the department? Is there an efficiency dividend within those reductions across the forward Estimates? Has there been any request, for example, from Treasury or the Treasurer, that there be cuts to the budget allocated for implementation of the commission of inquiry recommendations?

Ms PALMER - There are a number of questions in your question. I will try to work through that. The government committed \$424.5 million in the 2024-25 Budget and forward Estimates for the ongoing implementation of these reforms. That included \$92 million in the 2025-26 Budget. This builds on funding of \$55.1 million provided in the 2023-24 prior to the acceptance of the commission of inquiry report.

In addition, this budget allocates \$105.3 million over the forward Estimates to deliver the new Tasmanian youth justice facility and now that the site master plan and development application are completed. This is in addition to the \$50 million already allocated for the

¹³ Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth and Ginna Webster, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 8-9.

delivery of the new justice facility in previous budgets. The total budget now for the youth justice facility sits at \$156 million over the forward Estimates.

An additional \$30.8 million to deliver a new human resources information system across government to link up employer information - this is a critical enabler to delivering the recommendations of the commission of inquiry and Woolcott reviews.

There's an additional \$2.9 million for the State Archives to digitise and make accessible files to victim/survivors, and a further \$26 million across agencies for various recommendations for delivery until 2028-29.

We did have to reprofile some funding over the forward Estimates as the commission of inquiry implementation evolved and, as the secretary has said, if we need to go back to government, we will go back to government. I think the secretary had something to add to that.

Ms O'CONNOR - ... *If I could just address you to the question. I'm trying to understand the genesis of decisions that have been made to cut the allocated funding for implementing the commission of inquiry recommendations.*

Just going back to what the secretary said before about a budget being set early, and then, that wasn't quite the right budget. Align that with the 27 recommendations which have been pushed out and there seems to be a very clear link between under-resourcing and cuts and delays to the implementation of recommendations. It seems impossible to ignore that link.

...

Ms PALMER - *I will go to the detail of that with the secretary. What I will say is that there have been some recommendations where we've been able to move the timeframes up. There are some recommendations where, out of necessity, we have had to push them back. There's a variety of reasons for that and I'm very happy to step through them. We have that information at the table. As I say, there were some examples where the way the recommendations were initially put, the timeframes that were initially put simply cannot happen that way because we need legislation to be put in place to actually enact some of those.*

We've gone through every recommendation in a genuine way and said, 'How do we deliver these in a genuine manner?' Yes, we may not meet some of those timeframes, but, that is actually, really - it's a positive thing when we know it will come to achieving genuine outcome. We then took those timeframe changes to Robert Benjamin and said, 'Work through this with us, are we on track here?' The advice that's been given to me and through direct conversations I've had with him, he was very comfortable with the time changes. He felt that they were - it was a very genuine lever to pull, to change those timeframes to ensure that we are getting the best outcomes and being true to the spirit and to the principle of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry. ...

Ms O'CONNOR - *Thank you. I just haven't had an answer to that question yet about this carve-out of funds from the agency budget. I'm trying to understand how it happened. Just going by what you said earlier, there have been some delays to reforms to the Youth Justice Act, for example. We've had a youth justice blueprint here in this state for many years that there have been delays on implementation of. Yet, the government that you are part of could pull together a 157-page order on the stadium in a couple of months. We're being told that it's not been possible to deliver the amendments to the Youth Justice Act, and that's partly why there are these delays. It's just that what you say and the reality don't seem to line up.*

Ms PALMER - Through you, Chair, could we give some examples?

CHAIR - If it's in an effort to answer the question, yes.

Ms PALMER - It is in effort, because some of these are - I think if we have the opportunity to actually put some examples on the table, you would see the real, genuine need for some of these timeframes to move. ...

Ms WEBSTER - The key factor for us here is really the sustainability of the implementation and the complexity of those recommendations, including making sure that we've got the right workforce in the right place.

Mr Whitcombe will talk to this - there's a lot of rebuilding or building that we're doing in the child safety and youth justice area to make sure that the workforce is ready for the significant change that is being undertaken. If we use the Youth Justice Act as an example, many of the recommendations in terms of that timing, it seems to us that it was very clear that we needed to do a whole of Youth Justice Act piece of reform. There is a huge number of stakeholders that are interested in this reform, so the consultation piece and the discussion paper will include that holistic Youth Justice Act reform.

Many of the recommendations that we needed implemented for the building of the youth justice facility were required to be brought forward. We've actually brought forward a lot of those recommendations as well to do a holistic piece. To give you an example, one of the recommendations was around the principles of the Youth Justice Act, and that was towards the end of the process. There's much more sense that that's done at the beginning, because that guides the entire redevelopment of the Youth Justice Act. What we've done is make one piece of very complex reform, brought forward some and pushed out another. I think we've been really open and upfront about the complexity of the reform.

The other thing that I would say is that many of the recommendations talk to the building of the youth justice facility. There is an additional \$100 million in the Budget for that facility build, and coming out soon we will have a model of care for that facility.

With all of these things, we are trying to do them in a really appropriate sequence, and we also have to build the capacity of the sector. There is a lot of work to do in that area. For us, we have really tried to be upfront and honest about when we can make those changes and prioritising frontline service delivery for children and young people.

The other thing that I would say in terms of budget efficiencies, as an agency, we have asked ourselves, of course we have budget efficiencies and we have to work within those, but we have tried really hard, and we ask ourselves the question when we're doing any recruitment, what is the impact for children and young people? That is the first question that we ask ourselves. I think we are approaching this from: we are committed to implementing the recommendations, we are committed to implementing them with integrity, and we want to minimise the impact on children and young people.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. That was a very sincere and heartfelt answer, and it's good to hear. I still haven't had an answer to the question... ¹⁴

¹⁴ Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth and Ginna Webster, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 10-12.

The Committee posed further questions regarding resourcing and its impact on achieving the timeframes:

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... the commission of inquiry really calls for quite fundamental change in the way that our frontline workforce is organised. It talks about a relational approach to practice. The way that we are organised at the moment is more around specialties and is more around moving families through a system, as opposed to holding that relationship and working with them in the long term. We have needed to establish things like the Office of the Chief Practitioner, which is about leading practice, about learning, about growth, and about different ways of practising, and have that in place prior to making those changes within our workforce.

If we want to work differently across the system and sector, we've needed to establish a commissioning and partnerships team, which didn't exist previously, but we've needed to grow that function, grow that muscle, in order to be able to work in different ways.

I'm just trying to provide examples of the foundations that need to be built on which you then grow a well-functioning child safety and youth justice service.

Ms ROSOL - ... are you saying that if you had another \$20 million available to you that you wouldn't be able to do it faster?

Ms PALMER - One of the examples given to me was that even if you had double the money, there are some things that just can't be done faster if they're to be done genuinely - building capacity, some of the things that the deputy secretary has just gone to.

Ms ROSOL - What about things like staffing, though? The deputy secretary referred to 35 more staff. I know in your annual report you say there are 17 additional child safety officers. If there was more money available to you now, would you be employing more child safety officers and more staff now?

...

Mr WHITCOMBE - As I stated earlier, we have been relentless in our approach to growing our child safety officer workforce. We've gone as hard and as fast as we possibly can, and we've seen really significant growth. We expect to continue to see that growth. There's been no hold put on our frontline child safety officer positions.

...

Ms LOVELL - Is there funding that's quarantined for implementation of these recommendations, or is it just in the broader department budget now?

Ms WEBSTER - There is commission of inquiry funding that we have as a global figure within the organisation, but also I can move staff and reprioritise to add to that funding, if I need to.

...

Ms ROSOL - Just a question around vacancies, because you've talked about creating more positions but, when we've asked previously, there have been significant vacancies. What are the vacancies currently in child safety services, and particularly in child safety officer positions - and by region, if you could, please?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I'll start with the north, in terms of child safety officers. We currently have budgeted FTE of 25. Currently, we have occupied FTE of 30.8, so that's 5.8 over our budgeted. In the north-west, we currently have a budgeted FTE figure of 23.5, and occupied FTE of 28.1. For child safety officers in the south, we currently have budgeted FTE of 56.4, and occupied FTE of 54.9.

Ms ROSOL - In order for every child to have their own case manager, what FTE would you need for that? What are you aiming for?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I will answer honestly. We've been doing the figures in this space, and it appears to be around the 40 FTE mark that we would need beyond what we currently have. We're in the process of testing and refining those figures in terms of the full breadth of the commission of inquiry recommendations and what it would take, so we're doing further work at the moment.

Ms ROSOL - Forty across the state on top of what you have, based on your current calculations around that, if I heard that correctly?

Mr WHITCOMBE - That's correct.¹⁵

Funding for the JCP Youth BEAST Program

The Minister was asked about the contract and funding provided to JCP Youth's Beast Program, and circumstances under which the contracted model may involve a child staying overnight with a worker:

Ms PALMER - ... We have certainly upheld our continued commitment to support diversionary programs for at-risk young people, which is in alignment with commission of inquiry recommendation 13, with the JCP Youth Funding Agreement signed on 3 February 2025.

JCP's innovative BEAST program delivers statewide high-impact interventions for children and young people, which is, of course, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The diversionary programs are targeted at young males aged 11 to 17 years who are demonstrating at-risk behaviours that may lead to or have already contributed to contact with the youth justice system.

One of the things that the department's worked really hard on with JCP is around the governance, and some of the work that the department's really able to partner with JCP on to ensure that there is accountability and that there is really strong governance. ...

CHAIR - I'm particularly interested to know whether the funding for the program and the contract cover circumstances under which a single worker would stay overnight in a hotel with a child. If so, what aspects of the program model that activity would be related to and what oversight and reporting would be expected on that activity?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Through you, minister, a quick response to situations of a young person being in a hotel with carers. I'm not aware of any situations that fit that description.

CHAIR - That's never been brought to your attention?

¹⁵ Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, Ginna Webster and Peter Whitcombe, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 13-14.

Mr WHITCOMBE - Not to my attention.

CHAIR - It's been brought to my attention that there are regular instances in which a JCP Youth worker might be overnight in a hotel with a young person. I'm wondering if that's part of the funding and the contract that's covered by the government's funding of that organisation?

Ms PALMER - I'm certainly not aware of that. If you have examples of that, it would be good if you actually brought them to us.

CHAIR - ... What about interstate trips with young people under that program? Does the government funding and contract cover interstate trips for young people with JCP Youth workers for activities interstate, potentially with other third-party organisations or programs in other states?

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... Not as part of our funding and contracting arrangement with JCP Youth. I would not want something to be conflated whereby it might be part of a child's care plan to travel interstate to meet with their wider family or some other matters whereby those children who are involved with JCP may be doing that. I don't know of any situations -

CHAIR - Would they be doing that with a JCP Youth worker and engaging in other activities interstate with that worker while on a trip to meet with family members?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I'm not aware of any of those situations.

CHAIR - Minister, you're not aware of any situations in which a child on a care and protection order has been either taken for overnight stays at hotels within the state, or on interstate for trips with a JCP worker?

Ms PALMER - I would have to seek that information from JCP. To the very best of my knowledge, I'm not aware of that, but I'm very happy to look at the details about that.

CHAIR - Is that a circumstance under which it could be contemplated - under the contract that we have with JCP Youth as a state and the funding provider, are those sorts of activities something that could be contemplated under that funding? If so, what would need to be in place for those activities in terms of risk assessment and oversight and reporting for those activities to occur?

Ms PALMER - You've raised some issues with that question that I will need to explore. What I can say is that JCP is committed to providing that really safe and nurturing environment for children in all aspects of the program that they deliver.

As a department and as a minister, we expect there to be absolute accountability in that area. We see the strengthening of that with things like the fact that JCP Youth is a relevant entity under the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act, so they are required to comply with the act to be a child safe organisation. Of course, this act is overseen by the independent regulator. JCP Youth operates under child protection policies, including a child safe code of conduct aligned with the child and youth safe organisations framework to safeguard young people and to manage any concerns about child abuse.

Obviously, all their volunteers and employees have to have a working with vulnerable people card and are over the age of 18. Their staff also complete the Australian Childhood Foundation's safeguarding children training, and Introduction to Trauma and Trauma

Informed Practice workshops, both delivered by Lifeline, and DECYP's safeguarding training for external providers, along with youth and mental health for first aid.

JCP Youth also has a formal complaints process, enabling concerns including those around child abuse to be raised both internally and with independent regulators as appropriate. There are a lot of safeguards that have been put in place and a structure that has been put in place around JCP.

With the specifics of what you're raising here, I would need to take a further look at that.

CHAIR - *It's interesting that you have to put safeguards in place when funding is allocated via election commitment rather than via an open tender process where fully qualified organisations that we could have full confidence in the governance of could put forward their case for that funding. Unfortunately, in this case they weren't given the chance. Let's be clear about that.*

Ms PALMER - *Although, in fairness, Chair, what's been reported to me is that there isn't another service in Tasmania offering what JCP does.*

CHAIR - *There absolutely are. ... Let's be clear, there are plenty of very good evidence-based programs in this state that could have tendered for this money if it had been put out to tender.¹⁶*

The Committee sought clarification regarding the documentation, risk assessment and reporting requirements:

Ms WEBSTER - *There is a requirement in the funding agreement for JCP Youth to maintain regular contact with community youth justice representatives and to advise on scheduled plans or activities relating to JCP Youth participants that may impact any services provided to young persons. There is a requirement there.*

Ms O'CONNOR - *Can I just check on something? That indicates that from the department's point of view, it's almost a little bit passive. If I misunderstood you, Ms Webster, I'm sorry, but if the requirement is for JCP to maintain regular contact, does the department ever step in? How often would you step in and ask questions about these sorts of things rather than waiting for JCP to come to you?*

Mr WHITCOMBE - *... Our department, alongside JCP, have a regular monthly meeting which has established around - I think the number is 18 referrals that go through per year. It's an opportunity to talk about anything that might be emerging in the work that's going on. Our director of strategic commissioning is part of that meeting. Our executive director of services children, youth and families is a part of that meeting, alongside JCP staff. I'm simply saying that's a really great place for communication and dialogue around -*

Ms O'CONNOR - *...what's the process for going into JCP's records? A kind of spot check audit process? Because it sounds like it is possible that some things are happening that the department is - I'm not saying there's anything inappropriate necessarily - but that the department is maybe not aware of in terms of JCP and activities with kids?*

Ms PALMER - *With regard to the agreement, there is a requirement for quarterly reporting on outcomes and risk management. There are annual reports throughout the agreement's*

¹⁶ Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth and Peter Whitcombe, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp.19-21.

duration. There's program evaluation requirements, key performance indicators, compliance with the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act, coordinated referral processes, along with quite an intense and constant schedule of meetings that are locked in to be having those.

