

REPORT

Estimates Committee 'A' examined the Premier, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Trade and Major Investment, Hon. Jeremy Rockliff M.P., on Monday 23 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39:-
Division 1 – Brand Tasmania
Division 7 – Ministerial and Parliamentary Support
Division 10 – Department of Premier and Cabinet
Division 11 – Department of State Growth
Division 12 – Tourism Tasmania

Bill No. 40:-
Schedule 1, Part 6 – Office of the Governor

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Premier, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Trade and Major Investment, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Premier:

- Closing the Gap
- Resignation of Jenny Gale
- Hidden Stadium Costs
- State of the Environment Report
- Macquarie Point Development Corporation
- Unbudgeted Stadium Costs
- Women in Public Service
- Public Trustee Privatisation
- Weiss Report Funding
- Cabinet Razor Gang
- Budget Priorities – Stadium

- Public-private partnership financing for the stadium
- Hawthorn matches in Launceston
- Gender Budget Statement
- Unsustainable election spending
- Privatisation of GBEs
- State's growing debt burden
- Employees currently suspended over allegations of child sexual abuse on full pay keeping their Working with Vulnerable People registration
- State's credit rating
- Early engagement and relationship with the RSL
- Winter tourism in Tasmania
- Feasibility study for convention centre
- Support for tourism businesses due to delays in the arrival of the new Spirits
- Success of the Regional Tourism Loan Scheme
- Government's management of Government Business Enterprises
- Effectiveness of Ministerial Charter letters for GBE/SOCs
- Culture problem within GBEs/SOCs
- Cost planning and cost estimates of Macquarie Point Stadium
- Rationale behind proposed 1500-seat conference space at Macquarie Point Stadium
- Proliferation of locum doctors and agency health workers in the health system and resultant impacts on budget
- Introduction of a levy on Short Stay Accommodation and appropriation of levy revenue
- Jobs cuts
- Budget Cuts Management
- Public Trustee
- Caretaker Conventions
- TT-Line
- Spirits berthing in Singapore
- Parliamentary and Ministerial staffing
- Ministerial Code of Conduct
- Stability Clause
- Confidence and Supply
- Premier's advertising

Tourism and Hospitality:

- Cradle Mountain Cableway
- EOI Process
- Coordinator-General
- TT-Line subcommittee
- TT-Line delay communications
- Cradle Mountain Cableway

- Aviation fund

Infrastructure:

- Dove Lake Road
- Leith Intersection, Bass Highway
- Cradle Mountain Cableway
- Southern Outlet
- Budget Underspend
- Tasman Bridge & Southern Outlet
- Berth 6
- Stadium
- Capacity to Deliver Projects
- Delays to the South East Traffic Solution - Tasman Highway widening
- South East Corridor Plan – Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC)
- Tasmanian Golf Club inconvenience payments / other payments for planned works on South East Traffic Solution
- Potholes
- New Road Maintenance & Safety
- Infrastructure Spending
- Devonport Port
- Sea Road/Safety
- Berth 3, Devonport
- LNG Infrastructure
- Burnie Port
- Hobart Port
- Southern Transit Lane

Trade and Major Investment:

- Land Forces
- Coordinator General
- Translink



Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Jacquie Petrusma MP
CHAIR



REPORT

Estimates Committee 'A' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, and Minister for Transport, Hon. Eric Abetz M.P., on Monday 23 September and Tuesday 24 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39:-
Division 8 – Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Division 11 – Department of State Growth

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, and Minister for Transport, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Business, Industry and Resources:

- Coal Mines
- EDGI Grants and Riley Creek Lease
- Riley Creek Mine Lease
- HardRock Coal Mining Lease
- Venture Minerals Lease
- Lorinna Coupes
- Dial Ranges
- kunanyi/Mt Wellington Strategic Review
- Salmon Farming
- Forestry
- Forestry FSC Certification
- Native Forest Logging
- Government Revenue from Salmon Farming
- Government Revenue from Mining
- Ruling out increasing royalties collected by the State Government
- Deferral of questions to GBE hearings later in the year

- Salmon Farming
- LMRM act
- Harvest Strategies
- Advisory Committees
- Sardines
- Rock lobster
- Abalone
- Contracts
- Plantation sawlogs
- Plantation estate
- Avebury mine
- Mining

Transport:

- Bike Lanes and Active Transport
- Disability Accessible Bus Stops
- Public Transport
- Household Travel Survey
- Security Screens
- Safety Around Schools
- Transport Network
- Stadium
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor
- Learner Driver Mentor Program
- Smart ticketing system
- Selection of provider for smart ticketing system, procurement processes, rationale for direct procurement authorisation
- Difficulties faced by smart ticketing provider in other jurisdictions
- Proposed new Derwent Ferry terminal locations
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advice before payments to Finnish shipbuilder
- Seatbelts on school buses
- Public transport transit officers trial
- Contractual penalties for Metro Tasmania as a result of mass service cancellations
- Dover District school bus service changes
- Lack of a bus stop at Olive Grove Estate subdivision in Risdon Vale
- Total value of consultancies – Transport output of State Growth
- TT Line

- Spirits
- Hydrogen and electric buses
- Workforce recruitment
- Replacement buses
- Transit officers
- Common ticketing
- Budget Cuts
- School Buses



Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Jacquie Petrusma MP
CHAIR

REPORT

Estimates Committee 'A' examined the Estimates of the Treasurer, and Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs, Hon. Michael Ferguson M.P., on Tuesday 24 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39:-
Division 4 – Finance-General
Division 6 – Department of Justice
Division 13 – Department of Treasury and Finance

Bill No. 40:-
Schedule 1, Part 8 – Tasmanian Audit Office

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Treasurer, and Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Treasury:

- Pork-Barrelling
- Royal Flying Doctor Service
- Macquarie Point Development Corporation
- Macquarie Point Urban Renewal Project
- Tasman Bridge
- Stadium Costs
- Absence of revenue raising to balance the budget
- Questionable figures
- Expenditure on Macquarie Point Stadium
- Efficiency Dividends
- Inadequate spending on Education and Health
- Marinus Link

- Program funding in third and fourth years of the budget
- Programs not allocated for in the out years
- Lack of contingency plan built into the budget
- Reluctance to consider new revenue streams
- Ambitious targets when it comes to revenues in years three and four
- Forecasting accuracy
- Negative Growth
- Expenditure Growth
- Budget Cuts and service delivery
- Budget Efficiency Dividend
- Non-service delivery costs
- Specific Purpose Accounts
- Credit Agencies and Credit Rating

Small Business and Consumer Affairs:

- Gender Equality
- Tasmania Police health and safety obligations
- Palawa Business Hub
- Rent Control
- Regional Chamber Alliance
- Business Support Services
- Residential Building (Miscellaneous Consumer Protection) Act
- CBOS
- Phoenixing
- Continuing Professional Development & Licencing
- Industrial Manslaughter
- WorkSafe Resourcing

Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Jacquie Petrusma MP
CHAIR

REPORT

Estimates Committee 'A' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Parks and Environment, and Minister for Energy and Renewables, Hon. Nick Duigan M.L.C., on Wednesday 25 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39:-
Division 3 – Environment Protection Authority
Division 8 – Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Division 11 – Department of State Growth

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Parks and Environment, and Minister for Energy and Renewables, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Parks and Environment:

- Container Deposit Scheme
- Lewisham Foreshore
- Tyndall Range
- Three Capes Track
- RAA Reforms
- Lake Malbena
- Fish Farms
- Threatened Species Recovery
- Climate Change
- Crown Land Services
- Parks Infrastructure
- Efficiency Dividend
- Cradle Mountain
- Divo
- Heritage collections

Energy and Renewables:

- Forestry Emissions
- Hydro Tasmania
- Rooftop Solar
- Climate Change Act Review
- Climate Change Action Plan
- Offshore Wind
- Hydrogen
- Marinus Link
- Environmental Protection Authority's functions
- Inadequate wastewater management on Flinders Island and noncompliant practices
- Bell Bay Green Hydrogen Hub
- REAP
- Energy and Renewables policy focus directed towards big industry
- TasNetworks' tactics during Enterprise Agreement negotiations
- TasNetworks use of one-off payments to distort enterprise bargaining outcomes
- Next windfarm to be built in Tasmania
- Renewable Energy Approval Pathway employment of officers
- Impact of efficiency dividends on ReCFIT and EPA
- Marinus
- Whale Back Ridge
- Robbins Island
- Port Latta wind farm
- Solar
- Wind
- Battery
- Hydro
- TasNetworks
- Tariffs
- Bell Bay Hydrogen Hub
- Tamar Irrigation

Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Jacquie Petrusma MP
CHAIR

REPORT

Estimates Committee 'A' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Finance, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Sport and Events, Hon. Nic Street M.P., on Thursday 26 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39:-
Division 4 – Finance-General
Division 10 – Department of Premier and Cabinet
Division 11 – Department of State Growth
Division 13 – Department of Treasury and Finance

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Finance, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Sport and Events, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Finance:

- Fiscal Strategy
- Mining levies
- Modelling on EGM impacts
- Community Support Levy
- Harm minimisation
- Mandatory pre-commitment cards
- Mandatory Card Based Play
- Short-stay levy
- Saul Eslake Report

Local Government:

- Bullying in councils
- Development assessment panels
- Forced amalgamation

- Climate response
- Reduction of block size by local government for new developments
- Lack of funding allocated to facilitate local government reform beyond this year
- Establishment of a "friends of local government" within State Parliament
- Local Government Reform
- Local Government Act review
- Culture within Local Government
- Working with Vulnerable People check
- Recruitment of General Managers
- Rate Capping
- Skills Shortages
- Workforce Plan

Sport and Events:

- Stadium impacts on palawa and RSL
- Macquarie Point plans
- Stadium Goods Shed move
- Ministerial expectations for Stadium spending
- Hawthorn AFL and Supercars return of investment
- Launceston's partnership with Hawthorn
- Cairns partnership with Hawthorn's AFLW team
- Government discussions with Hawthorn
- High-performance centre servicing both AFL and basketball teams
- Launceston's share of top-tier sports
- Indoor multi-sport facility in northern suburbs
- Future of Bellerive Oval
- Amount spent on northern suburbs indoor multi-sport facility to date
- Budget for northern suburbs indoor multi-sport facility
- Lack of facilities for netball, basketball, volleyball, futsal players
- Lack of a sporting facility strategy
- Department of State Growth delays in delivering facilities
- Reclink – two-year funding agreement
- Football community concerns about location of AFL high performance centre
- Release of quantity surveyor's report by WT Partnerships, used as the basis for the KPMG cost benefit analysis for the stadium
- Provision of full, and unredacted, quantity surveyor's report by WT Partnerships to the Tasmanian Planning Commission or Dr Gruen
- Joint Hawthorn Football Club and Tasmanian Government Dinner cancellation

- Stadium
- AFL Deal
- AFL High Performance Centre



Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Jacquie Petrusma MP
CHAIR

REPORT

Estimates Committee 'A' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Children and Youth, Hon. Roger Jaensch M.P., on Friday 27 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39:-
Division 2 – Department for Education, Children and Young People
Division 10 – Department of Premier and Cabinet

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Children and Youth, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Community Services:

- Multicultural communities
- Community Support Levy funds
- Community sector indexation
- Vital services funding beyond year one and two
- Speed of funding to services given the late budget
- Reporting and monitoring of funding
- Community services workforce
- Indexation rates and application
- Longer term funding agreements
- Outcomes based purchasing
- Core funding amounts
- Liaison between different departments funding the NGO sector
- Financial reporting of funded organisations
- Diwali festival funding
- Conversion practices and protection of LGBTIQA+ people

- Time limited programs
- Meals on Wheels

Aboriginal Affairs:

- Bail hostel
- Move of Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
- Protections for cultural landscapes
- Truth and Reconciliation Park
- Full time Aboriginal liaison officer to support youth in the justice system
- Protection of Aboriginal youth concerning the Commission of Inquiry
- Government support for Aboriginal communities addressing divisions regarding the ownership of Aboriginal heritage and cultural land
- Outstanding council rates on sacred land at Saltwater River
- Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania – funding
- Closing the Gap
- Aboriginal Heritage Act
- Truth Telling and Treaty
- Reconciliation Tas

Children and Youth:

- IFES support
- Out of Home care
- Child safety services
- Closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre
- Assisted bail facilities
- External providers for detention transport
- Youth justice facilities
- Children in detention
- Number of young people currently at Ashley
- Replacement youth justice facilities
- Recruitment of child safety officers in the North West, including success of market allowance
- Child Safety
- Youth Justice
- AYDC
- Diversion programs
- Efficiency Dividend

- Commission of Inquiry



Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Jacquie Petrusma MP
CHAIR

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Thursday, 19 September 2024

The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 2:01 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mrs *Petrusma* (Chair) – by telephone
Mrs *Pentland*
Mr *Willie*
Dr *Woodruff*

TRANSFER OF OUTPUTS TO ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'B'

Ordered, That in accordance with the information contained in the budget documentation tabled in the House on 12 September 2024, the relevant Ministerial portfolio outputs be referred to the relevant stakeholder Minister for examination by the relevant Estimates Committee. (Dr *Woodruff*)

MESSAGE TO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

House of Assembly Estimates Committee A has passed the following Resolution:-

> *Resolved*, That in accordance with the information contained in the budget documentation tabled in the House on 12 September 2024, the relevant Ministerial portfolio outputs be referred to the relevant stakeholder Minister for examination by the relevant Estimates Committee.

19 September 2024
Parliament House
Hobart.

Hon. Jacquie Petrusma MP
Chair – Committee A

ORDER FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ESTIMATES

The Committee deliberated upon the order for the consideration of relevant estimates contained in the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill.

Ordered, That the Secretary advise:

(a) The Tasmanian Audit Office that they are required to attend half an hour before the examination of the Estimates of the Treasurer concludes (Tuesday, 24 September 2024 at 11:30 a.m.)

(b) The Office of the Governor that they are not required to attend. (Mr *Willie*)

At 2:13 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Monday, 23 September next.

Confirmed:

Date: 15/10/24 Chair: _____

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Monday, 23 September 2024

The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mrs *Pentland*
Mr *Winter* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)
Dr *Woodruff*

Also at the Table

Ms *Dow*
Mr *O'Byrne*
Mr *Shelton.*

The Chair read the following ruling of the Speaker:

> "Members of Committee A, I have been advised that the Chair of Committees, Hon. Jacquie Petrusma MP, is unwell and unable to attend to her duties as Chair of Estimates Committee A.
>
> In accordance with paragraph (6) of the resolution agreed to by the House on 10 September I hereby nominate the Member for Bass, Mr Simon Wood, MP as the Chair of the Committee in substitution of the Chair of Committees until such time as the Chair of Committees is able to resume the Chair of the Committee."

ESTIMATES OF THE PREMIER, MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY, MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE, MINISTER FOR TRADE AND MAJOR INVENSTMENT

ESTIMATES OF THE PREMIER

DIVISION 1: BRAND TASMANIA
DIVISION 7: MINISTERIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT
DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET
APPROPRIATION BILL NO.2 – SCHEDULE 1, PART 6 – OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Jeremy Rockliff* MP

Department of Premier and Cabinet:

Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary
Shane Gregory, Associate Secretary

Macquarie Point Development Corporation:
Anne Beach, Chief Executive Officer

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

The Premier tabled:

- 'Routine Disclosure relating to Commission of Inquiry matters'
- Department of Premier and Cabinet – Organisational Chart
- Service Tasmania highlights 2023-24

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The Premier tabled:

- Severe Weather Event (Aug/Sep 2024) Community Recovery Initiatives
- Community Recovery Initiatives – Severe Weather Event (Aug/Sep 2024)

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Suspension of sitting 10.59 a.m. to 11.07 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mrs *Pentland*
Dr *Woodruff*
Mr *Winter* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Ms *Dow*
Mr *O'Byrne*
Mr *Shelton*

Overview of Agency activities continued

At 11.25 a.m. Ms *Dow* withdrew.