CHAIR - Monthly meetings?

Ms PALMER - They're just the required ones. It's important to have those set meetings in place, so time doesn't get away with you. That's not talking about conversations that are had or meetings that are had outside of that.

CHAIR - Yes, but there's no accountability around that, minister, is there? I'm asking about oversight. I'm asking about documented oversight and accountability for activities. So, a monthly meeting and quarterly or annual reporting are limited.¹⁷

The Committee wrote to the Minister seeking details on the travel policy that applies to participants who are on care and protection orders, and the policy that applies to travel for participants who are not on care and protection orders. The following response was provided:

For any child or young person who is subject to a Care and Protection Order (CPO), interstate travel must be approved in writing by the Executive Director, Services for Children, Youth and Families, Department for Education, Children and Young People (hereon referred to as the department), prior to the travel occurring.

The Executive Director is a delegate under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas) to perform this role on behalf of the DECYP Secretary. This requirement includes children and young people subject to a CPO with Guardianship to the Secretary and participating in a Tasmanian Government-funded program, delivered by an external, non-government organisation requesting interstate travel.

For any child or young person who is subject to a Care and Protection Order (CPO), intrastate travel requests are discussed between the carer and the relevant departmental Child Safety Officer (CSO), who is authorised to approve intrastate travel requests on behalf of the department. The CSO will escalate requests to a senior departmental staff member for advice and/or decision, as necessary.

All requests are considered on a case-by-case basis considering the individual needs of the child or young person, including risks and safety issues. The final decision is informed by discussion and agreement through the relevant Child Safety Services (CSS) staff. A recommendation is made to the Executive Director, Services for Children, Youth and Families, for approval of interstate travel requests.

For children and young people who are not subject to a CPO but are referred by the department to a government-funded program, consent for intra and interstate travel is sought from the child or young person's parent or legal guardian by the relevant non-government organisation, prior to the travel occurring. This process is managed by the funded organisation.

The government safeguards children and young people through monitoring and reporting, according to the current funding agreement between the Tasmanian Government and the organisation, including escalation of child safety matters to the relevant authorities.¹⁸

¹⁷ Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, Ginna Webster and Peter Whitcombe, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸ [Letter](#) dated 3 February 2026 to the Committee from Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth.

In relation to the evaluation of JCP Youth's BEAST program:

CHAIR -... who's undertaking it? How was that organisation or individual, or whoever, selected? What steps have been taken to ensure the evaluation will include matters that have been raised in terms of concerns around the program or brought to your attention around the program? What steps have you taken to ensure there's going to be that critical distance maintained between the evaluator and the JCP Youth program itself, given Tasmanian professional networks are fairly well enmeshed?

Ms PALMER - ... I will pass to the secretary for the details of that, but I think that evaluation body of work is going to be really important to actually see the outcomes that we believe are quite fantastic with JCP.

My understanding is that procurement arrangements to engage a contractor to evaluate the BEAST Program are now progressing, and a request for quotation to evaluate the program, I understand, is imminent. I'll pass to you, secretary.

Ms WEBSTER - That's really all that we can add. Obviously, there would be the need for an independent evaluation, hence the request for a quote. The contract says that it has to be undertaken within three years of the contract period. Actually, I believe it's 18 months of the contract period, in this case, and it's important that the program has been operational for a reasonable period of time to inform that. That's underway.

CHAIR - To explain that timeframe a bit more then, we're going to go through a whole three-year contracting period with this organisation, and we won't have completed the evaluation by the end of that three-year period, by the sound of it?

Ms WEBSTER - No, sorry I have corrected myself - it's 18 months.

Ms O'CONNOR - Halfway through the contract?

..

Ms WEBSTER - ... The contract commenced in February 2025; the evaluation, as I understand it, has to be completed within 18 months.

CHAIR - Regardless of when the person or organisation who is doing it is appointed?

Ms WEBSTER - Yes, that's my understanding. I will confirm that with Mr Whitcombe.

Mr WHITCOMBE - Thank you, secretary. The notes that I have say:

The evaluation of the program is to be required to be undertaken within the three years of the contract period.

CHAIR - Right. Not by August next year, then; by the end of a three-year period - February 2028?

Ms WEBSTER - Yes. We're just about to release the procurement for that now. We're not waiting till the end of the three years, is what I'm saying.

CHAIR - I understand, but we won't have the results of the evaluation until the end of the contract period.

Mr WHITCOMBE - I disagree with that.

CHAIR - By all means, please explain, but it sounded like that's what you described.

Mr WHITCOMBE - I wouldn't anticipate the length of the evaluation taking the next two-and-a-bit years. I would absolutely hope that we're getting much earlier information through the evaluation. We will want to see that in terms of the way that we set up the evaluation, procurement -

CHAIR - The terms of reference for it are written, or not written yet?

Ms WEBSTER - I believe we're very close to them being released, so they would be written, but we can confirm that.

...

Ms ROSOL - ... Are you planning a one-off evaluation? What's the timeframe for the evaluation? ...

Ms WEBSTER - We haven't finalised that as yet. The process would be that we would be quite flexible within the terms of reference, and usually we would have a conversation with the evaluator around what might be useful to be included as well.

Ms PALMER - I think my expectation would be that we need to start the evaluation after there's been enough time for there to be something substantial to evaluate. It has to be within that three-year contract. My expectation is that once that evaluation has come to fruition, part of the department's responsibility would be to hold JCP to account with regard to that evaluation. I know that JCP is very keen for this evaluation process to start. They are really wanting to get that feedback and that understanding, which is fantastic, that they are wanting to be so engaged in that process.

What we're really looking for are - what are the outcomes for participants, you know? How do we measure that? That's the work being done now.

My expectation, and the advice I've received, is that we'll be able to go out for this by the end of the year. We can certainly bring that information to this committee, about what that looks like.

CHAIR - That's fine. I'm going to push back on you, though, minister, about starting an evaluation once something is in place and has had time to be established. Actually, all best practice around evaluation would say you start evaluation at the outset of a program and you build it into the rollout of a program and then you have evaluation take place over time, so you can see not just it's short-term impacts but enduring impacts as well. I don't believe it is good practice to start well down the track, but I'll leave that with you.¹⁹

The Committee sought detail regarding nighttime patrols conducted by JCP Youth, reported in local media:

Mr WHITCOMBE - I would not characterise them as patrols; that's certainly not the way they reference them within the agency.

¹⁹ Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, Ginna Webster and Peter Whitcombe, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 27-30.

CHAIR - It is in the media.

Mr WHITCOMBE - They do have a community presence and that's because they're interacting with young people where they're at. I would have to seek more information about how often they're out in the community and working with young people in that way.

CHAIR - I will quote an Examiner article from 22 October this year regarding the operations of JCP Youth and what they do in the community. They specifically said:

We patrol through the CBD. We have hotspot patrols around the northern suburbs. We identify what young people are out on the streets.

Another quote:

Information on young people is then logged into a software program to enable JCP Youth staff to monitor where, when and with whom they saw a young person.

So 'patrols' is most certainly the way they characterise their activities out on the street, just for clarity.

Ms PALMER - I will also add that we've had our executive director go out and be part of this program -

CHAIR - I saw that on social media.

Ms PALMER - It was really fantastic to have that insight.

Ms ROSOL - JCP Youth has reported that they maintain a database. What information do they report to you from the patrols or the night-time endeavours?

...

Ms ROSOL - Do they share when they pick up a young person?

Ms WEBSTER - I guess from our perspective, some of the work that JCP Youth does are not referrals from the service. We fund, I think, 54 positions statewide as part of their funding agreement, so some of that extra work they do is not in relation to the referrals from the department. In terms of the interactions with the agency, it would be very much about those referrals. Many of those young people we are aware of.

I think the other thing we need to remember is that the characterisation of the monthly meetings does not take into consideration the incidental conversations that are also had between Community Youth Justice and all our service providers in a regional area, so we would not necessarily be aware of all of that. It's important to remember that the work that JCP do, to my understanding, is not just in relation to the funded positions for the organisation.

Ms ROSOL - If they pick up a young person off the street somewhere, do they inform you of what they've done? Is there a report that goes to you that they've picked up a young person at this place at this time, because how would you know if they had a care and protection order or not? How would you know if they were referred? What information sharing is there from JCP Youth to you so that you know what they're doing with young people that you may have referred to JCP Youth or may be in care? How is that information shared and how are you tracking that?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I wouldn't expect in their case management all the interactions they have with young people to be coming through into our system. I don't think that's reasonable or should be occurring. What I would expect to be happening for those young people that we've referred is that they will have care teams and care plans in place around them. JCP is a really important part of those care teams and that's where the information about what might be happening for a young person, what other supports might need to be in place, that's where those conversations are happening. You lift that up a level and on a monthly basis we have those operational meetings where, again, any issues are flagged and there's opportunity for discussion about those particular young people as well if there are things that need to be addressed at that operational governance level.

Ms ROSOL - So if a young person is picked up off the street and taken into their care and they become the carer for them, you potentially wouldn't know about it until the monthly meeting when they provide a report?

Mr WHITCOMBE - No, I don't think that's what I described. What I described was the situation where those people who are directly involved in the care plan and the care team around that young person, that's where the conversations would be happening on a really regular basis.

CHAIR - To step in here, if I may, we're not talking about conversations. We're talking about how it is reported and what activities are undertaken with a young person, say, who's been referred to the program who's on care orders? For example, if they're picked up and they stay overnight at a JCP facility, where is that reported back to the department?

Ms WEBSTER - The requirement is that JCP has to get consent from the guardian. If the child is on a care and protection order, it's very clear - and obviously as secretary some of that I delegate to people in the regions - that consent would have to be obtained from the department.

CHAIR - Consent to be involved in the program, or consent for any instance of, for example, taking that child into care overnight?

Ms WEBSTER - My expectation would be if that child is taken into care overnight, the guardian would have to give consent, like any parent would have to give consent for that child.

CHAIR - What auditing is done, then, against the records kept by JCP that they have children in their care overnight and whether you, as the department and the guardian, have requested consent for that?

Ms WEBSTER - I'm not aware of any specific auditing that has occurred on that basis.

Ms LOVELL - If they engage with a young person at night after hours and decide that young person needs emergency care overnight, what is the process for JCP Youth to gain consent from the department? How do they find out if that person's under a care and protection order? Who do they contact? How is that consent provided?

Ms WEBSTER - There are a couple of things. I will let Mr Whitcombe answer because it is quite an operational question, but it depends on the age of the child as well. If they're a younger child there's certain things that would happen. If the young person is 16 and they're interacting with them, the young person may not tell them that they're on a care and protection order. They're a mature minor. It depends very much on a case-by-case basis, but I'm not sure if Mr Whitcombe can provide a bit more operational detail.

Mr WHITCOMBE - If there are any child safety matters or issues around the care and protection of a young person, JCP will work through both the ARL during the day, the advice and referral line, and the after-hours contact line in conjunction with our service if there are any matters that might require some sort of care arrangement to be established and how that occurs and what the decision-making looks like within that, so using those mechanisms.

Ms LOVELL - The question is, then, what checks are being done to make sure that is the process being followed? If they have a young person who might not understand themselves that they're under a care and protection order, or don't want to tell them that, they know that young person needs emergency care and want to provide that care, but they don't know whether they're under a care and protection order or not, what's the process then?

It just feels to me like there would likely be instances where there are children under care and protection orders - and maybe that consent is not being sought overnight because of the circumstances. What processes are in place to make sure that that's not happening?

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... That is down in a level of detail that's hard to quantify. What we do know is that JCP has processes in place. If they're working with a young person and they don't know their situation and there's care involved, they will reach out. There will be a conversation on that day, on that night, with our service to work out what needs to happen for a particular young person.

...

CHAIR - The thing that I find disturbing, potentially, about what's just been described is the idea that conversations happen. I'm interested in what's documented and on any given night, are we aware of any children in the care of the state, on care and protection orders, who are staying in JCP safe houses, or however they're referred to - overnight respite? Would we know beforehand? Would we know afterwards? Is it documented somewhere and say, for example, provided in the monthly reports? I'm trying to clarify what's documented, not what conversations happen.

Mr WHITCOMBE - I suggest that our professional practice standards would be consistent about the importance of recording as part of what we do. I'd expect that those matters absolutely are recorded in our system. I would like to also add something to what I said before. JCP works with young people who are referred to them. They're not working with a range of other young people who they may just come across. This is about the young people who are referred to their service.²⁰

The Committee wrote to the Minister requesting confirmation of the number of staff who typically go out on JCP Youth nighttime patrols. The following response was provided:

JCP Youth use the term 'Youth Response' when referring to afterhours engagement with young people participating in its programs and activities, and who may be at risk.

The JCP Youth 'Youth Response' staffing levels vary depending on need. It is standard practice for two JCP Youth facilitators to be actively working 'Youth Response' in the evenings, supported by an additional two staff members available on-call. This ensures appropriate coverage, support, and safety for both staff and participants.²¹

²⁰ Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, Ginna Webster and Peter Whitcombe, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 31-33.

²¹ [Letter](#) dated 3 February 2026 to the Committee from Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth.

Safety at Ashley Youth Detention Centre

The Minister was asked about safety at AYDC and the current use of body scanners, body-worn cameras and isolative practices:

CHAIR - ... Given it's [AYDC] staying open for the time being until there's a new facility, the intent was to make it safer than it had previously been for young people, as we know full well from the commission of inquiry. I'm interested in some of the arrangements around that.

In terms of the body scanners, are they now being used? Are they being used according to policy and, if the answer to that is yes, how do we know that? What auditing is being done to check against the use of those body scanners according to policy?

...

Ms WEBSTER - ... In particular, the body scanners are operational, is my understanding. ...

...

CHAIR - I know it's there, I know it theoretically works. But my question is, how do we know it's being used according to policy? Is that audited or is something done to give us that assurance that it's being used according to policy? Whose task is it to do that oversight?

...