At 11.25 a.m. Mr *Willie* took a seat at the Table.

The Premier tabled the following documents:

- Sorell Service Centre – Service Tasmania and Services Australia co-location
- myServiceTas Digital Account

At 11.56 a.m. Mr *O'Byrne* withdrew.

At 12.26 p.m. Mr *Willie* withdrew.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 12.38 p.m. to 12.45 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Badger* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mrs *Pentland*
Mr *Winter* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Mr *Shelton*.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH
DIVISION 12: TOURISM TASMANIA

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Jeremy Rockliff* MP

Department of State Growth:
Craig Limkin, Secretary

Tourism Tasmania
Vanessa Pinto, Acting Chief Executive Officer

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 1.45 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Burnet* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mr *Winter* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*
Ms *Dow*
Mr *Shelton*.

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Jeremy Rockliff* MP

Department of State Growth:
Craig Limpkin, Secretary
Denise McIntyre, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Housing, Infrastructure and Planning
Cynthia Heydon, Deputy Secretary, Transport And Infrastructure
Robyn Hawkins, Senior Project Manager

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 3:56 p.m. Mr *O'Byrne* took a seat at the table.

At 3:59 p.m. Mrs *Beswick* withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 4.01 p.m. to 4.07 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Burnet* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mr *Winter* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Ms *Dow*
Mr *O'Byrne*
Mr *Shelton*
Ms *Beswick*

At 4.21 p.m. Ms *Beswick* withdrew.

At 4.50 p.m. Mr *O'Byrne* withdrew.

At 4.54 p.m. Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

At 5.03 p.m. Mr *Winter* withdrew.

At 5.09 p.m. Mr *Winter* took a seat at the Table.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 5.37 p.m. to 5.40 p.m.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND MAJOR INVESTMENT

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Rosol* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mr *Winter* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*
Ms *Dow*
Mr *Shelton*.

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Jeremy Rockliff* MP

Department of State Growth:
Craig Limpkin, Secretary
John Perry, Tasmanian Coordinator General
Jenna Cairney, Deputy Secretary, Business and Jobs

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 6.10 p.m. to 6.15 p.m.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Burnet* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mrs *Pentland*
Mr *Winter* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Ms *Brown*
Mr *O'Byrne*
Mr *Shelton*.

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Eric Abetz MP*

Department of State Growth:
Craig Limpkin, Secretary
Denise McIntyre, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Housing, Infrastructure and Planning
Cynthia Heydon, Deputy Secretary, Transport And Infrastructure
Martin Crane, General Manager Road User Services

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 6.22 p.m. Mrs *Beswick* took a seat at the Table.

At 6.33 p.m. Mrs *Pentland* withdrew.

At 7.20 p.m. Mr *Winter* withdrew and Mr *Willie* took a seat at the Table.

At 7.45 p.m. Mrs *Beswick* withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 7.45 p.m. to 7.51 p.m.

At 8.21 p.m. Mr *Willie* withdrew.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Hon. *Jeremy Rockliff* MP

Premier:

1. Can you table DPAC's savings strategies? (Mr *Winter*)
2. Can you table the staffing allocation for political parties and independents by employee expenses and FTEs? (Mr *Winter*)
3. Will the Government commit to the Commonwealth Workplace Gender Equality Reporting (WEGA) program? (Dr *Woodruff*)
4. What are the cost estimates to date for all options considered for the moving of the goods shed? (Dr *Woodruff*)
5. What are the cost estimates to date for all considered options for the construction of the underground carpark? (Dr *Woodruff*)
6. Was DPAC engaged at any point in relation to the advice provided to TT-Line that it did not need approval to pay an additional $80 million to RMC? If so what was DPAC's advice or input? (Mr *Winter*)
7. How much public money was spent in the 2023-24 financial year on Facebook or Instagram advertising? (Mr *Winter*)
8. Is content such as "felt bad pouring the red out" being promoted using taxpayer money? (Mr *Winter*)

Tourism and Hospitality:

1. When was the Cabinet Subcommittee on the Spirits project set up? (Mr *Winter*)
2. When did you become aware that the new Spirits would not be operating this summer?
    a. When did you inform the tourism and hospitality sector of that? (Mr *Winter*)
3. Please provide passenger numbers for the TT Line when there are extra routes provided. What is the occupancy? Are the ships always full? (Mrs *Pentland*)
4. What is the latest estimated cost of the cableway at Cradle Mountain? (Mr *Winter*)
5. What's the uptake been like for the regional loan scheme?
    a. In what ways are tourism operators informed about the scheme?
    b. How much has been allocated so far?
    c. Please answer all the above questions in reference to the previous tourism loan scheme. (Mrs *Pentland*)
6. When was Tourism Tasmania advised that the new Spirits of Tasmania would not be operating this summer? (Mr *Winter*)

Infrastructure:

1. Can you please breakdown the number of pot holes across state roads by road, and the number that have been filled? (Ms *Dow*)
2. RTI documents reveal the price offered by a joint venture led by Hazel Bros. was $374 m before the agreement was torn up. Can you confirm the Hazel Bros. cancelled project ended up being $1 million cheaper than the one you eventually entered into with a mainland contractor? And further, can you confirm that the Hazel Bros. job was scheduled to be completed in August 2023, five months earlier than the best case scenario you have with the new contractor? (Ms *Dow*)
3. Regarding the Southern Outlet, of current works, road widening, couplet upgrade and Macquarie Street lane changes, what safety upgrades are occurring and is this a black spot with high crash history?
    a. How much has been spent on the southern outlet transit lane, including on reports and compulsory land acquisitions? (Ms *Burnet*)
4. Has the State Government made any payments to the Tasmanian Golf Club or related entities from the period commencing the day of the project announcement? If so, what for and how much? (Mr *O'Byrne*)
5. Has a report been made to Work Safe regarding the current condition of berth 4 at the Burnie Port? (Ms *Dow*)
6. Inside the cavernous concrete viewing shelter (at Dove Lake) an interpretation sign implores visitors to "please walk lightly on palawa land as we have done from creation" – can you please tell us how many truck movements moved "lightly" across that country for this construction and how many thousands of kilograms of concrete were needed to build it? (Ms *Burnet*)

Hon. *Eric Abetz* MP

<u>Transport:</u>

1. Where is the real-time information for passengers on Metro bus services? (Ms *Burnet*)
2. Did the Government or the TT Line board seek DFAT advice prior to making the additional payment for the new Spirits vessels during caretaker? (Mr *O'Byrne*)
3. What is the total value of consultancies in the Transport output group? (Mr *O'Byrne*)
4. Please table savings strategy for the transport portfolio. (Ms *Brown*)

At 9.19 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, 24 September next.

Confirmed:

Date: 15/10/24 Chair: _____

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Tuesday, 24 September 2024

The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Bayley* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mrs *Pentland*
Mr *Willie*

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*
Mr Garland
Mr Winter
Mr *Shelton*.

ESTIMATES OF THE TREASURER AND MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

ESTIMATES OF THE TREASURER

DIVISION 4: FINANCE-GENERAL
DIVISION 13: DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Michael Ferguson* MP

Department of Treasury and Finance:
Gary Swain, Secretary
James Craigie, Deputy Secretary, Budget and Finance
Dean Burgess, Acting Deputy Secretary, Economic and Financial Policy

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 10.14 a.m. Mr *Winter* withdrew.