Mr MURDOCH - ... Body scanners are used regularly as part of safety and security, particularly when there is a reasonable suspicion that a young person is carrying something on them. Obviously, we want to reduce the prevalence of, I guess, hands-on searches such as pat searching, et cetera. It is used quite regularly. I see them recorded often in our database, but also I see it recorded in incident reporting. What I can say is that, although staff are trained to use the body scanner, I can't say that there's any formal auditing as part of that.

CHAIR - Obviously, there's a policy relating to use of the body scanner. If so, perhaps you could table that policy for us so we can have it as part of the record. If we have a policy relating to that and I presume formalities around using the scanner in that presumably staff members probably have to sign-off on use or in some way document use, so why wouldn't there be some form of auditing or oversight to see that that's being done according to policy?

Mr MURDOCH - Through you, minister. That's noted. That's a good question and we shall follow it up.

CHAIR - Thank you. I would like to ask about body-worn cameras now and it's a similar set of questions around that. I know that they're there. I know that they're used at times. What I'm interested in is, what's the policy for their use and how do we know that they're being used according to policy?

Ms WEBSTER - Through you, minister, I might start that off. I can't remember the particular date, but it was some time ago the decision was made to make them mandatory.

...

Ms WEBSTER - We're undertaking the process of negotiations with the unions around that. That's a change to policy and procedure. Purchasing the body-worn cameras and making sure the policies are tight, but they will be mandatory requirements.

CHAIR - Currently not mandatory? That's coming in at what point?

Ms WEBSTER - As soon as we have the number of body-worn cameras, and we've done that negotiation with the union, they will be mandatory. That's the direction.

...

CHAIR - Thank you, and I'm going to want to know when that's likely to be in terms of procuring the body-worn cameras. I'm also still interested, even though they're not mandatory at the moment, there must be a policy about their use and how do we know that they're being used according to policy at the present time?

Mr MURDOCH - The procedures for body-worn cameras are pretty clear, but as they are not currently mandatory, some staff will choose not to use them. As the secretary said, we are currently in negotiations with the unions on a regular basis in terms of moving towards that and working through what some of those barriers for some staff are.

The body-worn cameras themselves, when they are used, are found to be particularly helpful, especially in the review of incidents. It gives another dimension beyond just using CCTV footage, which doesn't cover any verbal interaction because there's no sound attached. The body-worn cameras themselves add a new richness into our ability to review incidents because they do record the variables and the other sort of sound recordings as well.

It's important that we move towards that, given that this is a negotiation and a consultation with unions, we don't necessarily want to put a deadline on that, but it is certainly something to prioritise and work towards, so that we can have global coverage of body-worn cameras which I think is actually contributing greatly to the safety of both the staff and the young people.

CHAIR - I agree that they would be contributing, but also the selective use of them can also be problematic because if you turn a camera on in the middle of an incident you don't see what happened in the lead-in to that incident. Then it can be deceptive in terms of what it's going to show or not show about behaviour.

My impression from what the secretary said, minister, was that it was the procurement of additional cameras, in order to be fully stocked with them for mandatory use, that was the issue.

From Mr Murdoch, it sounds like we still haven't formally put that new position in place because the unions are pushing back on it. It seems, from the way it was described by Mr Murdoch, that there's an issue from some staff who are resistant to this. Can you clarify that this is a definite decision, and there will be a definite timeline in bringing it into play, given it's the safety of children we're talking about here?

Ms WEBSTER - I did indicate that there were also union negotiations and policy and procedures, but it is a decision. It's a decision of the secretary. I've made that decision and we're working towards it. I'm unable to give an actual date, because obviously it's a consultation, but as soon as possible. The decision has been made, and I won't be going back on that decision.

CHAIR - Good to hear. Thank you. Regarding the use of the cameras currently, according to policy, is there any auditing or oversight of that to ensure we have confidence that that's occurring, even in the limited way it is now, according to policy?

Mr MURDOCH - What I would say is that the auditing itself is in the other processes that are in place for what the body worn cameras were introduced for in the first place. That includes incident review committees that occur on a weekly basis. ...

...

CHAIR - ... I'm interested in restrictive practices, and distinctions between use of isolation and restrictive practices. It's my understanding that, although we would document use of isolation, as per statutory requirement, restrictive practices are not documented in the same way. That's much more discretionary, the degree to which that's documented, and there's no particular rigorous oversight of the use of restrictive practices. I'd like comment on that, and how we ensure that that's not occurring. Noting that it's something that's been raised, say, with the Commissioner for Children and Young People's advocate there, raised by others who have insight into that facility currently, and is potentially problematic because it can be used punitively. It can be used to deprive children of the opportunity to be accessing school and other services.

Mr MURDOCH - The context of the question itself, what I do know is that restrictive practices - and that can be the use of isolation, the use of force, the use of search - those are the three key areas of restrictive practice. What I can say is, as far as I'm aware, all use of restricted practice is recorded and requires authorisation internally, depending on the length of time and the reasons for use of isolation.

The term 'isolation' itself, the use of it can be quite broad. For example, a young person may ask to have 10 to 15 minutes' time out in their room just to help them to self-regulate and de-escalate. Technically, that's a restrictive practice called isolation, even though the young person may actually ask for it. Then it's granted by a member of staff.

But, depending on the reasons why, and the period of time that a young person needs to spend in their room, the level of authorisation increases. From the operations coordinator, who can authorise a short time of a young person being in their room, it then leads towards a centre manager. Then eventually it comes to me to authorise, once I've examined the circumstances and the reasons behind why the young person needs to be in their room for an extended period of time, which, from memory, I think is over an hour.

CHAIR - What I'm interested in is the auditing of that, or the oversight - is it ever gone back and checked that, okay, this documented use of restrictive practice - for example, confining a young person to their room - tallies with what we can actually look for evidence of, for example, on footage or on other records.

Mr MURDOCH - Yes, it will either be tied into footage but also, it's usually included as part of incident reporting - that a young person needed to be kept in their room for a period of time to de-escalate after an incident has occurred. It's in detailed form in terms of time, length of time, reasons why, within our internal database system.

It would be included if it was part of a post-incident response and it would be included in other areas as well, such as the young person's shift notes, case notes, et cetera, and things like that.

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... I will just add that there's another layer of monitoring and oversight that occurs through the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT)

reporting mechanism where, as you say, that data and information, and how we're recording, and does it match up, is explored through that oversight mechanism.

CHAIR - We know at the moment that OPCAT oversight is limited by its own funding challenges, but hopefully will be fully operating as we go forward. It is limited in terms of, I'm sure, its ability to actually undertake that full oversight.

...

Ms ROSOL - We're talking about restrictive practices, but if I use the terminology 'lockdowns', how many lockdowns have there been in Ashley Youth Detention Centre in the last six months?

Mr MURDOCH - ... In the time that I've been with Ashley Youth Detention Centre - which has been six months - from memory there have been three, as a result of major incidents that have required the facility to be locked down in order to be made immediately safe. I would need to go back and check if there's been any more over those six months. I can think of three temporary periods of lockdown while we've had to respond to serious safety issues after major incidents.

Ms PALMER - Can I check your question - you were asking about lockdowns of the facility. In that example, you weren't talking about isolation?

Ms ROSOL - I understand that, for recording purposes, if a young person is in isolation it counts as a lockdown. I'm talking more broadly than that - operational staffing, all sorts of reasons for lockdowns.

Mr MURDOCH - To clarify, so when something occurs, and we have to ask all the young people to go to their rooms temporarily, I can think of two or three in the time that I've been at Ashley in response to those major incidents. We would need to go back and check if there's been any more, but those are all that I can think of right now.

Ms ROSOL - Have there been any instances where there's had to be a lockdown because of staffing - insufficient staff?

Mr MURDOCH - ... Yes, as a result of serious short staffing. A normal complement of, say, a shift at Ashley would be 15 youth workers, with one to two operations coordinators on for the day. I can think of one or two days where we have had three or four of that shift not show up for work, for various reasons. As a result, I think last year there was a business continuity plan completed, and that was enacted for the first time this year in response to an incident like that, where we had to actually keep all the young people in the rooms because we only had three or four staff. All the non-operational staff that were able to park their work came onto the floor.

Then, as a result of that, there's this process called rolling lockdowns. That's where we go from unit to unit to let young people out of their rooms. The school staff get engaged and they're providing school input and education to the young people while they're in their rooms. It's a concerted effort to address that just for the day.

It has to be said that the communication, and the way that it was implemented by the management team at that time, was actually really impressive - this was me fresh coming in - the level of communication with young people, the level of buy-in. It was interesting in terms of going through that process and thinking about not just where we have a business continuity plan where we're putting in all this effort, but how we actually continue that on a day-to-day basis. That was one of the lessons that came out of that.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Can I clarify that was in addition to the two or three days that you were talking about before? And because it was rolling, you didn't include it in those two or three days?

Mr MURDOCH - No, I didn't. It was more in response to the incidents. When we have our business continuity plan enacted, then the results are the same, but it's usually for a very different reason, the fact that we're very short-staffed and we have to manage that resource very carefully from unit to unit.

Ms ROSOL - And you said that was one?

Mr MURDOCH - I think it's been enacted three times since I've been here over the last six months as well.²²

The Committee wrote to the Minister for Children and Youth on 17 November 2025 with the following questions taken on notice:

- How many lockdowns for operational reasons have there been at AYDC in the last six months?
- Please provide a breakdown of these lockdowns according to categories, for example (but not limited to) major incidents and staff shortages.

On 3 February 2026, the Minister provided the following response:

The AYDC centre-wide 'lockdowns' are applied only as a last resort to ensure the safety and security of everyone at the centre, and to maintain community safety and managed according to the Youth Justice Act 1997.

Since the implementation of YJ Plus in August 2025, seven centre-wide 'lockdowns' have occurred at AYDC in response to major incidents requiring immediate risk management to ensure the safety of everyone. The Deputy Secretary, Child Safety and Youth Justice Operations is notified by the Director, Custodial Youth Justice Services when a centre-wide 'lockdown' is initiated. The Deputy Secretary is responsible for notifying the Secretary, and children and young people oversight bodies.

In some instances, centre-wide restriction of young person movements occurs in response to unplanned staffing impacts, including unplanned staff leave, affecting the safe operation of the Centre. In these cases, all young people have coordinated and safe access to programs and recreational activities at managed intervals throughout the day.

Operational isolation data recorded in YJ Plus is focused on individual isolation events, including duration and cause, rather than whole-of-centre operational responses, including centre-wide 'lockdowns' or restriction of young people's movements, for example due to staff shortages. Recording of individual isolation incidents allows oversight of care, support and practices at the Centre relating to individual young people. The practice ensures the rights of children and young people at AYDC are upheld and assurance that isolation and restriction of movement around the Centre is only used when safety and security is at risk and not used as punishment.

²² Hon Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, Ginna Webster and Peter Whitcombe and Shane Murdoch, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 8 December 2025, pp. 40-45.

The government is focused on continuous improvement of data quality and reporting capability of YJ Plus following the implementation of the new information system in August 2025.²³

Findings

8. Funding for implementation of Commission of Inquiry recommendations declines over the forward estimates of the 2025-26 State Budget.
9. The Minister and Department for Education, Children and Young People indicated the budgeted funding for implementation of Commission of Inquiry recommendations has and may continue to change due to changes to timelines of some recommendations and ongoing review of funding requirements for others, with the expectation the Government will agree to future funding requests.
10. The Department for Education, Children and Young People has been increasing the child safety workforce, however they have identified a further 40 FTE child safety officers are required to fully implement the Commission of Inquiry recommendations.
11. JCP Youth's contract requires monthly meetings with the Department, quarterly reporting on outcomes and risk management, and annual reports. An evaluation of the program is required to be undertaken within the three years of the contract period, and procurement processes for this evaluation were underway at the time of the hearing.
12. JCP Youth conduct nighttime patrols and maintain a software program to enable JCP Youth staff to monitor young people, and during such patrols may take young people into their care overnight. It is the Government's expectation that parental/guardian consent would be obtained when children are taken into care overnight, including Departmental consent for children on Care and Protection Orders.
13. In alignment with Professional Practice standards, the Department for Education, Children and Young People expects that records are being kept of JCP Youth nighttime patrols and engagement with young people, including parental/guardian consent for children taken into care overnight. However, DECYP has undertaken no specific auditing of JCP records relating to these activities.
14. The Department for Education, Children and Young People report body scanners are used regularly at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, however there is no current auditing of their use and compliance with relevant policy and procedures.
15. The Secretary of the Department for Education, Children and Young People has directed the mandatory use of body-worn cameras by relevant Ashley Youth Detention Centre staff, however implementation will depend on procurement of sufficient cameras and finalisation of industrial negotiations.

²³ [Correspondence](#) dated 3 February 2026 from the Minister for Children and Youth, Hon Jo Palmer MLC. p. 3.

16. Use of restrictive practices, including isolation, at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre must be authorised and documented according to policy.
17. At the 8 December 2025 hearing, the Department reported Ashley Youth Detention Centre had been in full lockdown on three occasions in the previous six months as a result of major incidents, and rolling lockdowns due to insufficient staff had been implemented a number of times. However, in answers to questions taken on notice, the Minister reported seven centre-wide lockdowns from August 2025 to the beginning of February 2026. The Department provided no data on the breakdown of the categories of these lockdowns.
18. There is a lack of transparency and clarity on the frequency, length and cause of lockdowns of units, rather than centre-wide lockdowns at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
19. Regardless of the reason for a lockdown, the detrimental impact on children and young people at Ashley Youth Detention Centre is the same, and is of significant concern.

Recommendations

The Joint Sessional Committee recommends that the Government:

4. Commission an independent review of reporting, monitoring and oversight of contracted providers of child safety and youth justice services.
5. Employ sufficient Child Safety Officers to ensure every child engaged with Child Safety Services has an individual case manager.

LOUISE COE, INDEPENDENT REGULATOR

On 5 February 2026, Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, appeared before the Committee to provide evidence in relation to the Annual Report 2024-25 of the Office of the Independent Regulator (OIR).²⁴ Ms Coe was accompanied at the hearing by Allison Waring, Principal Solicitor, Office of the Independent Regulator.

The full transcript of this hearing is available to access via the [Inquiry webpage](#).

The Independent Regulator outlined the role of the OIR, progress made by the office in its first 18 months of operation, and a summary of concerns identified:

The OIR is a newly formed regulatory agency with the objects to protect and promote the best interests of children by executing the functions as outlined in the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023. These functions are broadly to:

- educate and provide advice to entities to implement the Child and Youth Safe Standards, the Universal Principle and the Reportable Conduct Scheme;*
- oversee and enforce compliance with the standards and the universal principle;*
- administer, oversee and monitor the reportable conduct scheme;*
- conduct own-motion investigations, public interest monitoring of investigations and assess whether entities have appropriately handled reportable conduct investigations; and*
- to provide relevant information relating to reportable conduct findings and ensure the sharing of information between relevant entities.*

You will find evidence of those activities over the past financial year within the annual report.

Tasmania is well placed to build a robust child-safe culture. We have seen genuine commitment and engagement by agencies and organisations to capitalise on what they already have in place to better protect and promote the best interests of children and to build on these systems to provide genuine child-centred care.

From January 2024 until 31 December 2025, we've seen engagement from organisations that have participated in either our online or face-to-face forums attended by approximately 2450 participants across 100 sessions within the last 18 months. We have reviewed and provided tailored feedback to approximately 20 organisations who have shared their child-safe materials. We have provided outcome letters for 546 finalised reportable conduct investigations. These letters provide commentary on the quality of the investigation, our view as to whether we agree with the findings, and if we have suggestions to improve practice.

Where there are concerns that identified risks to children are not being managed in a particular matter, we will follow up with the relevant entity. We will share information as appropriate with other agencies, including our interstate regulatory partners if we have concerns relating to individuals or organisations providing services to children.

As an efficient regulator, the OIR collaborates and shares information with our oversight partners such as the ... Ombudsman, the Integrity Commission, the Custodial Inspectorate, the

²⁴ https://oir.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/834559/AR-2024-2025_website-version_Updated.pdf

Register for Working with Vulnerable People, the Commission for Children and Young People and the Office of the Implementation Monitor.

I appreciate the committee may be interested in what our reporting data is saying about the safety of children and young people receiving services from both government and community organisations. At this early stage of the scheme's implementation, it may be too early to see any clear trends that will develop over time. Early indications, though, based on the volume of matters reported through to the Reportable Conduct Scheme, in conjunction with increasing engagement by organisations with our forums and online educational materials, there are strong indicators that children are becoming safer. We are seeing an upward trend in the number of reportable allegations being reported to the OIR. Obviously, this can be taken as either a good or bad indicator of child safety. Again, given the early stage of the scheme and what we know from the Commission of Inquiry, allegations or incidents of harm to children are expected to occur. Reporting and taking action to investigate these allegations is pivotal in building a child-safe culture.

The OIR will maintain our focus on increasing levels of engagement. Our engagement strategy has been refined in the last 12 months to provide targeted engagement with high-risk organisations on key topics such as the child-safe risk mitigation strategies. Our 2026 assessment and monitoring program will focus on a range of organisations based on reportable conduct, trends and data, overall risk of the sector and public interest. These priority areas for 2026 include the early childhood sector, out-of-home care sector, ongoing monitoring of youth justice including reception prisons and early intervention services.

In terms of reportable conduct data, I'm not generally concerned with the reporting data from the highest sector, namely education. This is to be expected and in line with other states that have established schemes in place. The types of matters being reported are not often at the high end of seriousness, although we have seen a number of teachers' aides being reported suggesting an opportunity for more training and support to be provided to these aides to ensure appropriate engagement with children.

Concern remains about the level of physical altercation between youth workers and young people at AYDC. I've reported previously on the lack of timely closures of reportable conduct matters, which has made it difficult to discern the quality of reporting and investigations of allegations of reportable conduct. I've had significant engagement with the department over the previous 12 months and we are now seeing signs that our feedback is being taken seriously and action is being taken from the secretary's office to address concerns. While there's been recent activity to increase recruitment of youth workers at Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) to clear the backlog investigations, review all child-initiated complaints, promote the use of body-worn cameras, improve the quality of reporting and investigations and engage proactively with the youth justice oversight network, concerns remain as to whether all matters are being reported through identified channels.

I remain particularly concerned as to the training of new and experienced staff and appropriate de-escalation techniques. It is my view the majority of the physical violence allegations against youth workers stem from a lack of effective training and remedial action after incidents have occurred. There still remains a clear focus on the adult worker and more needs to be done to ensure the voice of the young person is heard.

According to recent published data, there is also a concerning upward trend in the average daily number of children in care for the September quarter 2025 to 985 children. There's also an upward trend in publicly reported substantiated investigations for Tasmanian children in care to a high of 35. That's the RoGS (Report on Government Services) data for 2025-26.

I'm also aware there is a marked increase in children in residential care in 2024-25, to 106. The number of reportable conduct notifications received across both government and non-government agencies for the 2024-25 year is 133. Forty-eight of these notifications come from DECYP and 85 from the NGO sector.

Given these upward trends indicating a considerable increase in residential placements combined with increasing NGO providers during the 2025-26 year, out-of-home care will be a sector of interest for 2026.

In August last year, my office was notified that Tasmania Police received legal advice correcting earlier advice that police officers are not subject to the Reportable Conduct Scheme. This is of obvious concern and I note the recommendation of Peter Woolcott in his review Strategic Recommendation 6.1 to explicitly include Tasmania Police as a regulated entity and make them subject to both the Child and Youth Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct schemes.

I've met recently with the Attorney-General, who has assured me this matter would be addressed as a priority. Even more recently, I received correspondence from the Department of Justice in relation to a regulation amendment. It's my wish that this regulation is made retrospective to 1 August last year.

Finally, in terms of government agencies requiring to comply with the Child and Youth Safe Framework, I have continued to urge the heads of these agencies to develop a child and youth safe action plan. This is not a mandatory requirement, but it is a highly desirable way to demonstrate commitment to implementing the framework. So far, the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management (DPFEM) and the Department of Health have submitted action plans for our review and comment. DECYP also most recently provided its first action plan.

Nationally, Tasmania is an early adopter of both the standards and Reportable Conduct schemes. Our experience and knowledge setting up both schemes has been sought out by our interstate partners. Across the nation there is excellent collaboration and knowledge sharing. In March this year, Tasmania will host the Inter-Jurisdictional Conference, attended by regulators and policy officers from all states and territories to discuss implementation of the Child and Youth Safe Scheme.

In closing, while I acknowledge the positive and general efforts of individuals and agencies to promote child safeguarding practices, there is still plenty to be done to increase knowledge and awareness and then drive the importance of having child-centred practices. Legislative amendments will help to ensure the smooth and inclusive running of the scheme and place greater emphasis on information-sharing across all agencies required to collectively keep children and young people safe.

It is important for organisations to remain vigilant to the behaviours of workers which cause concern. Low-level behaviour can escalate, and addressing these behaviours early is the best way to disrupt a perpetrator's behaviour. Access to information is essential for the protection of children and young people.

As a state, we are hesitant still to share our concerns with other entities. We are also wary about substantiating a finding of reportable conduct. The two most recent reviews into the prolific offending by two childcare workers in Victoria and Queensland have highlighted the importance of not ignoring early-warning signs and not looking to the criminal justice system to prevent offending.

The focus should be on detecting safety threats, acting in a systemic way, recording, and communicating these threats. This requires agencies to work together and not simply pass the risk on. Information-sharing is a protected mechanism by which we safeguard children in this state.²⁵

Ms Coe highlighted some areas of concern within her opening statement to the Committee. Further consideration of these issues is provided below.

Reportable Conduct – Ashley Youth Detention Centre

The Independent Regulator was asked whether the Incident Review Committee was operating effectively, particularly in relation to ensuring that its findings and recommendations were communicated to staff and acted upon:

Ms COE - Well, I was told that they can be stood up quite quickly as well. If there's an incident - I know, as you're saying, there's a fortnightly meeting or something. I've also been told by the department that they can also stand up that committee quite quickly if there's a matter that needs to be reviewed. It is concerning. It needs to be a more systemic approach and a regularity, as you say, that hasn't necessarily happened. Sometimes there might be a valid reason for it, but if there are instances of violence that we're seeing being used, then they do need to be meeting frequently and they need to be assessing all those matters and providing that feedback. That would be my expectation, and that it's fed through to the DECYP corporate channel, through the CMOU, the case management oversight unit, that then reports through to my office. That's the process, and while it's getting better, originally there were matters that fell through the gaps.

I think there are systems - and we've given consistent feedback and they've had a review of that IRC and how that's operating. I've seen that review and I've provided feedback to the department on some other aspects of concern from our perspective. I haven't actually seen that review come through to fruition, as in the new terms of reference or whatever, but my understanding is that it's something that's being looked at; it just - everything takes time.

CHAIR - ... The sort of lack of closing the loop that you spoke about where the IRC, the incident review committee, may have assessed an incident that occurred, have come up with constructive, important suggestions that need to be then taken back to staff to - you mentioned a gap there. Is there no-one designated or no mechanism designated by which that informed and expert advice from that committee would then go back and be given to staff, and it be assessed that staff have understood actually how they might have done things differently and could do things differently and better next time?

Ms COE - I don't know if there's been any recent changes. We have done an assessment and monitoring piece on AYDC, which is more an educative piece basing on strengths and making recommendations. At the time of doing that, the training coordinator was not advised of those outcomes and that's what we saw as a significant gap. We've given that feedback to the department, so it may have been remedied between then and now. I can't say for sure whether that has been remedied at this point in time.²⁶

²⁵ Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 5 February 2026, pp. 2-5.

²⁶ Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 5 February 2026, pp. 18-19.

Ms Coe provided the following evidence in relation to concerns regarding the training of current and new staff at AYDC:

Ms O'CONNOR - ... What's your understanding of what kind of training they [new staff] are provided with, but also, are you satisfied with the training of current staff at AYDC?

Ms COE - No, I'm not satisfied. I think that's something they would admit themselves; they don't often have the opportunity for training. I think that's one of the matters they're trying to address, to build in time in their roster to have dedicated training.

My main concern is on when we've seen reportable conduct matters and I won't sign off on a reportable conduct outcome letter in relation to AYDC unless one of my officers has sighted the CCTV and if there's body-worn camera footage that they've listened to that and seen that as well. The concern is there will be an incident and it could have been handled better. It's like there's recognition by the workplace panel or the IRC that particular matter could be handled better and they would make suggestions which are really valid suggestions.

My concern is that feedback loop is not necessarily going back to the workers. They can't close that loop for me and that's the purpose of the Reportable Conduct Scheme because it's low-level matters. It is meant to get in early and see if there's something that needs to be remediated, if there's feedback, if there's a better way of handling a matter that is actually followed through. I haven't been convinced that step is actually taken there.

As I said, there are valid observations and feedback that should be provided. I'm not convinced that's actually happened. That's how existing and new staff can learn and improve. I'm really concerned as to when there is an incident and there could be room for improvement that is not fed back.

Ms O'CONNOR - It's bordering on alarming to hear you're so concerned that to some extent it sounds like there's not really any comprehensive or dedicated training of current and new staff at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Correct me if I've misinterpreted what you've said, but given the history of that place, given how much it featured in the Commission of Inquiry that we're still at this point now where there is apparently inadequate training of staff at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, what are you hearing or able to influence about making sure that training is happening?

Ms COE - They do have an induction and it's a six-week induction for new staff. They're rolling out a new sort of de-escalation technique called APR, used to be the Maybo, now they're doing that and there's going to be training for that. It's not that there's no training. My concern is when incidents occur there needs to be some corrective action and there is feedback to that worker or they view the CCTV or the body-cam footage. That's the part for me that's missing because we see time and time again there's a lack of de-escalation. That's the issue. There's an immediate reaction and it results in physical violence.

I totally accept the environment is heightened, people are anxious. There's been a number of serious assaults both ways, so people are on edge. That's a whole piece that needs to be managed. Then there does need to be training and then there's short staff. How do you take someone off the floor for training if you're understaffed and the children then are in rolling lockdowns in their rooms? It is not just one particular issue; it's all of it. It is quite complex.

Ms O'CONNOR - To follow through on that, what's your understanding of the adequacy of the staffing at AYDC because we're certainly hearing consistent reports that they're significantly understaffed, which would be adding to that stress that you've referred to?

Ms COE - That's right.²⁷

Reportable Conduct – Out of home care

Ms Coe provided the following evidence in response to concerns raised about the increasing trend in reportable conduct in out of home care:

Ms ROSOL - Going back to your opening statement, you talked about out-of-home care and the increasing trend in reports and reportable conduct and increasing substantiation and that being a focus going forward.

Are you able to talk more about what your focus will be, the actions that you will be taking in that area, and in terms of those increasing trends, where those trends are, what's happening in that space?

Ms COE - I think the numbers are showing that there's a higher number of children in care on a daily basis, which is obviously concerning. It's now 985.

We have fairly good engagement with the non-government sector in that space and a lot of those agencies have a national footprint so they're familiar with the Reportable Conduct Scheme and the Child and Youth Safe Standards.

I think it is concerning the number of children who are not in traditional foster care placement. From our perspective, it's a bit of a complication because we have an issue as to whether it's a subcontractor arrangement which is not considered part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. So if you've got a foster carer, they are considered a worker for the Reportable Conduct Scheme. If there's a company or a sole trader or some sort of organisation providing services and they have staff that there may be reportable conduct allegations that are not captured directly unfortunately, and that's one of the matters we want to remediate. Clarifying that engagement piece between how these organisations - how these individuals or organisations are being contracted to provide care is a concern of mine.

Ms ROSOL - In view of that lack of clarity, or not being covered by the legislation, do you think then -

...

Ms COE - They're covered, but I would have to - there's no-one to do that investigation. I would expect for DECYP to do the investigation. If it's a foster carer, there's no question and it's their foster carer that's a worker for their purpose. If they're in a subcontractor situation, it would be up to us as an agency to do an own motion if we want to look at that particular matter. It's not really an acceptable situation to be in if there are concerns. I think the number of matters being reported through from the DECYP side about their carers, it appears a bit low given the number of children in care and the high needs and vulnerability of those children. I think it needs to be - the Child and Youth Safe Standards and reportable conduct needs to be better socialised.

Ms ROSOL - Do you think that there are incidents being missed?

Ms COE - Yes.

²⁷ Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 5 February 2026, pp. 16-17.

Ms ROSOL - But you think the incidents being missed are potentially in DECYP, not in the subcontracting -

Ms O'CONNOR - Both, potentially?