At 10.14 a.m. Mr *Jenner* took a seat at the Table.

At 10.29 a.m. Mr *Jenner* withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 10.29 a.m. to 10.39 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Bayley* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mrs *Pentland*
Mr *Willie*

Also at the Table

Ms *Beswick*
Mr *Garland*
Mr *Shelton*.

Overview of Agency activities continued

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 12.11 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Bayley* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Ms *Dow* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)
Mrs *Pentland*

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*
Dr *Broad*
Mr *Shelton*.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

DIVISION 6: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Michael Ferguson* MP

Department of Justice
Kristy Bourne,Acting Secretary
Robyn Pearce, Executive Director, WorkSafe Tasmania
Brad Wheeler, Executive Director, Consumer, Building and Occupational Services

Department of State Growth:
Jenna Cairney, Acting Deputy Secretary, Economic Development

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 1.40 p.m. Mr *Bayley* withdrew and Ms *Burnet* took a seat at the Table.

At 2.15 p.m. Ms *Dow* withdrew and Mr *Winter* took a seat at the Table.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 2.30 p.m. to 2.35 p.m.

The Chair read the following correspondence from the Speaker, dated 24 September 2024:

> "Dear Mr Wood
>
> In accordance with the provisions of the Resolution appointing the Estimates Committees under "Membership of Committees", paragraph 6, I hereby nominate:
>
> Ms Anita Dow as a substantive member of the Committee in substitute for Mr Josh Willie on Tuesday, 24 September 2024 from 4 pm for the remainder of the day.
>
> Yours sincerely
>
> Hon Michelle O'Byrne MP
> Speaker"

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND RESOURCES

DIVISION 8: DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT TASMANIA
DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Dr *Woodruff*
Ms *Dow*

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*

Dr *Broad*
Mr *Garland*
Mr *Shelton.*

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Eric Abetz* MP

Department of State Growth:
Craig Limkin, Secretary
Jenna Cairney, Acting Deputy Secretary Economic Development
Mark Bowles, Acting Chief Executive Officer, ReCFIT and Resources
Alastair Morton, Director of Mines

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Diedre Wilson, Deputy Secretary Primary Industries and Water
Dr Ryan Wilkinson, Acting Director, Inland Fisheries

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 2:55 p.m. Ms *Finlay* took a seat at the Table.

At 3:11 p.m. Ms *Dow* withdrew.

At 3:26 p.m. Mrs *Beswick* withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 4.36 p.m. to 4.44 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Dr *Woodruff*
Ms *Finlay* (substitute for Ms *Dow*)

Also at the Table

Dr *Broad*
Mr *Garland*
Mr *Shelton*

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 5.34 p.m. Dr *Woodruff* withdrew and Ms *Badger* took a seat at the Table.

At 5.40 p.m. Mr *Garland* withdrew.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Hon. *Michael Ferguson* MP

Treasurer:

1. How much revenue do Braddon based businesses, companies and other non-government entities produce for the state of Tasmania (i.e. mining, dairy, livestock, cropping, aquaculture, forestry, manufacturing)?
    a. What is that as a fraction of the overall Tasmanian Gross Domestic Product?
    b. What is this as a figure on a per capita basis? (Mr *Garland*)
2. How much revenue did the State Government receive from the salmon industry for the most recent financial year (2023-2024), comprised of:
    a. Payroll and other taxes;
    b. Fin fish farm lease fees; and
    c. Regulatory costs? (Mr *Garland*)

Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs:

1. Are you confident that all government departments currently have processes in place to ensure compliance with WHS obligations of the PCBU?
    a. Specifically, can you confirm how many WHS breaches there have been at TasPol and State Emergency Services in the last financial year, and the nature of any breaches. (Ms *Burnet*)
2. About the procurement-single form for tenders under $500k for construction projects, does HomesTas have access to this single form?
    a. Does it pose a risk with the tendering process?
    b. For residential builds, how are you ensuring Tasmania is getting best price for residential builds? (Mrs *Pentland*)

Hon. *Eric Abetz* MP

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources:

1. Regarding the 158,000 m3 of saw log volumes promised to existing Forestry Tasmania customers from FPPF land, during the state election, how was this calculated if land parcels have not yet been identified. (Dr *Woodruff*)
2. The budget refers to 90% of timber undergoing "some form of processing" in Tasmania.

   a. What are the forms of processing that are referred to?
   b. Is the trimming of logs before they are placed on the back of a truck considered to be "processing"? (Dr *Woodruff*)
3. Where did the figure of 5000 people employed in the salmon industry in Tasmania (as reported in the Government's 2030 Strong Plan) come from?
   a. What proportion of this number are directly employed in the industry? (Mr *Garland*)
4. Please table the Marine Resources Division efficiency dividend and savings plan. (Ms *Finlay*)
5. What are the statistics for recreational breaches of recreational fishing rules? (Ms *Finlay*)

At 6.43 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, 25 September next.

Confirmed:

Date: 15/10/24 Chair: _____

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Wednesday, 25 September 2024

The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms White (substitute for Mr Willie)
Dr Woodruff

Also at the Table

Ms *Butler*
Mr *Garland*
Mr *Shelton.*

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR PARKS AND ENVIRONMENT AND MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND RENEWABLES

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR PARKS AND ENVIRONMENT

DIVISION 3: ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY
DIVISION 8: DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT TASMANIA

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Nick Duigan* MLC

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania:
Jason Jacobi, Secretary
Sophie Muller, Deputy Secretary Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service
Wes Ford, Chief Executive, Environment Protection Authority
Jo Crisp, General Manager Environment
Hugh Christie, General Manager, Waste and Resource /Chief Executive Officer Tasmanian Waste and Recovery Board
Alice Hollywell-Jones, A/General Manager Park Operations and Business Services
Penny Stolp, Strategic Project and Policy Manager

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 9.02 a.m. Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

At 9.04 a.m. Mr *Bayley* took a seat at the Table.

At 9:32 a.m. Mrs *Pentland* withdrew.

At 9.36 a.m. Dr *Woodruff* withdrew.

At 10:33 a.m. Mr *Garland* withdrew and Mrs *Beswick* took a seat at the Table.

At 10:40 a.m. Mr *Bayley* withdrew and Ms *Badger* took a seat at the Table.

At 10.45 a.m. Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

At 10.55 a.m. Ms *Butler* withdrew.

At 11.01 a.m. Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

Suspension of sitting 11.01 a.m. to 11.08 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Badger* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Ms *White* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*
Ms Finlay
Mr *Shelton*.

The Minister tabled:

- Table of figures regarding Marine Farm Development Planning Areas.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 12.23 p.m. Ms *Badger* withdrew and Ms *Burnet* took a seat at the table.

At 1.03 p.m. Mr *Shelton* withdrew.

At 1.06 p.m. Mr *Shelton* took a seat at the table.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 1.08 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND RENEWABLES

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Bayley* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Ms Finlay (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Mr *Garland*
Mr O'Byrne
Mr *Shelton.*

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Nick Duigan* MLC

Department of State Growth:
Craig Limkin, Secretary
Mark Bowles, Acting Chief Executive Officer, ReCFIT and Resources
Sarah Russell, Director Climate Change
Sean Terry, Executive Director Energy

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

Suspension of sitting 3.30 p.m. to 3.38 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Garland* (substitute for Mrs *Pentland*)
Ms Finlay (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Mr *Shelton.*

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.42 p.m. Dr *Woodruff* took a seat at the Table.

The Minister tabled:

- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment – Work Health and Safety Management System – Local Hazard Register SR – 301. – SF-8315 Activity Risk Assessment documents.
- Climate Change Activity Statement 2024, Climate Change Office.

At 4.07 p.m. Mr *Garland* withdrew.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Hon. *Nick Duigan* MLC

Minister for Parks and Environment:

1. Can the Minister table the savings strategy for his Agency for the 24-25 financial year? (Ms *White*)
2. Provide the data available for fish farm mortalities for the past year. (Mr *Bayley*)
3. What are the annual costs for administering, servicing and maintaining the Three Capes Track product? Can this please be broken down into the cost to maintain the walking track, maintaining and servicing the public accommodation complexes, helicopter hire, Pennicott boat transfers, fees paid to the Port Arthur Historic Site plus wages for PWS staff and contractor payments. Would appreciate the annual costs over the last three years so we can understand its trajectory. (Ms *Badger*)
4. Is waste water on Flinders Island managed according to environmental laws? (Mrs *Pentland*)
5. Can the Minister provide details of the lease agreement with the Derwent Valley Men's Shed including the length of time the Shed can continue to operate from their current site? (Ms *White*)
6. Can the Minister provide details of the lease agreement with the Derwent Valley Horse Riding Club including the length of time the Club can continue to operate from their current site? (Ms *White*)
7. Can the Minister please table as committed to in committee the three safety assessments on the DIVO at Beauty Point. (Ms *Finlay*)
8. What other further uses for the land where the Derwent Valley Riding Club operate from is the government considering? (Ms *White*)

Minister for Energy and Renewables:

1. Has the Minster for Primary Industries declared by way of an order that industrial water can/will be delivered to the Bell Bay Hydrogen Hub? (Ms *Finlay*)
2. From data collected as part of the LULCF accounting, Annual emissions caused by all forestry activities, including clear-felling and post-logging burning, for each of the last 5 years. (Dr *Woodruff*)

At 5.09 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Thursday, 26 September next.

Confirmed:

Date: 15/10/24 Chair: _____

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Thursday, 26 September 2024

The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr Bayley (substitute for *Dr Woodruff*)
Mr Willie

Also at the Table

Mr *Winter*
Mr *Shelton*.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE, MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, MINISTER FOR SPORT AND EVENTS

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE

DIVISION 4: FINANCE-GENERAL
DIVISION 13: DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Nic Street* MP

Department of Treasury and Finance
Gary Swain, Secretary
Jonathon Root, Deputy Secretary, Revenue, Gaming and Licensing
Dean Burgess, Acting Deputy Secretary, Economic and Financial Policy

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 10:26 a.m. Mr *Winter* withdrew.

At 10:54 a.m. Mr *Shelton* withdrew.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 11.00 a.m. to 11.05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Burnet* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Ms *White* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*
Ms Dow
Mr *Shelton.*

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Nic Street* MP

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Mathew Healey, Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery
Mike Mogridge, Acting Executive Director, Office of Local Government

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 11.16 a.m., Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

At 11.37 a.m., Mrs *Pentland* withdrew.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 12.05 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR SPORT AND EVENTS

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Bayley* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mr Winter (substitute for Mr *Willie*)
Mrs Pentland

Also at the Table

Mr O'Byrne
Mr *Shelton.*

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Nic Street* MP

Department of State Growth
Craig Limkin, Secretary

Stadiums Tasmania
James Avery, Chief Executive Officer

Macquarie Point Development Corporation
Anne Beach, Chief Executive Officer

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 1.14 p.m. Ms *Johnston* took a seat at the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The Minister tabled the following document:

- Mac Point Precinct Plan – August 2024

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The Minister tabled the following document:

- Ticket to Wellbeing – Program Guidelines

At 1.57 p.m. Mr *Willie* took a seat at the table.

At 2.13 p.m., Ms *Johnston* withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 2.13 p.m. to 2.19 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Bayley* (substitute for Dr *Woodruff*)
Mrs *Pentland*
Mr *Willie*

Also at the Table

Mr *O'Byrne*
Mr *Shelton*
Mr *Winter*.

At 2.33 p.m., Mr *Winter* withdrew.

At 2.36 p.m., Mrs *Pentland* withdrew.

At 3.14 p.m., Mr *Shelton* withdrew.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Hon. *Nic Street* MP

Minister for Local Government:

1. How much has your government spent in the last 10 years on local government reforms? (Ms *Dow*)

Minister for Sport and Events:

1. On Thursday 22 August Dean Winter MP held a media event at Mudbar Restaurant in Launceston where restaurateur Don Cameron poured his heart out about business conditions and why he wanted to see more tourists in the city. Later that day, after an online article appeared, a large dinner booked and co-hosted by Hawthorn Football Club and the Tasmanian Government for the following evening was cancelled. Mr Cameron was told it was because of his comments in the media. Mr Winter is aware that the dinner was later reinstated and then cancelled again later for other reasons. This question is not about the second cancellation. Were you or your office involved in the first cancellation of the dinner? Were you aware of this? (Mr *Winter*)
2. On the evening of 22 August, Mr Cameron contacted Dean Winter MP to say that his dinner booking had been cancelled following his media appearance. Can you tell the Committee what involvement, if any, your office had in that cancellation? Did your office contact Hawthorn FC or anyone else about the booking at Mudbar following Mr Cameron's comments? Did your office say words to the effect that "the Government won't be spending a cent at that venue this weekend"? Were you aware of this? (Mr *Winter*)
3. Did the Premier's office become aware of the cancellation and instruct your office to reinstate the dinner, or involve themselves in any other way? At

that time, the restaurant had a large booking for the following evening, the 23rd August, where they were hosting the Hawthorn Football Club and Government representatives for dinner the night before their match in Launceston. Were you aware of the intervention of the Premier and/or his office? (Mr *Winter*)

4. Has the conduct of your office breached the Anti-Discrimination Act and/or the Ministerial Code of Conduct? (Mr *Winter*)
5. Please provide the Committee with the details of preferred 'drop off parking and pick up area' on the Queens Domain as per pg 32 Mac Point Precinct Plan 'Coach'. (Mr *Bayley*)

At 3.36 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Friday, 27 September next.

Confirmed:

Date: 15/10/24 Chair: _____

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Friday, 27 September 2024

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *Haddad* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)
Ms *Rosol* (substitute for *Dr Woodruff*)

Also at the Table

Mrs *Beswick*
Ms *Brown*
Mr *Fairs.*

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES, MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, AND MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Roger Jaensch* MP

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Melissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy, and Reform
Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director, Community Partnerships and Priorities

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 9.46 a.m. Mr *Fairs* withdrew.

At 9.49 a.m. Mr *Fairs* took a seat at the Table.

At 9.58 a.m. Ms *Rosol* withdrew and Ms *Burnet* took a seat at the Table.

At 10.00 a.m. Ms *Haddad* withdrew and Mr *Willie* took a seat at the Table.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 10.30 a.m. to 10.36 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Mr *Willie*
Dr *Woodruff*

Also at the Table

Ms *Brown*
Mr *Fairs.*

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Roger Jaensch MP*

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Melissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform
Steve Gall, Director, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
Caroline Spotswood, Director, Aboriginal Partnerships

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 10.39 a.m., Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

At 11.45 a.m., Mr *Fairs* withdrew.

At 11.47 a.m., Mr *Fairs* took a seat at the Table.

At 11.58 a.m., Mr *Willie* withdrew.

At 12 noon, Mr *Willie* took a seat at the Table.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 12.06 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

DIVISION 2: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *White* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)
Ms *Rosol* (substitute for *Dr Woodruff*)

Also at the Table

Mr *Behrakis*
Ms *Brown*.

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Roger Jaensch* MP

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Courtney Hurworth, Chief Reform Officer
Shane Gregory, Associate Secretary

Department of Education, Children and Young People
Jenny Burgess, Acting Secretary
Sue McKerracher, A/Deputy Secretary, Children and Familes
Kane Salter, Deputy Secretary Business Operations and Support
Claire Lovell, Executive Director Children and Families
Craig Woodfall, Director, Community and Custodial Youth Justice
Jason Sowell, Deputy Director, Finance and Budget Services

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 1.05 p.m., Mrs *Beswick* and Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

At 1.41 p.m., Mrs *Pentland* withdrew.