Ms COE - Of course it can be both. I think there's a higher number of reporting coming through from the NGO sector compared to what's coming through DECYP, so that's where my concern would be. I know that we've provided training - I think it was early last year, forums, online forums and it wasn't particularly - I don't think it was particularly well-publicised because it wasn't well-attended in terms of particular areas within DECYP, whereas I feel through FKAT and the NGO sector, we've done a lot of forums but focusing on carers and the Reportable Conduct Scheme and there's a greater knowledge of this scheme. It's something that we're going to look into more closely.

Ms O'CONNOR - Do you think legislative change is required?

Ms COE - In terms of the subcontractor situation, definitely.²⁸

Reportable Conduct – Tasmania Police

Ms Coe provided the following evidence in response to the concern identified when her office was notified that Tasmania Police received legal advice correcting earlier advice that police officers are not subject to the Reportable Conduct Scheme:

Ms O'CONNOR - I'd like to go back to the fact that Tasmania Police is apparently not covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme and to understand better your level of engagement with Tasmania Police.

Given there's been history of the most egregious breaches of trust and damage to children, does Tasmania Police, or have they informed you, for example, that they have any sort of child-safe framework or policies or practices in place?

Ms COE - DPFEM has put in a child-safe action plan, so they have taken that on board. Up until that sort of change in focus, I think there's been quite good engagement with Tasmania Police and the department as a whole. It's just really concerning now that it's a gap. We've seen some matters that have come through reception prisons involving police officers. That's concerning. And we don't have oversight of that.

Ms O'CONNOR - And what happens in that instance if a young person reports that they've been physically or sexually harmed by a Tasmania Police employee? What happens?

Ms COE - My understanding is they will still do an internal review. It's just that the advice they've received, they can't give us the names of the police officers involved. As I explained earlier with our system, we put the subject of allegations details in them and track that profile. So that's a concerning aspect.

Then the outcomes of reports - there are matters they have reported obviously prior to 1 August and they will give us the outcome in some particular matters, and a couple of them I might have concerns, but others seemed appropriate, the appropriate outcome. I don't really have that oversight at this point in time. That's why the concern about the regulation.

²⁸ Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 5 February 2026, pp. 21-22.

Ms O'CONNOR - But you do have before you the DPFEM child-safe action plan. Are you able to share with the committee what are the elements of that plan?

Ms COE - Well, it's how they're going to socialise the Child and Youth Safe Standards within their organisation and that's something that we're in negotiation - well, not in negotiation - we gave them feedback on in their development. As I said, it's more about just socialising the scheme at this early stage. What's it going to look like? Are people going to know what the standards are?

So it's not particularly demanding, but it's just to keep it on the agenda and make it a strategic document that it's part of the organisation. It's not an add-on, it's not like a regulatory burden. This is how we improve our service delivery, particularly to children and young people and this is how we're socialising it because there's no point saying we're a child-safe organisation and the workers know nothing about the standards, so it's about socialising that and taking a really child safe approach.

As I said, there is an intention, police are happy, I understand, to be in the scheme - or you know, correctly within the scheme.

Ms O'CONNOR - And so they should be.

Ms COE - So, there's no pushback there. It's just an unfortunate turn of events really.

Ms O'CONNOR - And can you just remind us again when you you've been informed that the regulatory change might be presented first of all to the Subordinate Legislation Committee and then to the parliament?

Ms COE - Well, I think it was last week we got a draft of the regulation. So that would be up to Department of Justice as to when that progresses, but when I met with the Attorney-General, he said it was a priority and it would be addressed, and so far it looks like it is a priority, so hopefully soon.²⁹

Reportable Conduct - Education

Ms Coe was asked about engagement in the education sector between Independent and Catholic school and DECYP's public schools to ensure they all have child-safe practices in place:

Ms O'CONNOR - ... The Commission of Inquiry makes some recommendations about DECYP engaging with the Catholic and independent schools on making sure that they have genuinely child-safe practices in place.

Some of the evidence that we've heard come before the committee is not particularly reassuring about that level of engagement between government through DECYP and the independent and Catholic schools. I guess a concern that we've heard is that there may be a different safety lens being applied to children in independent and Catholic schools than there is in public schools given that DECYP doesn't directly regulate independent and Catholic schools.

Do you have any concerns about the level of engagement with that educational sector and the progress of that recommendation, which I think is 6.8?

²⁹ Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 5 February 2026, pp. 26-27.

Ms COE - As a general comment with non-government schools, we've had quite good engagement through our strategic engagement teams in terms of implementing the standards.

From our perspective, my office provides that training and guidance material and through the Reportable Conduct Scheme we've seen matters come through and we can see evidence of where they are implementing the standards in terms of what their outcomes are and they will often tell us what remedial action.

So, I don't have any particular concerns as a whole in terms of the NGO sector, I think they have taken up the Child and Youth Safe Standards and implemented it to a certain degree.

Ms O'CONNOR - Have they sought training or direct input from your office?

Ms COE - Yes, they have. We've had engagement. And as I said, if the matter comes up through the Reportable Conduct Scheme, we will have ongoing engagement with them as well and we might make referrals to the engagement team from the reportable conduct team if we think there might be something that they need to address, but in some outcome reports they will take remedial action following a reportable conduct matter, which really shows they've looked at the risks and they've addressed the risk and they've acknowledged their role in that incident occurring, so it might be about supervision, it might be about clarifying expectations.

Generally, I'm not particularly concerned. I think there's a relatively high level of reporting and, as I said, they're not - you know, apart from a few pointy-end ones - they're not generally of a serious nature, but it's good to see that these matters are being looked at early and actioned, because that's what I'm concerned about: that there's some follow-through action after an incident occurs, because that's how you learn. That's how you change your process and build a culture.³⁰

Findings

20. The Independent Regulator suggests Reportable Conduct Scheme data and increasing engagement with Office of the Independent Regulator forums and online educational materials provide strong indicators children are becoming safer in Tasmania.
21. The Independent Regulator remains concerned about the level of physical altercation between youth workers and young people at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the lack of timely closures of investigations of reportable conduct matters.
22. While there are indications the Department for Education, Children and Young People is taking action to address concerns about physical altercations at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, concerns remain about the adequacy of de-escalation training for staff.
23. The Independent Regulator reported inadequate feedback and follow up with staff after Incident Review Committee assessment of physical altercation incidents at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

³⁰ Louise Coe, Independent Regulator, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 5 February 2026, pp. 20-21.

24. The Independent Regulator identified that reportable conduct incidents may be under-reported or not investigated in the Out of Home Care sector due to the use of sub-contractors. The Independent Regulator identified this as an area requiring legislative change.
25. The Independent Regulator expressed concern about potential under-reporting of reportable conduct from the Department for Education, Children and Young People in the Out of Home Care sector.
26. The Independent Regulator expressed concern about the low number of Department for Education, Children and Young People foster carers who have attended available training on the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
27. The Independent Regulator continues to urge Department Secretaries to develop child and youth safe action plans in compliance with the Child and Youth Safe Framework. The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, the Department of Health and the Department for Education, Children and Young People have submitted action plans to the Office of the Independent Regulator for review and comment.
28. The Independent Regulator stated Tasmania was an early adopter of the Child and Youth Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct schemes and has shared experience and knowledge with interstate partners.
29. The Independent Regulator notes the need for legislative change to ensure Tasmania Police are covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme, backdated to 1 August 2025.³¹

Recommendations

The Joint Sessional Committee recommends that the Government:

6. Legislate to ensure the Reportable Conduct Scheme applies to sub-contractors in the Out of Home Care sector.
7. Ensure department-managed foster carers undertake training on the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
8. Ensure all Ashley Youth Detention Centre staff undertake de-escalation training and receive regular refresher training.
9. Develop and implement structured processes for feedback to staff following incident review at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

³¹ The Committee notes legislation has been tabled to bring Tasmania Police within the Reportable Conduct Scheme and the legislation was subject to [consultation with stakeholders](#).

THE 'WOOLCOTT REVIEW' – PETER WOOLCOTT AO AND RADHA THOMAS

On 12 May 2026, Peter Woolcott AO and Radha Thomas appeared before the Committee to provide evidence in relation to the Independent Review into the actions taken in response to the information and concerns raised by the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (the 'Woolcott Review'). The full transcript of this hearing is available to access via the [Inquiry webpage](#).

The '[Woolcott Review](#)' was tabled in two parts:

- Part A was tabled in November 2025. Part A forms the first and major part of the report. This part addresses disciplinary matters (the audit), employment frameworks, culture, regulatory oversight and information sharing.
- Part B was tabled in December 2025. Part B provides a view of the regulatory and oversight arrangements and their intersection with the justice system in Tasmania.

The [Government response to the Woolcott Review](#) was tabled in Parliament on 25 March 2026.

Mr Woolcott commenced his opening statement by highlighting the interdependency of the recommendations:

The recommendations across both parts of this review span structural, legislative and cultural change. They are interdependent. The structural reforms depend on the legislative ones. The legislative ones will not take hold without the cultural ones. To implement some and not others, to address the legislative without the cultural or the structural while leaving the regulatory untouched would limit the very impact that the reform package is designed to achieve.³²

In relation to Part A of the Woolcott Review, Mr Woolcott noted the Government supported the majority of the recommendations, and he outlined the principal focus areas of the review:

1. *Strengthening the State Service Code of Conduct*

The Government has supported proposed amendments to the State Service Act, including:

- A clear statement that the purpose of State Service employment is to serve the government, parliament and the Tasmanian community;
- A requirement that employees adhere to all elements of the code of conduct at all times, and not merely during working hours;
- Provisions ensuring that misconduct under the Integrity Commission Act constitute a breach of the code; and
- That any reportable conduct of an employee at any time is triggered as a breach of the code of conduct, regardless of when it occurs.

2. *Employment directions and disciplinary processes*

The review recommended updating employment directions governing misconduct investigations and disciplinary action, which the government has supported.

³² Peter Woolcott AO, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, p. 3.

Progress has already occurred through the delivery of updated Employment Direction No. 5 in 2024 and the establishment of the Shared Capability and Centralised Investigations Unit within DPAC to improve the quality, timeliness and trauma-informed character of Code of Conduct investigations across government.

The review proposed further reforms to employment directions including:

- Significant revisions to ED5 to more clearly distinguish between preliminary assessments and investigations; providing timeframes for completion of process milestones; allowing for consideration of unsubstantiated prior behaviour where relevant; determining whether or not to proceed with an investigation
- Proposed changes to ED4, ED6 and ED26 include enabling immediate suspension without pay for child safety concerns, loss of mandatory qualifications on grounds of being risk to others with clear guidance and timeframes

3. *Information sharing*

The review identified significant barriers to sharing information about child sexual abuse across law enforcement, regulatory bodies and other agencies.

The Government has supported reforms including:

- Targeted amendments to the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIP Act)
- A direction to the Solicitor-General to provide transparent advice on the interpretation of existing information-sharing provisions
- Prioritisation by the Department of Justice to identify and progress the necessary amendments

4. *Culture, oversight and child safety*

The review recommended stronger oversight arrangements, including:

- Explicit inclusion of Tasmania Police in the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 as a regulated entity, subject to both the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme. The government has supported this and is preparing legislative amendments for 2026.
- Strengthened arrangements for the Registrar to work with vulnerable people and that scheme, including elevating the status of the registrar and introducing an annual performance report to parliament, is supported in principle by the government.

5. *Integrity, culture and Aboriginal child safety*

The Government has supported recommendations aimed at improving organisational culture, including:

- mandatory ethics and integrity training for State Service managers;
- a framework for engagement with community organisations in the child safety sector and that DECYP prioritise the establishment of the role of Executive Director for Aboriginal Children and Young People and the Office for Aboriginal Policy and Practice.³³

In conclusion, Mr Woolcott highlighted the importance of continued implementation, oversight and cultural change, noting the State Service stewardship role is central to embedding long-term reforms:

³³ Peter Woolcott AO, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, pp. 3-4.

*The review considers the government's broad support for the recommendations a positive step but highlights the importance of continued implementation, oversight and cultural change. It stresses that the State Service stewardship role is central to embedding long-term reforms and that Parliament should continue to monitor progress.*³⁴

In relation to Part B, Mr Woolcott noted the Government's support or in principle support for most recommendations. The key recommendations made in Part B are summarised as follows:

1. Role of the Solicitor-General

The review identified ambiguity in the current framework, specifically Treasurer's Instructions FC-17, about when the Solicitor-General's legal advice is binding on agencies and when they retain discretion to act otherwise. The government supported reforms to clarify the relationship between legal advice and decision-making.

The review recommended ensuring agencies such as the Ombudsman, Integrity Commission, Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Implementation Monitor can access independent legal advice where necessary to preserve their independence. The government supported this in principle and indicated agencies can self-determine when external advice is required.

2. Model litigant obligations

The review recommended that the Attorney-General reissue the model litigant obligations as formal directions to all agencies and instrumentalities. This has been supported by Government.

3. Establishment of the State Litigation Office

The review welcomed the establishment of the State Litigation Office but noted that structural reforms alone are insufficient. Ongoing leadership, training, monitoring and commitment to model litigant standards are required to achieve cultural change.

4. Oversight by the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor

The review also highlighted the need for continued parliamentary oversight and welcomed the Government's intention to refer supported recommendations to the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor to provide ongoing accountability and monitoring.³⁵

The Committee explored a number of the key focus areas of the Woolcott Review as follows, including evidence received by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the Attorney-General on 26 June 2026.

³⁴ Peter Woolcott AO, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, p. 3.

³⁵ Peter Woolcott AO, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, pp. 4-6.

PART A

Oversight by the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor

The Committee sought clarification regarding which recommendations would be subject to oversight by the Implementation Monitor.

CHAIR - ... Have you been made aware of exactly which of these recommendations the Implementation Monitor will be monitoring in an ongoing way ...?

Mr WOOLCOTT - No, we haven't. I understand that it's subject to negotiations between the independent monitor and the Department of Justice at the moment.

CHAIR - In terms of the fact that we might anticipate that at least the recommendations that haven't been accepted by government will not be monitored, then, in an ongoing way, and some of the others may not be either because it might be deemed they're not within this remit - what's your concern then, about ongoing monitoring of the circumstances which gave rise to those recommendations and the potential implementation of the ones that fall outside the remit of the monitor? ...

Mr WOOLCOTT - There's clearly an important role for the department and this committee in relation to the work of the independent monitor. I would think that that would very much fall to the parliament, once the Attorney-General decides what bits should go to the independent monitor to do so. I think there's, as you say, an important role for this committee to continue to keep an eye on that.

...