At 2.31 p.m., Mrs *Beswick* and Ms *Brown* withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 3.00 p.m. to 3.09 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Wood* (Chair)
Ms *White* (substitute for Mr *Willie*)
Ms *Rosol* (substitute for *Dr Woodruff*)

Also at the Table

Mr *Behrakis*.

At 4.04 p.m., Mr *Behrakis* withdrew.

At 4.07 p.m., Mr *Behrakis* took a seat at the Table.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Hon. *Roger Jaensch* MP

Minister for Community Services:

1. Can the Minister provide a list of funding agreements under his portfolio broken down by how long their core funding agreement component is eg 1, 2, 3 etc years. It need not list the names of the organisations if that is not possible, a number and duration is sufficient. (Ms *Haddad*)

Minister for Children and Youth:

1. In 2023-24, how much money was paid to Essential Services for providing transport to and from Ashley Youth Detention Centre? (Ms *Rosol*)
2. What is the department's projection for the average daily number of children and young people in Ashley Youth Detention Centre in 2024-25? (Ms *Rosol*)
3. What is the annual cost of a special care package? (Ms *Rosol*)
4. What is the annual cost of a package for intensive foster care? (Ms *Rosol*)
5. Can the Minister please indicate when staff within child safety services south will need to move out of their current accommodation at St Johns Park as per the St Johns masterplan? (Ms *White*)
6. In child safety services how many staff are on workers comp?
    a. What is the average length of time?
    b. What is the longest length of time? (Ms *White*)

At 4.39 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, 15 October next.

Confirmed:

Date: 15/10/24 Chair: _____

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Tuesday, 15 October 2024

The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 9:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mrs *Petrusma* (Chair)
Mr *Willie*
Mrs *Pentland*
Dr *Woodruff*

APOLOGIES

No apologies.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19, and 23 to 27 September 2024 last were read and confirmed as a true and accurate record. (Mr *Willie*)

Mrs *Pentland* took a seat at the Table at 9.01 a.m.

DRAFT REPORTS

The Chair brought up draft reports on the estimates of the:-

- Premier, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Trade and Major Investment;
- Treasurer, and Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs;
- Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, and Minister for Transport;
- Minister for Parks and Environment, and Minister for Energy and Renewables
- Minister for Finance, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Sport and Events; and
- Minister for Community Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Children and Youth;

The reports were adopted. (Dr *Woodruff*)

At 9.02 a.m. the Committee adjourned *sine die*.

Date: 15/10/24 Chair: _____

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP

Monday 23 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Dean Winter MP
Ms Anita Dow MP
Mr David O'Byrne MP
Mr Mark Shelton MP
Ms Helen Burnet MP
Mrs Miriam Beswick MP
Ms Cesily Rosol MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. JEREMY ROCKLIFF MP
Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, Minister for Trade and Major Investment.

Kathrine Morgan-Wicks
Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Anne Beach
Chief Executive Officer, Macquarie Point Developemnt Corporation

Craig Limkin
Secretary, Department of State Growth

Denise McIntyre
Deputy Secretary Strategy, Housing, Infrastructure and Planning, Department of State Growth

Robyn Hawkins
Senior Project Manager, Department of State Growth

John Perry
Tasmanian Coordinator General

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

CHAIR (Mr Wood) **-** We might make a start. I have a quick thing to read out. I have received the following ruling from the Speaker, which I shall read to the committee:

> Members of Committee A,
>
> I have been advised that the Chair of Committees, the honourable Jacquie Petrusma MP, is unwell and unable to attend to her duties as Chair of Estimates Committee A. In accordance with paragraph 6 of the resolution agreed to by the House on 10 September, I hereby nominate member for Bass, Simon Wood MP, as the Chair of the Committee in substitution of the Chair of Committees until such time as the Chair of Committees is able to resume the Chair of Committee.

Welcome, Premier and members of the committee this morning. Premier, would you please introduce the persons at the table for the benefit of Hansard?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, thank you very much. To my right is the Secretary of Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC), Kathrine Morgan-Wicks and Shane Gregory, the Associate Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. To my left is Ned Whitehouse, my chief of staff.

CHAIR - Thank you. The time scheduled for Estimates of the Premier is three and a half hours. We will be taking a short break for five minutes or so at 11.00 a.m. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day, or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister, and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary, Ben, so that it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

I also remind you that microphones are sensitive, so I ask you to be mindful of Hansard and be careful when moving your folders, documents and water glasses around the table. It is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I would ask that members speak one at a time to assist with this.

Premier, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity for the scrutiny members. I have an opening statement, of which there's a number of documents that I would also like to table throughout.

The 2024-25 Budget provides record investment to deliver the government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future over the next four years. We are taking action on the issues that matter to Tasmanians, including the cost of living, health, housing, a stronger economy, and supporting our communities.

Across the Budget and forward Estimates we are providing over $550 million in cost-of-living relief to ease the financial pressures Tasmanians are facing and to make life more affordable, through energy bill relief payments, half-price bus fares and healthy lunches in

schools, as well as stamping up stamp duty for thousands of Tasmanians buying their first home.

Importantly, the Budget fully responds to the recommendations from the commission of inquiry. We did not shy away from the commission or what the commission found. We will meet our obligation to victim/survivors and others who shared their stories. These wrongs date back decades. It is our responsibility as a government of the day to make the significant change we need, and to drive that change.

Funding of $423 million over four years is in the Budget to deliver - to implement the 191 recommendations of the commission of inquiry. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is leading this work in close collaboration with other agencies. This funding, together with the funding allocated in 2023-24 and the provision for civil claims, means that more than $1.1 billion is being provided from Tasmania's public finances to address the shortcomings in our protective systems, to keep children safe, and to appropriately compensate those who suffered harm. Our government is committed to widespread transformational reforms to our systems and culture to keep children safe.

We recognise that our response must focus on transparency and accountability to rebuild trust. My department has been increasing the level of transparency through the publishing of routine disclosures relating to the assessment and actions by heads of agency in relation to matters referred to in the commission of inquiry report, both for alleged perpetrators and alleged non-perpetrators. Assessment and actions by the Commissioner of Police in relation to matters referred to in the commission of inquiry report, Tasmanian Police officers: notifications of State Service employee suspensions from duty as a result of allegations of child sexual abuse, cumulative since October 2020, and a Joint Referral Review Team (JRRT). Matters of interest are identified through the commission of inquiry section 34A notices and other data sources, State Service employees and general public persons of interest. These tables are routinely updated and published on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website, with the latest being published last week, with data as of 17 September 2024.

I want to provide as much information about these matters to victim/survivors and the community as is lawfully possible. I table a copy of the latest routine disclosure report. As part of a continuous improvement focus, the secretary of Department of Premier and Cabinet has progressed a DPAC government review to improve the delivery of services to the Tasmanian community for the realignment of similar functions and providing a simple, clearer structure to aid engagement for the community and our stakeholders.

Following a consultation and engagement period, the government's review has delivered a contemporary departmental structure to deliver on key priorities for the Tasmanian government and our community. To inform the committee, I table a copy of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's new structure.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet continues to deliver outcomes for the Tasmanian community and I would like to highlight a few of these.

Service Tasmania marked 25 years of service serving our communities. Launching in 1998, the organisation was the first of its kind in Australia and continues to provide an essential and valued service all these years later. This last year, Service Tasmania handled over 950,000 customer inquiries, with a customer satisfaction rating of 85 per cent. More than

20,000 Tasmanians signed up for the new myServiceTas portal in the first eight weeks of its launch. I would like to share with the committee the Service Tasmania highlights for 2023-24 and I table the full update.

My department also provided critical network and internet communication services to support government business in more than 960 locations in 128 towns across Tasmania, including schools, Service Tasmania shops, hospitals and fire stations; worked with the Australian Government on the development of the National Cybersecurity Strategy and the National Cyber Security Incident Management arrangements; and launched a new Keeping Children Safe website and reporting dashboard to provide up-to-date information; conducted 1400 detailed assessments by Aboriginal heritage specialists and provided advice on proposed activities that may impact on Aboriginal heritage; launched the Disability Employment Portal to support people with disability seeking employment within the Tasmanian State Service; and secured more than $14 million from the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund to build disaster resilience, and engaged almost 500 stakeholders and stakeholder groups to develop regional drought resilience plans.

In closing, I'm pleased to inform the committee that in 2025 I'll be the chair of the Council of Australian Federation. This forum provides for state and territory leaders to discuss and resolve important issues independently of the Commonwealth. I'm excited to be leading this forum, given the significant intergovernmental issues addressing the nation, including domestic violence, disability reform, health funding reform and education funding reform.

I thank you for the opportunity to say a relatively short opening statement and I look forward to questions. I table the three documents I referred to in terms of the routine disclosure relating to commission of inquiry matters, the new departmental structure, and Department of Premier and Cabinet and Service Tasmania highlights.

Mr WINTER - Thank you, Chair. Premier, you opened by saying that the Budget provides for record funding, but when comparing the preliminary outcome from last financial year to this year's Budget, we can see cuts in funding for employee expenses right across your government of around $100 million this financial year, which is the equivalent of around 1000 jobs. How are agency saving strategies being managed to make such significant cuts to spending and the reduction of employee expenses?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. There is record funding. In fact, I recall our first Estimates, Health was in the order of $5.8 billion or $5.9 billion in 2014-15. It is now $12.9 billion. But you would expect any government to be mindful of ensuring that the taxpayer contributions are spent very wisely and that budgets are sustainable, recognising, of course, the investments we've been putting in the last few years about commissions of inquiry - very worthy - and, moving forward, the pandemic, which were significant investments, and all Tasmanians would expect an efficient public service and one that works very solidly when it comes to delivering and, most importantly, targeting the needs that Tasmanians quite rightly deserve.

Now, when you talk about efficiencies, that does not mean impacts to frontline services. What it does mean, in terms of our investments, is more nurses, more doctors, more paramedics of course, health professionals more broadly will be in our health system over the course of the next 12 months, and I can look at the matters pertaining to police and emergency services, the housing, schools - all significant investments and record investments.

Our heads of agency will be working very solidly over the course of the next 12 months to deliver efficiencies. and doing so with no reductions to nurses, doctors, paramedics, police officers, teachers, child safety officers or any other frontline working positions.

Mr WINTER - How can you say that there will be no reduction in those services when, for example, your Budget this year reduces the total employee expenditure in the Department of Health by $132.5 million? So, how can you on the one hand cut $132.5 million from the health budget and at the same time say you will employ more people? How those two things possible?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Because it is about ensuring that we get the balance right and I am interested to work through your $150 million worth of savings as well, of which you outlined online with your first iteration of your budget reply and, so, you might well have some insights into the challenges that we have and you can detail the $150 million of your savings as well, but we will be working very solidly across government to ensure that.

Mr WINTER - You are not answering the question, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I absolutely am, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - You cannot have more staff and spend $132.5 million less.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is about ensuring that the investment in and across government and the whole of government sense focuses on people on the frontline and the services and find savings elsewhere so we can ensure that we do have that balance right in terms of frontline service growth, but also backline efficiencies, and that could well come from further investment when it comes to the HRIS, in terms of the IT investment we are making-

Mr WINTER - Are you suggesting you can save $132.5 million by implementing HRIS?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, it is just an example of efficiencies that can be created throughout the system. I am not saying $132 million, as you call it. in isolation with that, but it is also ensuring we take meaningful action to ensure the State Service can provide the central public services, job creating infrastructure on a sustainable basis now and into the future.

Now, as part of our strategy to achieve this, we have got modest efficiencies beginning in 2024-25 representing a $300 million reduction in expenditure over the forward Estimates. So, in 2024-25, the Budget includes an additional $150 million budget efficiency dividend to maintain the budget repair effort in the new forward estimate year and to ensure the government is best placed to meet its 10-year fiscal objectives.

And, so, we are not about slashing and burning the public service. We are about ensuring we have a very measured and purposeful approach to a sustainable pathway to surplus, which focuses on ensuring we continue to invest in the frontline but find efficiencies elsewhere across the public service.

Mr WINTER - Is there a central process or a budget committee to manage to sign off on these strategies?

CHAIR - I have given the call to Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, in your Budget speech you talked about governments having to make tough decisions. I want to know: was it a tough decision to blow your budget on a stadium that you will end up gifting to the AFL instead of delivering critical social and economic infrastructure like a Basslink digital interconnector or a fully funded emergency department upgrade for the Royal Hobart Hospital?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Right, I am not 100 per cent convinced of the way you framed the question. We are investing $375 million into the stadium, not a cent more. We are ensuring that we invest in not only services, but enabling infrastructure when you talk of choices in terms of investments. As I said in 2022, 2023 and now in 2024, I have been scrutinised on this project for over two years, Public Accounts committees, I cannot think of a project that has been so heavily scrutinised. Now, we have the project of state significant submission, a 4000-page document and so this is the most transparent process in terms of an enabling infrastructure that I can ever recall. It is about -

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you agree a decision was made to not spend public money on the proper upgrade for the Royal Hobart Hospital and a Basslink digital interconnector? Do you agree that a decision is made not to prioritise funding into those two objectives?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, we are prioritising essential services and enabling infrastructure and the $375million, Dr Woodruff, as I have said on numerous occasions, we are investing once, just once.

Dr WOODRUFF - Could have been once for a Royal Hobart Hospital upgrade and once for a digital interconnector as well but you chose not to do those things.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am choosing on upgrading health infrastructure. In fact, all our four major public hospitals are being invested in and improved and there is evidence of that. Every 42 days we invest $375 million into our health system and we are investing once into the stadium infrastructure, alongside the Commonwealth investment as well, to create that enabling infrastructure and an economy around that enabling infrastructure, as well as all the other benefits associated with the stadium. Now, I accept -

Dr WOODRUFF - You chose an AFL folly over a data interconnector and a Royal Hobart Hospital upgrade. That is the tough decision that you made, you landed on the side of a vanity project like that, instead of infrastructure for generations for Tasmanians.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am talking about intergenerational infrastructure when it comes to health and schools as the Brighton High School, just the other day completed, term one will have the first students arriving at the school, and that school will be there for decades and decades after I am long gone. Also, intergenerational infrastructure of a Macquarie Point precinct as part of an urban renewal project that will also be there for decades and decades and decades, but also supporting not me, but the thousands of people that will be employed on the project, employed when the project is completed and employed supporting young Tasmanians, not only on the footy field and I speak of AFL and AFLW, but also the other entertainment and opportunities that will come Tasmania's way as a result of that.

I was at the Bill Sorell lunch last Friday, Chair, 580 people, Mr Winter was there and every time the stadium was mentioned there was a round of applause, including that of Mr Winter. The Greens, I respect, have a different view but I've always -

Dr WOODRUFF - And the majority of Tasmanians.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, the difficult decisions are decisions we make in terms of this project, but if I look at other stadia infrastructure across the nation, Adelaide, Optus Oval in Perth and others around -

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, I believe that the Premier's probably had time on that answer.

Mr O'BYRNE - My question is a whole-of-government shareholder responsibility question around the government business enterprises. You have TT-Line, who has overseen a delay in the delivery of the vessels and there is clearly a crisis of confidence in their leadership, given some of the changes. You have TasPorts with their infrastructure crumbling and their actions are imperilling our Antarctic Gateway. You have TasNetworks staff in intense negotiations and not very conducive to good delivery of service. You have Metro that has cancelled hundreds, if not thousands, of bus services. Has your government lost control of the government business enterprises?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, but as I expressed in parliament the other day, Mr O'Byrne, my expectation is that our government businesses and state-owned companies have a very strong team Tasmania approach. I have been concerned about the siloed approach in many respects where, in my view, a lack of communication across GBEs has resulted in not the best decisions being made. That's why we have started rewriting the charters from government to GBEs, setting very clear expectations.