Mr WOOLCOTT - Because it is under legislation, as I read it; it is the parliament's prerogative to also have a major say in terms of what matters go to the independent monitor.

...

CHAIR - It's not just a matter of the Attorney-General and the government deciding? You regard that the parliament has a role to be able to refer things to that monitor position as well?

Ms SHARMA - That's right. That's my understanding that the act that establishes the Implementation Monitor has a provision in it that would allow parliament to refer other recommendations to the Implementation Monitor.

The only other observation I would make, Meg, is that the Implementation Monitor, as I understand it, has oversight of the COI recommendations. So, in the context where our recommendations generally build upon the recommendations of the COI, I think, logically a separation, in terms of referral, just from a practical perspective, in our recommendations built on the recommendations of the COI, I would expect that the Implementation Monitor in oversight of the implementation of those recommendations would naturally be taking account of our recommendations because they're progressive.³⁶

³⁶ Peter Woolcott AO and Radha Sharma, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, pp. 8-9.

In relation to the Government's response document, the Committee questioned Mr Woolcott's interpretation of statements from the Government that the recommendations were supported, but were simply linked to existing COI recommendations, and therefore potentially dismissed as already addressed:

Mr WOOLCOTT - Well, the way I've interpreted that is that we have obviously sought to build on the work of the COI. Part of the issue that the government and the parliament face is the enormous number of recommendations; not only the 191 recommendations that came out of the COI, but the range of other reports and reviews that have been done on this issue, which the government has also accepted. There's an enormous amount of material that the government has to prioritise and work through and the Independent Monitor has that role, in terms of keeping the government informed of how he thinks it's going. He has an absolutely critical role in the system going forward.

As I said, we've thought to be fairly succinct in what we've said in relation to the number of recommendations. I can talk further about why we broke them up in strategic, operational and the accountability aspects to that, but it's essentially about building on the work that's already been done. So, when I see the government referring to that, I don't see there's anything untoward about the way that they have approached those recommendations. They said they're supported. We've set out clearly what those recommendations are and, yes, we have sought to build on the work of the COI.³⁷

The Attorney-General, appearing before the Committee stated:

Mr BARNETT - The government certainly supports this recommendation in part, consistent with the requirements of the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Act. I can confirm, as stated in our government's response, that we will assign all recommendations from the report to the Implementation Monitor for oversight that are legally able to be referred. All recommendations assigned to the Implementation Monitor will be made public via the Tasmanian Government Gazette.

As stated in our response, only recommendations that relate to child safety and wellbeing are legally able to be referred to the Implementation Monitor, in accordance with section 13 of that act. The Government's been engaging directly with the Implementation Monitor in regard to which recommendations can be referred to him. I anticipate we will formalise those referrals in the very near future.

You've obviously heard from DPAC this morning. I am advised that they have been working very recently with the Implementation Monitor in that regard.

Ms BOURNE - Not too much more to add. As you've noted, we're in the final stages of working through that referral process, which has included direct engagement with the monitor and working very closely with DPAC as well as the head of the State Service and the chief reform lead talked about this morning. Obviously, our focus is on providing advice around the requirements under the act, noting that, as the deputy has said, section 13, read together with the monitor's functions under section 12, provides some guidance without explicitly defining what child safety and wellbeing means. But those discussions are progressing with direct consultation from the monitor, and we hope to be in a position to be able to finalise that in the very near future.

CHAIR - It's our understanding that the intention would be, while the monitor may not report on the referred recommendations in his annual report in September this year, there

³⁷ Peter Woolcott AO, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, p. 9.

will at least be a clarity provided in that report on the recommendations over which he will have oversight going forward. Is that your understanding?

Mr BARNETT - Yes. That's the absolute very high level expectation that that'll all be sorted by September. I think I'll just confirm with the Secretary that that's her view as well.

Ms BOURNE - That is my view. I think it would be helpful to have that clarity for the purposes of that September report, and feel that we're in a good position to be able to meet that timeframe.³⁸

And further:

CHAIR - The question I have, then, just to bring us to a close, is around any [recommendations] that are the responsibility of the Department of Justice that aren't referred to the monitor for that ongoing oversight and reporting on. How will the department be reporting on the implementation of those recommendations in a way that's public and accountable?

...

Ms BOURNE - ... through existing structures that we have, the way that we manage and continue to manage our response to Commission of Inquiry recommendations is through a governance structure that, effectively, sits with the agency executive. The reporting mechanisms that we comply with as set by the Office of the Implementation Monitor are endorsed by me and advice from our Commission of Inquiry Response Taskforce. I do see once there is a final determination around what sits with the Implementation Monitor and what doesn't, so to speak, that will build upon that existing framework within the agency so that they require - they're allocated to the particular part of the agency that will be the sponsor, so to speak, with a reporting structure back-up through my agency executive, ultimately to me as head of agency. And we have a fairly rigorous approach with regard to outstanding recommendations around Commission of Inquiry, and I'd like to see that continue, as well as keep the monitor informed of those, even if he doesn't explicitly have responsibility for them.

CHAIR - Thank you. That explains that internal process, but in terms of external visibility and accountability, how would the public or the parliament then understand where things are at in terms of implementing any recommendations that haven't been given to the monitor for oversight?

Ms BOURNE - Through you, Deputy: I think I heard the head of the State Service talking this morning about the implementation plan that's currently under development and we're feeding into that body of work. Without speaking for her, I anticipate there will be some public-facing reporting function like we have already on the Keeping Children Safe website. And there would be absolute engagement from the Department of Justice to do that and replicate that, in some way, on our own website.

CHAIR - That would extend to these recommendations that may not be given to the monitor?

Ms BOURNE - That's my intention and my understanding.³⁹

³⁸ Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General and Kristy Bourne, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, p. 25.

³⁹ Kristy Bourne, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 42-43.

Misconduct as a Breach of the Code of Conduct under the State Service Act

In response to the question of whether Tasmania's legislative framework and State Service culture adequately recognise and respond to misconduct, particularly where it affects the protection of children and vulnerable people, Mr Woolcott and Ms Thomas stated:

Mr WOOLCOTT - ... *I don't think it's the definition of misconduct that is such a problem. It's the processes and the regulatory and legislative arrangements which govern those processes which have been a major part of the problem in handling these issues within the State Service.*

Ms SHARMA - *The reason that recommendation exists in relation to aligning the two definitions. The State Service Act has a definition of what constitutes a breach of the code of conduct. Section 9 sets out in detail a number of ways in which you might breach the code of conduct. The Integrity Commission Act uses the words 'misconduct' as opposed to 'a breach of the code of conduct'. In speaking to both the Integrity Commission and more widely we're conscious that those two terminologies don't necessarily align and that they create unnecessary ambiguity in the context of what really constitutes a breach of the code of conduct, whether you call it a breach of the code of conduct as per the SSA act or misconduct. What we have attempted to do is to remove any sense of ambiguity that a breach of the code, regardless, is based upon an assessment of your conduct - a definitional variation in terms of use of words should not drive a different approach to addressing what is poor conduct in the service - as a consequence of having two separate acts that use two different terminologies.*

Ms O'CONNOR - *What about the issue, ...of a deeper understanding within the State Service of what constitutes misconduct, as it applies to the code of conduct, but also as it applies to general ethical principles and principles of good governance? ...*

Ms SHARMA - *I would respond to that by saying that you have seen over two decades of instances of child sexual abuse in Tasmania ... and longer - and in many of those instances, as the commission of inquiry established, that conduct in the case of some individuals persisted for a long period of time, that those allegations went unaddressed, and that should give you a very clear sense that there was a systemic problem, both in the understanding of what constitutes a breach and also how to handle it.*

What the review and, I think, the commission of inquiry, and, I would say now, the State Service and parliament have done is to bring greater scrutiny and understanding, particularly in the context of abuse of children, what that abuse might constitute, how it commences, how it might escalate and, therefore, the need to be ever vigilant in addressing what might start off as poor minor behaviours and transgressions and might escalate to more serious perpetration of harm to children.

In summary, I would say, yes, there has been a problem in the context of understanding what the impact of child sexual abuse is, what it looks like; what is child sexual abuse? I think the service's handling of that historically has not been up to the standard that one would expect.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Peter Woolcott AO and Radha Sharma, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, pp. 10-11.

State Service Management Office and proposed Commissioner of the State Service

Mr Woolcott observed that of the recommendations noted rather than accepted by Government, most were related to the State Service Management Office SSMO (SSMO). Mr Woolcott noted the following in relation to the SSMO and the proposal to establish a Commissioner of the State Service:

The government has noted rather than supported the proposal for a new commissioner of the State Service and a possible future public service commission model. It has, however, supported the need to uplift the State Service Management Office, clearly defining its role as system steward, with accountability, capability, culture, integrity and performance. ...

The government has also committed to exploring amendments to the State Service Act to strengthen the role of the SSMO.⁴¹

In relation to the recommendation to establish a new role of Commissioner of the State Service, Ms Morgan-Wicks provided the following evidence relating to the establishment of this role and the timeframe:

Mrs GREENE - ... have DPAC prepared any options or a business case relating to the establishment of this new role or will it not be proceeding? If it's not proceeding, what alternative governance arrangements will deliver the same outcome?

...

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - As part of the machinery of government change, we are bringing in large parts of the Department of State Growth and we are looking at the creation of a new unit, in terms of Workforce Tasmania, that's going to bring together our State Service Management Office in terms of public sector workforce and also Jobs and Skills and private sector workforce.

Now, Mr Woolcott's made these recommendations and I have had a conversation with him about the fact of this machinery of government change that's come in after he's conducted his review, and noted that we'll consider the issue of a commissioner or a title change and kind of definition of role change as part of this machinery of government work which is currently underway. But at the moment, I'm just trying to fix, in terms of the structure, how Jobs and Skills will sit alongside SSMO. You know, as an example, both units at the moment have data and analytics functions which I'd like to see combined in a new structure, but that work is currently underway.

Mrs GREENE - Do you have the timeline on when there might be some progress, then, once you've worked out the structure?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Yes, so the machinery of government change and the moves into DPAC are due in December this year. At the moment our focus has been on the units that are moving out of DPAC, and then our focus is on settling that structure and working with staff in both State Growth and DPAC. ...

CHAIR - The thing that occurs to me when I look at these recommendations from the Woolcott review, is that the focus is very much... [on elevating] ... the State Service Management Office in terms of its role as a custodian of the public service, and the elements

⁴¹ Peter Woolcott AO, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, p. 3.

of that that are around being a steward of the accountabilities for capability, culture, integrity and performance. That's particular characteristics of the State Service, the public sector as opposed to the private sector, and management and roles within the private sector.

Bringing those two things, the public sector and the private sector, into one entity, it occurs to me that that might not take us towards the intent of this recommendation, but might potentially take away from it or blur it by putting public and private alongside each other. Can you comment on that?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *I think that could be one view, Chair. But, certainly, we're also hoping that bringing them together can give greater bench strength within this workforce unit. I probably think of all the contacts that, for example, we've had from the private sector about trying to access training that we're providing in the public sector, particularly around child safety. We've made that training publicly available. It's been prepared and funded by the government for roll-out to the public sector, but wanting to also provide that to private sector employees, employers, sporting clubs, associations, et cetera so that if that could assist them in raising awareness of child safety, we think that's a positive thing.*

I could just go ahead and make a recommendation to the Premier: just let's appoint a commissioner, let's change the title. What I actually want to get right is the structure that sits within the office. I know Mr Woolcott has a very certain view in terms of the way in which he used to run the Australian Public Service Commission and Commissioner. We've had long conversations about the way in which they approached that for the Australian Public Service. I need to make sure that that can fit the Tasmanian State Service and also fit the available budget that we have for it. I have to take all of those considerations. But if I can get the structure and make sure that we've got the role and responsibilities right, and that we've got two units that now can come together with a greater resource in terms of the priorities for both public sector and transformation - and I have my chief reform lead that will also be working on public sector transformation and these Woolcott recommendations, alongside of making sure our SSMO is running efficiently, and that we're bringing in our jobs and skills unit, and managing their outcomes.

CHAIR - *The thing I want to delve into a little bit deeper in relation to this, though, is that the concept of stewardship and custodian of public service values was very strong in the Woolcott review, and the need for that to be strengthened in Tasmania, which is why they've gone to these recommendations. That's the principles behind these recommendations.*

Noting that you don't necessarily feel it needs to be done in exactly the way Mr Woolcott's outlined it, ... what is it within the Tasmanian public service then that needs to be strengthened in order to give better effect to this stewardship and custodian role, do you think, that isn't just changing the title?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *I haven't rejected just changing the title. All I've said is that we're currently working through it and I need to make a recommendation to the Premier, as the employer and who is responsible for the State Service Management Office.*

...

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *Stewardship is currently in every head of agency performance management agreement. I think we have come an incredibly long way in terms of stewardship on child safety. Each of the heads of agency have been working incredibly hard to ensure that they have reviewed all of their policies and procedures across agencies. They have led in terms of rolling out mandatory training, and with some resistance in particular cohorts, et cetera, within agencies that I'm aware of, but they've stayed true to that course. But the concept of*

stewardship, obviously, is far broader than child safety. I'm working with the Secretaries Board in relation to what are the key priorities in terms of our TSS and our public sector transformation that we're going to focus on from a stewardship level? But our first priority has been the recommendations of the commission of inquiry.⁴²

Mandatory Training for Ethical Decision Making and Integrity for all State Service Employees in a Management Position

In relation to Operational Recommendation 5.2 which calls for mandatory ethical decision-making and integrity training for State Service managers, and mandatory training regarding the management of conflicts of interest for all officials, Mr Woolcott was asked how the recommendation would be implemented and whether the Integrity Commission had the capacity to deliver the training:

Mr WOOLCOTT - ... *I don't have any line of sight on the government's thinking of how this could be operationalised. ... I know resources are an issue. Then, whether this could be done by the Integrity Commission in partnership with Tasmania University in terms of integrity training, something else they might well think about.*

We do think it's pretty important at the management level there's a clear understanding of what integrity means and what integrity looks like. I do believe that the conflict issues that you yourself discussed just then are very real in Tasmania. It's a society in which everybody knows everybody, and to have a clear understanding of what a conflict can look like - and people don't mean to do the wrong thing: most people working in the State Service want to do the right thing, but they need to have a clear understanding of conflicts and a clear understanding of integrity and what that actually looks like in the working environment for them to do the best for the people of Tasmania.

Ms O'CONNOR - *Can we take from that, that your review identified some real gaps there in terms of State Service management understanding of ethical decision making and integrity and of the broader State Service's understanding and, therefore, capacity to manage conflicts of interest, because it's certainly something that arises in our work as members of parliament and committee members as an area where attention is required.*

Mr WOOLCOTT - *That's absolutely right. I think people want to do the right thing but understanding what the right thing looks like in practice is pretty fundamental, and that's what we saw.*

CHAIR - ... *I wondered about whether you had in any sense assessed the capability of the Integrity Commission to deliver such training that you've suggested in the report, on integrity or conflicts of interest. Other than just outright resourcing, did you look at the training that's already delivered by the Integrity Commission on those matters?*

...

Ms SHARMA - *No, I did not look at the provision of - well - I did look at the fact that they offered the training. I haven't looked at the training materials, Chair, so I couldn't really tell you what quality they are, so, no, I couldn't make a comment on that.*

⁴² Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 11-14.

CHAIR - Hopefully, then, as that recommendation may be monitored going forward by the independent monitor, maybe, if it's one that's captured under his remit, we might get a sense of an assessment of that going forward.

... When you're making the recommendation there, about training on integrity and training on conflict of interest in decision making, what do you envisage is the scope of that within the full workforce? Is it certain levels of management that you're talking about having that training provided to or a very broad net that captures most State Service employees?

Mr WOOLCOTT - In a way we've taken a somewhat bite-sized approach. It costs money to do training. It's important, but it does cost money. We've focused our recommendation around training initially on managers: people who are supervising other people and, hopefully, what comes out of that is a cascading effect down and over time you can expand that training.

I think in the initial phases, our recommendation focuses very much on the management and that was driven by the number of, as you say, the 30,000 state servants in Tasmania, the need to move relatively efficiently and effectively on this, so let's focus on managers for the moment. That was our thinking.⁴³

In relation to mandatory training on ethical decision making and integrity for all State Service managers, Ms Morgan-Wicks and Ms Hurworth provided the following answer when asked how managers will be identified:

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Each head of agency - and we'll work with them through the Secretaries Board to make sure that appropriate layers of management are identified, and that then they're able to clearly describe who has attended and report on that in their annual report.

Ms LOVELL - Do you have any idea now as to who will be required, what sort of roles you'll be looking at, or what level?

...

Ms HURWORTH - I think what you're getting at is one of the complexities that we had in finalising the review. The reviewers obviously come from the APS, and the APS are not, except for some key areas, actually service deliverers. And so, when they were thinking about the review, they were thinking about departments in the sense that we would understand sort of central departments and policy departments. Obviously for us, that becomes more complex because we deliver services. So, your question is, how far down in a service do you go?

Ms LOVELL - Yeah. I guess the terminology that's been used in this report is maybe not terminology that has a clear definition in the State Service.

Ms HURWORTH - Correct.

Ms LOVELL - How will we know and what decisions are being made around who should be completing this training?

Ms HURWORTH - ... you really have to go through what are the requirements of different roles in terms of decision making and then look at whether that capability is needed in that role. And it is a significant task. We did discuss that extensively with Peter and Radha when they were talking through with us what their recommendations intended to achieve. So, we

⁴³ Peter Woolcott AO and Radha Sharma, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, pp. 20-22.

couldn't provide you a list right now that says, 'This is every single position we would look at'. It will have to be a process where we talk through heads of agency through sec board, with their people and culture areas, coordinated through SSMO, around what are the requirements of roles in terms of making decisions, managing conflicts of interest and how far do we need to go in terms of what a manager is to achieve that?

Ms LOVELL - What are some of the criteria that you're looking at around setting that?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - ... I think Mr Woolcott wanted to make sure that we also had quite extensive coverage in terms of ethical decision making. For example, in a hospital, I would absolutely want to see that at nurse unit manager level, assistant nurse unit manager level, anyone that stands as a supervisor and is going to be making decisions in relation to issues that are escalated up to them in a management or supervision capacity. But we would need to go to - I'm happy to work with the State Service Management Office to say, 'Well, what is that criteria that could assist heads of agencies', who I think have a very good idea in terms of where they see issues escalate, or where they see things being stopped, or is there a barrier? That also ties into our work of, if you have a complaint, that we've got a common complaint and grievance-raising procedure that's right across the State Service. And a lot of work has happened in this space.

Ms LOVELL - ... Have you got a timeline for when you expect that work to be done or when we'll see the training being rolled out?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - ... We are working through that in the draft of the implementation plan now. I need to consult with secretaries, but we're expecting that the draft implementation plan should be going through to the next secretaries board. So, probably in the next couple of months we will have that finalised and be able to be published.

...

CHAIR - noting it's ethical decision making and integrity training, not just the decision making training, are you expecting that we begin to roll out this training within this 2026-27 financial year? Or when do we start rolling it out?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Yes, that is my expectation: in the 2026-27 financial year. ⁴⁴

In relation to resourcing to deliver the training:

Ms LOVELL Will ... [the Integrity Commission] be provided with any additional resources to deliver this training, or have they raised that with you as a concern at all?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - In terms of my conversations with the CEO, she hasn't raised a request for further resource for this training. But it's certainly something that each head of agency would be working through in terms of their budgets to make sure that this is a recommendation that must be implemented and training that has to be run across their agency. It will be my expectation that they'll be meeting that from agency budgets.

...

Ms ROSOL - I'm wondering about funding for the training as well, because if a large number of staff are going to undergo this training, have you done any work around costings for that?

⁴⁴ Kathrine Morgan-Wicks and Courtney Hurworth, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 7-9.

Will extra funding be provided to the Integrity Commission or to departments to implement the training, given you're hoping to roll it out in this financial year?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - ..., I should note that additional funding is in the Integrity Commission's budget for 2026-27, but I had previously mentioned that the CEO of the Integrity Commission hasn't raised the issue of additional funding for this package with me. Coincidentally, I'm actually meeting her directly after this, so I will absolutely - she might raise it. But it is my expectation that, as it is a core recommendation, heads of agency will be working within their budgets to make funding available for this training to be conducted in this financial year. But we will work through that as a matter of sec board. If there is an issue in terms of a particular agency not having budget, I will work with Treasury to make sure that that budget is made available.⁴⁵

In relation to evaluations of the effectiveness of the training, quality assurance and benchmarking:

Ms RUSSELL - We work with the Integrity Commission closely on that. I think it's a really important question in terms of how we also modify and reflect learnings as we go along in terms of the importance of foundational training.

The only other comment I'd make to what Kath has said is that, nationally, there are other jurisdictions that are quite happy to work with us. I think as part of the head of the State Service and supporting Kath in her role as the head of the State Service, that's a really active partnership with other jurisdictions. So, as part of the contributory work that the State Service Management Office does with the Integrity Commission, we'll be looking to tap into other jurisdictions and their learnings, which I think is really quite important in this space.

CHAIR - ... Is there a particular quality assurance sort of program that we have, to know that the training we implement here is of the right quality and effectiveness that we want it to be?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Perhaps if I can ask Courtney to reflect on the child safety training and the work that we have been doing in terms of evaluation, as an example, noting that we haven't yet rolled out this ethics training in terms of the development.

CHAIR - But we would potentially look to have a similar approach, if we were talking about quality and effectiveness?

Ms HURWORTH - Yes. I think one of the things the commission of inquiry has given us is some pretty good blueprints on how we can do some of these sorts of things, particularly at scale. As Ms Lovell alluded to, we may be talking about large amounts, and certainly with mandatory training, large cohorts of staff. With the commission of inquiry work, each agency had sort of developed their own child safety training, either prior to or just after the commission handed in its report. Part of what my unit did, alongside experts that we took from different areas, including the National Office for Child Safety, was to review all of the training packages that agencies had developed and put a set of standards around what we expected to see in those training packages. Then we actually worked with SSMO and we've developed sort of what we would consider a gold standard training package, which we've made available to the entire community. We would consider we would take a similar approach to that in some of these ethics, integrity and conflict of interest matters.

I would also point out that we do have some really strong internal bench strength when it comes to designing training and working with subject matter experts around training. And

⁴⁵ Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 8-10.

we recently had our child safety training externally audited, and it's considered to be exceptional. ⁴⁶

Mandatory Training for the Management of Conflicts of Interest for all Officials

In relation to the mandatory training regarding the management of conflicts of interest for all officials:

Ms LOVELL - ... *Is it your expectation that this conflict of interest training would be rolled out to that broader group as well? Will that be done in, like, a staged approach? I imagine the group that's been identified by Mr Woolcott is a much smaller group Will there be a prioritisation of these staff officials and people with delegated decision-making authority? Do you know when that work will be done?*

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *I think we're probably back in the same position as we are working at the moment with the Integrity Commission. We're working with our training consortium and we'll work together with the secretary's board to develop that criteria and make it very clear the expectation of whom, within each agency, is required to attend ethics, integrity or conflict of interest training.*

Conflict of interest training already occurs across the State Service. Every single State servant, under the code of conduct in the State Service Act, is subject to a code of conduct that requires the management of conflicts of interest. So, certainly, that's a standing expectation as a Tasmanian state servant. I am aware that different agencies roll out different forms of training in relation to conflicts of interest, but again, we need to look right across and make sure that there are no gaps in that application in particular agencies.

It's a standard, for example, as part of recruitment. So if you, in the State Service, are on a recruitment panel or in procurement, it is a standard component of conflicts of interest. It features in our governance, so in terms of people that are on executives or executive committees or governance committees, that there are standing items for the declaration of conflicts of interest. But we all know that it can go down very deep, in terms of even very junior officers that could be exposed to the potential or the management of a conflict.

Ms LOVELL - *I understand there's already some training that happens broadly across the State Service, but I guess Mr Woolcott's identified this particular group for a reason. Is it your expectation that this group that's been identified will undertake more in-depth training, or more detailed training, and what work is being - I mean, you've talked about the work that's being done. Do you expect this will happen, I mean, more quickly than the work that's being done with the Integrity Commission? It seems that this would be maybe a simpler piece of work, if it's a smaller group, and you've already got a policy in place?*

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *Yes, Ms Lovell, in terms of the smaller group being identified, and if we've already got existing modules of training that we could quickly also tweak or update, and we will compare to the conflicts of interest training that the APS run out - that Mr Woolcott's obviously very familiar with - to make sure that it is consistent. You know, we can target that as a first priority. I just don't want to disrupt - in case the Integrity Commission have a plan for the ethics and integrity training that they wish to put out as a priority. But if it's a smaller cohort, absolutely, and it's my expectation that would occur in the 2026-27 financial year.*

⁴⁶ Kathrine Morgan-Wicks and Courtney Hurworth, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 7-10.

Ms LOVELL - ... the recommendation, this one, is not to partner with the Integrity Commission, this is for SSMO to develop and deliver the training. But are you saying that you're expecting the Integrity Commission to include this as part of their work on the ethics and integrity -

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I'll have a conversation with the Integrity Commission, because they also, in many of their reports, have raised conflicts of interest and have previously rolled out training in relation to conflicts of interest. What I'm trying to do is make sure that we don't have three different service providers that are trying to hit State Service employees in terms of, you know, one topic. So, we need to make sure we're coordinated, whether that's a partnership between our training consortium and the Integrity Commission. ...

...

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - We have to take people off the frontline to attend our various training. We need to make sure it's concise, you know, positive and able to be completed, and evaluated, and makes a difference.

Ms LOVELL - This recommendation speaks specifically about officials, and particularly those with delegated decision-making authority on a regular basis, so who would fall into that category?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - In terms of officials, we'd obviously start with the SES. The SES will have taken part in various conflict of interest training already. But in terms of - again, 'officials' is not a defined term in the State Service. I'd be looking to our heads of agencies to identify who are the officers across the agency that have the potential to be able to recognise, identify and manage a conflict of interest in their day-to-day work in the State Service.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 14-16.

PART B

Model Litigant Obligations

The Committee noted the Government agreed to recommendations to reissue model litigant obligations as directions, however had not agreed to establish an office to oversee compliance. In relation to the risk this presents if there was no independent oversight, Mr Woolcott stated:

Mr WOOLCOTT - ...*We still think it has merit to actually have an independent body within the Department of Justice manage those aspects and any complaints that might arise. It's how the Commonwealth handles it. I've been influenced a bit by the Commonwealth in that regard and it's worth looking at the legislation there. ...*

Ms SHARMA - ...*The intention of that recommendation is really to say, you might have legislation that asks you to do x. Compliance with that is actually really useful and having an oversight mechanism is really useful as a learning opportunity because you might do things over the course of a year that it's helpful at some point in the year to sit down and reflect, to say, have we met fully the intent and the spirit of the law as well as the word of the law? What can we learn from what has transpired over the last 12 months? Where have we not necessarily met the standard that we would expect? So, a compliance reporting mechanism is not just an attempt to say, we want to bring greater transparency. It's also a valuable learning opportunity to say - particularly given that these are new directions, there is a shift. There's a lot of effort and work that has gone into revising these. From our perspective, we just felt that that mechanism would enable the department to take stock, quite frankly, on an ongoing basis on how it was meeting those obligations.*

CHAIR - ...*I wanted to check with you: the fact that they've essentially rejected this Part B of recommendation 1.1 here in Part B report, the detriment of that presumably is significant because if we have a set of guidelines and we have no way in which to know whether we're complying with them or how well we might be complying with them, how on earth would, say the parliament, this committee or the parliament broadly, hold the government to account on that?*

Mr WOOLCOTT - *Chair, the government hasn't rejected it; it's just noted it. It may amount to the same thing in practice. We will wait and see. And, as we've said, we do think it has merit.*⁴⁸

The Attorney-General was asked to clarify the noting of Part B of Strategic Recommendation 1.1:

Mr BARNETT ...*You've correctly noted our support for A in terms of reissuing the model litigant obligations as directions to all agencies and instrumentalities.*

Regarding part B, the government's noted it, rather than supported it, because the proposal to establish a separate compliance office within the Department of Justice - and if I can explain a little bit. Compliance by agencies with the model litigant obligations is not optional. It is a legal obligation. So, in regards to the establishment of an oversight office, the advice from my department is that this would require the recruitment of a number of highly experienced and specialised legal practitioners with a specific focus on oversight of compliance with model litigant guidelines. It's not at this stage clear whether it is feasible, in the Tasmanian context, to establish a new office with that level of legal expertise for the task.

That does not change in any way that each government agency has a clear obligation to comply with the model litigant guidelines, and will be accountable for doing so.

⁴⁸ Peter Woolcott AO and Radha Sharma, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, pp. 12-13.

Ms LOVELL - ... accepting that it's a legal obligation, how do we know if agencies are meeting their legal obligation if we're not tracking that and there is no oversight and reporting of that?

...

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, deputy, through you: as the deputy has said, in the absence of a separate office dedicated to that purpose, there are a range of other compliance activities, for lack of a better word, that occur that oversee compliance with model litigant guidelines. Heads of agency obviously have responsibility for their own compliance, as do courts, our legal professional regulators, parliament and other oversight bodies. The State Litigation Office still coordinates and oversees compliance with those guidelines by external practitioners. And as the Deputy has said, the commitment is there to review those guidelines; they haven't been looked at since the inception of the State Litigation Office. So, I think it's a really good opportunity to make sure that they're fit for purpose.

...we are considering how that revised framework can further strengthen the current assurance measures that are in place. An escalation point from the State Litigation Office or practitioners across the system is a complaint to my office. There is a really intricate relationship with the legal profession board, so where complaints relate to lawyers not necessarily, or allegedly, maybe not complying with their professional commitments, there's a very clear role for that board. But I think Mr Woolcott's review gives us an opportunity to further look at that compliance model that may not necessarily see the creation of an explicit independent office within the Department of Justice. Noting, as the Deputy has noted, there are difficulties that the service experiences already in attracting and retaining legal practitioners, and a focus on trying to resource our frontline legal practitioner support to manage demand -

Ms LOVELL - ... what information do you have, Deputy Premier, about how well we're tracking against meeting those model litigant guidelines? Is that tracked? Do you collect that information? How do we know that those compliance activities are working?

Mr BARNETT - ... there's a whole range of obligations for each agency head. In my space, as Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, I meet, for example, my Secretary on a weekly basis, where opportunities for raising any compliance or non-compliance concerns are available. I meet with, obviously, the Crown Solicitor, I meet with the State Litigator, I meet with the Solicitor-General. So, there's opportunities in all of those forums for feedback in terms of non-compliance, and if there were any, I would act on it. ...

Ms BOURNE - As you've highlighted, there's not an explicit tracker. That's something we've been talking about a lot of late, particularly since the provision of the Woolcott review with the Director of Crown Law, about how, in the absence of a new system, we can use current reporting requirements to try and better track that across the Crown - noting, as we've said, heads of agency have responsibility in that regard too. The new guidelines that the Deputy and government have indicated will be developed could potentially include provision around further reporting mechanisms, which I think would be a really integral part of those considerations. And how we manage sensitivities around legal professional privilege reports that go to the legal profession board, or need to be worked through, but certainly something that we're already considering about improving those systems. ⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General and Kristy Bourne, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 26-28.

Access to Independent Legal Advice by Oversight Agencies

In relation to Strategic Recommendation 1.5, which recommends explicitly excluding independent oversight agencies from the Solicitor-General's remit so they can obtain independent legal advice without ambiguity or procedural barriers, the Committee questioned why the review recommended an explicit exclusion when the government's response stated that oversight agencies can already determine for themselves when to seek independent legal advice. Mr Woolcott responded:

Mr WOOLCOTT - *There was a bit of a sense - it was complex. They would have to seek permission to go outside for external legal advice. So, yes, if they could do that - but did they do it? How complicated was it? How often did they do it? There was just some confusion, some hesitation about how that all worked in the system. Because their independence in the executive is the sort of foundation of their effectiveness, we think it's actually really important, because there is an inherent structural tension particularly when the oversight body may be investigating or scrutinising the very agencies the Solicitor-General advises. So, the government's response, I think, confirms independent agencies can already seek independent advice under existing instructions, and that's good, but we would still reckon that it'd be useful to set it out very explicitly.*

Ms LOVELL - *I guess the unanswered question would be: how complex is it for them to do that and is that a barrier?*

Ms SHARMA - *Sarah, I would say that they're required to seek an exemption. That's a threshold step. What we see, in terms of the shift, is the language that says it's self-determination, so i.e. they don't have to seek an exemption. That's the way I would now read it. The fact that that's on the record is actually really helpful. For the agencies that are independent, I would now expect that they can exercise that self-determination or feel confident in exercising that self-determination, and so the ambiguity around wanting to have to seek an exemption in order to go and seek external legal advice in and of itself presents a challenge because that means you're explicitly having to set out what's the matter in which you wish to go externally, why do you wish to go externally? But, what this appears to do is to clarify that a change is not necessary because the path is self-determined when you go externally ...*

Ms LOVELL - *That's possibly something that, as a committee, we can clarify further with the government to ensure that that is the case.⁵⁰*

The Attorney-General was asked to confirm whether, under the Treasurer's Instructions, it is a true self determination or whether an exemption should be sought to be able to obtain independent legal advice:

Mr BARNETT - *... we do support the recommendation in principle. It recognises the importance of the independence for oversight and regulatory agencies. So, independent agencies already have the ability to obtain their own legal advice under the Treasurer's Instruction FC-17, which permits external practitioners to be engaged with the prior written agreement of Crown Law. The Treasurer's Instruction FC-1 also permits an accountable authority to seek an exemption for all or part of the Treasurer's Instructions, such as FC-17. However, this recommendation provides an opportunity to clarify and reinforce these arrangements, particularly in relation to the application of the Treasurer's Instructions. So, ensuring that oversight bodies can obtain independent legal advice supports confidence in their impartiality and institutional independence, and the Department of Justice will consult*

⁵⁰ Peter Woolcott AO and Radha Sharma, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 12 May 2026, pp. 13-14.

with the independent statutory officers on the changes proposed by Mr Woolcott as part of the recommendation. ...

Ms BOURNE - ... As you've said, TI FC-17 already provides the flexibility for external counsel to be sought. The department is not aware of any entity explicitly asking for it; that would be a matter for individual entities. Whilst there is provision for that exemption to be provided, I think the recommendation provides us with an opportunity to look at how we can potentially, in consultation with Treasury, of course, ensure that the guidance within the Treasurer's Instruction is clear, potentially narrowing that universal referral requirement, being explicit about the type of advice that an organisation is seeking, which, as the Deputy has said, we do hope to soon formally consult with independent statutory officers to seek their views and their experience on the current system.

Ms LOVELL - ... If I can just go back to my original question and just to confirm that what you've said in your answer, Deputy Premier, they can do it, but they do require prior written agreement of Crown Law or to seek an exemption? The oversight body can't decide themselves that this is what they need to do and just go ahead and do it - they have to get written agreement or seek an exemption. Is that correct?

Mr BARNETT - Well, the way I think expressed it, and again, I'll be corrected by the Secretary, in terms of an oversight body simply deciding to engage any lawyer it chooses, the body decides whether it requires legal advice and whether independence is necessary. And where FC-17 applies, the engagement must still occur through a lawful mechanism, and that might involve Crown Law engaging the practitioner, for example, Crown Law authorising direct instruction, or an exemption or variation under FC-1.

...

Ms BOURNE - ... That's my understanding as well, that there's a process. So the independent agency makes a determination, ordinarily would advise the Solicitor-General that they've made that determination, and the Solicitor-General consents, for lack of a better word, to the engagement of external legal advice. And the department's not aware of an instance where that consent, again, for lack of a better word, hasn't been provided. But that's our understanding of the process. Of course, there is the ability for the TI to be carved out, effectively, by the Department of Treasury and Finance, depending on the circumstances, then an independent organisation may put to Treasury on a longer-term basis, as opposed to a case-by-case request for advice.

Ms LOVELL - Just to be clear, Secretary, if I can go back to what you were saying before, you're consulting with those independent oversight bodies about this and whether further clarity is needed?

Ms BOURNE - Yes, ... that's right.

...

Ms O'CONNOR - Clarity and flexibility possibly, too.

CHAIR - Just to follow up on that, you said, for want of a better word, 'consent' from OSG. So, is there a circumstance under which that consent might not be given and if so, what would that circumstance be? ...

Mr BARNETT - I think, if I can put it in these words, certainly as a government we recognise the independent oversight bodies, and they must be able to obtain genuinely independent legal

advice. And that's, at the moment - if I can explain the Treasurer's FC-17, and I'll just read it to you:

The accountable authority must not directly engage external counsel or commercial legal services without the written agreement of Crown Law.

That's why we support the recommendation in principle and we agree to the intent. That's why the Secretary's indicated we are now going to consult with the independent agencies on the best way to progress this recommendation, which we support in principle.

The in-principle support relates largely to the fact that the existing arrangements, under the Treasurer's Instruction FC-17 do not impose a prohibition on external or independent legal advice for independent statutory officers. That's why the Secretary will be consulting with the relevant bodies before determining the final model. Of course, the final model is not here yet, but it will be coming and we're obviously happy to make that available.

CHAIR - *The Woolcott Review, with this recommendation, wasn't implying that there's a prohibition on them using it. The recommendation, from what I can clearly read, is alluding to the fact that the Treasurer's Instruction allows them, but puts a threshold test there to get permission, essentially, from Crown Law. So, the recommendation is about removing that threshold test. Nothing that you've said here today or described indicates that you support that in principle. Can you confirm whether you support that in principle as the recommendation?*

Mr BARNETT - *I think I've indicated that ... the government does recognise that independent oversight bodies must be able to obtain genuine independent legal advice. That's why we support that in principle.*

... the Secretary is committed to consulting with the relevant bodies on the best way to word the final model. ...

Ms BOURNE - *Only to be really clear, as has been said, when FC-17 applies, the engagement needs to occur through a lawful mechanism, which may involve the Crown engaging with the practitioner, authorising direct instruction or providing that exemption.*

One thing that the agency's really keen to explore further with statutory independent officers is, at what point, potentially, is that initial threshold step not required, pertaining to particular matters of law or advice that they're seeking advice on. And whether or not there are core legal issues pertaining to matters of the Constitution or work health and safety law, for example, that may be best placed to sit within coming from Crown Law, so that there's consistency and those sorts of things. That's what we're working through now.

...

Ms LOVELL - *If I could ask just one more question on that, Deputy Premier, just to be absolutely clear: it sounds to me like what you're saying is that you, as the Attorney-General, are at least open to a model where these independent oversight bodies can obtain legal advice without having to seek an exemption or consent, or permission, or whatever it is - that they are truly able to self-determine that that's what's required and seek that advice. Is that correct?*

Mr BARNETT - That's correct in principle, subject to the independent agencies acting within the law, within their purview, within their legislative remit.⁵¹

Findings

30. The Government will refer some Woolcott Review recommendations to the Implementation Monitor for oversight and reporting. Mr Woolcott understands the Parliament also has the power to refer recommendations to the Monitor.
31. Any Woolcott Review recommendations not referred to the Independent Monitor for oversight will be reported on through a public mechanism coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
32. The Head of State Service stated the Woolcott Review recommendation to establish a new role of Commissioner of the State Service is being considered in the context of other machinery of government changes within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, including the intended creation of a new unit called Workforce Tasmania.
33. Heads of Agencies are determining which state service management roles will be included in the ethical decision-making, integrity and conflict of interest training recommended by the Woolcott Review.
34. The ethical decision-making, integrity and conflict of interest training recommended by the Woolcott Review is expected to be delivered by the Integrity Commission in 2026-27. Departments are expected to fund this training from within their current budgets.
35. The Government has not supported the Woolcott Review recommendation to establish an office in the Department of Justice to oversee compliance with Model Litigant guidelines. Consideration is being given to how reporting requirements can be developed to deliver a similar intent.
36. The Woolcott Review identified the current requirement for statutory oversight entities to seek an exemption under the Treasurer's Instructions to procure independent legal advice is a barrier to self-determination. The Government agrees in principle with the recommendation on this matter and is consulting with the independent oversight entities on a model for greater self-determination in obtaining independent legal advice.

Recommendations

The Joint Sessional Committee recommends that the Government:

10. Ensure all Departments prioritise and fund ongoing delivery of the Woolcott Review recommendation for ethical decision-making, integrity and conflict of interest training.
11. Give full effect to the intent of the Woolcott Review recommendation to allow independent oversight bodies to seek independent legal advice, as required, without barrier.

⁵¹ Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General and Kristy Bourne, [Transcript of Evidence](#), 26 June 2026, pp. 32-35.

Appendix A – Meeting Attendance Record

	LOVELL	WEBB (Chair)	O'CONNOR	GREENE	JAENSCH	ROSOL (Deputy Chair)	VERMEY	HOWLETT
52 ND PARLIAMENT								
6/10/2025 (12:05 – 1:08pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Until 12:37 pm	✓		
15/10/2025 (1:00 – 2:01pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X Leave of absence	✓		
29/10/2025 (10:30-10:59m)	✓	✓	X	✓	X Leave of absence	✓		
3/11/2025 (12:00-2:08pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X Leave of absence	✓		
8/12/2025 (9:45-1:44 pm)	✓	✓	✓ Until 1:13 pm	✓		✓	✓ Until 10:49 am	
4/2/2026 (9:30-4:00 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X Leave of absence	
5/2/2026 (9:26 – 3:30 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X	
12/2/2026 (9:30 – 3:30 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X Leave of absence	
13/2/2026 (9:32 – 12:34pm)	✓ Until 12:02 pm	✓	✓	✓		✓	X Leave of absence	
25/2/2026 (9:30-4:03 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
26/2/2026 (9:00-1:00 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓ From 9:28 am		✓	✓	
31/3/2026 (11:00 – 3:05pm)	✓	✓	✓	X		✓	✓	
10/4/2026 (8:50 – 9:07 am)	✓	✓	✓ From 8:58 am	✓		✓	✓	
21/4/2026 (9:30 – 3:06 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X	
22/4/2026 (10:00 – 3:08pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X	
28/4/2026 (9:30 – 4:07 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X	

29/4/2026 (9:30 – 1:37 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X	
12/5/2026 (9:15 – 12:21pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
13/5/2026 (9:30 – 10:37am)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
15/5/2016 (12:00 - 12:11pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	X	
26/6/2026 (9:05 – 12:07 pm)	✓	✓	✓ From 10:28 am	✓		✓	✓	
5/8/2026 (9:30 – 3:02 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
6/8/2026 (9:30 – 3:37 pm)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
27/8/2026 9:30 – 11:43 am)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		X