I acknowledge the need for a shake-up. You've pointed to some challenges and there needs to be a shake-up. The GBEs and state-owned companies are owned by the Tasmanian people first and foremost and they should never forget that. We expect a government policy to be delivered. You name a number of areas. I expect very strong and stronger stakeholder engagement with our GBEs as well and I get feedback that there could be a need for continuous improvement in those areas.

In our first 100 days of government, we committed to rewrite the ministerial charters in a statement of expectations of all government businesses. The ministerial charters and statements of expectations outline those expectations and, as I've referred to, the service delivery requirements, Mr O'Byrne, providing transparency and accountability.

You mentioned one of those projects, Macquarie Point berth 6. I've had very good discussions with federal minister Plibersek, just last week in fact, and my expectation is that within a matter of a few weeks we will have a deal and be able to progress that berth redevelopment. I respect the cooperation between agencies, federal and state. While minister Plibersek and I don't agree on matters salmon, we do agree on matters when it comes to working together to ensure that we get berth 6 up and running and done and secure for the *Nuyina* and securing our gateway to the Antarctic as well.

Mr O'BYRNE - Premier, in terms of the ministerial charters and the statement, isn't that really window dressing? They're already pretty prescriptive. You talk about team Tasmania but

aren't most of those GBEs kicking the other way from where we need to go? Are we going to use that analogy? Metaphor, sorry.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The charters are very good statements of expectations. When respective ministers meet with their GBEs, then that is a very good reference point. But I do expect our GBEs to play the team Tasmania game, if I can put it that way, and work together when it's required on certain projects. When it comes to a number of GBEs involved in infrastructure requirements for ports, for example, and other matters to ensure that we are attracting investment. I also expect strong stakeholder engagement as well, and for stakeholders to be listened to in some of their views on these matters, whether it's impacts on upgrades of certain infrastructure, or TasNetworks that are engaged with landholders on a range of matters, for example. That's my clear expectation. That needs to be improved, certainly prior to the election. I believe it will be improved further.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, my question is to do with the weather, would you believe. The last month or six months we have had some very much welcomed rain. But along with that rain came some fairly significant weather events with the wind and so forth. Of course, a lot of the constituents out there had power outages and suffered the bad weather through storms and floods and that sort of thing. You've actually identified some grant programs that are out there. My question is around how many people have access to these grants and how much has been provided to date? In the future, will there be any other grants for businesses, for example, that have suffered through that weather?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, for that question. Can I also thank you and other members of Parliament that communicated with me directly through the power outages and we talked with team Tasmania approach. There was very little politics played throughout that extreme weather circumstance. I had messages from all colours of the political rainbow, if I can put it that way, contacting me, alerting me to the circumstances of individuals at which we were able to act and respond. It was a true Team Tasmania approach.

We were hit by the extreme weather. This led to significant damage from destructive winds and flooding. Thousands of Tasmanians were impacted by these power outages. I'm advised the TasNetworks had more than 20 per cent of its network damaged. The storms also caused flooding in a number of catchments, and major flooding in the Derwent River between Meadowbank and New Norfolk. The Derwent Valley Council opened two evacuation centres in New Norfolk to support impacted residents. The centres were staffed and managed with support from Hobart City Council, thank you, Kingborough Council, thank you, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, thank you.

Councils and community organisations established locations for communities impacted by power outages to charge their devices and access amenities. Derwent Valley Council held community information sessions in locations across the Upper Derwent Valley. Other recovery was attended including DPAC who assisted the recovery grants, et cetera. I thank the local councils for their responsiveness and support, and our public service staff who assisted with information applications.

We provided grants to Tasmanians impacted. We also provided grants of $255,000 to Neighbourhood Houses, and $50,000 each to Foodbank and Loaves & Fishes. DPAC engaged recovery partners to perform outreach visits and calls to communities to deliver psychological first aid, check on wellbeing and connect people with available supporters.

The Tasmanian Emergency Information Service was activated on 1 September. I'm informed that it managed over 30,00 calls to date. As of 20 September, I can advise that 13,567 recovery applications were approved and processed, which equated to $7.17 million. Our Tasmanian Emergency Information Centre received again over 3,000 calls, in fact 3,400 I am advised. The TasAlert App was installed 50,000 imes, and almost 700,000 app notifications were sent. The $7.17 million included emergency assistance grants. These were for the Derwent Valley and up to $1000 per a household was made available. There have been 632 applications approved and a total of $267,000 provided. In relation to the emergency food grant, there is $350 per household for those without power for 72 hours or more and there have been 11,497 applications approved with $4.02 million provided. For the temporary living support payment, it is $2000 per household every seven days with no power, or if a home is uninhabitable due to damage. There have been 1445 applications approved with $2.89 million provided. Lastly, of the grants to replace or repair household items or homes, there have been three applications approved for $2799 paid.

In relation to the second part of your question about business support and other grants, the emergency event impact registration process has been set up and already more than 220 businesses have registered. This will help us to tailor specific response activities where needed. To inform the committee and in the interests of time, I table the information on the community recovery response here.

Mr WINTER - Premier, do you accept that this year's Budget reduces the total employee expenses by around $100 million across the public service compared with what was spent last year? Is there any kind of central process or budget committee to manage these cuts?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, they are efficiencies, and you would expect a government to be efficient when it comes to applying the resources, which essentially are Tasmanian taxpayer resources. The Budget indicated that the government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services. These efficiencies are an essential component of ensuring a responsible budget and Tasmanians expect their public service to be efficient and productive.

Government efficiencies are being achieved in part through a combination of operating efficiency measures in agencies and ceasing or scaling back non-priority activities that are either not a strategic priority or have been replaced with election commitments. Efficiency measures must be achievable in both the short and long term. This means that agencies must identify efficiency measures that are structural and achievable on an ongoing basis.

Our government will ensure our resources are prioritised and we will work with agencies to allocate resources to efficiently support government priorities and new services. Where the government can be more efficient in our non-people costs, as already referred to, we will be, but not to the extent that we're not continuing to improve or uplift the service we provide the community through programs like the digital service uplift. It is acknowledged that some efficiency measures will have a lead time, particularly those making structural or service delivery changes and, as such, there is a rising profile in the efficiencies to be achieved.

There are key principles to your question. Efficiency measures must be allocated to activities and costs within the control or influence of the agency. In general terms, this means that efficiency measures should be applied to controlled activities and not applied to administered items or to specific activities funded by specific external parties, such as the

Australian Government. Efficiency measures must consider operational impacts. This means that the efficiency measures must consider matters including, but not limited to, timing and transitional issues, staffing impact, internal communications and change management requirements.

Efficiency measures must not negatively impact outcomes of frontline services. The following strategies have been identified by the Department of Health, for example, to meet the budget efficiency dividends by combining leadership roles where appropriate; combining service delivery areas to implement leaner operating models; reducing expenditure on consultancies; reducing expenditure on suppliers and consumables through a reduction in items purchased outside of common-use contracts and negotiating more competitive pricing on a non-contracted items; and reducing operating costs through a variety of measures including vacancy control and reducing non-salary expenditures such as travel, transport, advertising, property expenditures and consumables.

Mr WINTER - The question hasn't been answered, which was a pretty simple one. Is there a central process or budget committee to manage and/or sign off on these strategies?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, there is a whole of government approach, we have a Budget committee of Cabinet, which will be having a very close eye on efficiencies. It is also a collective responsibility of Cabinet as you would appreciate, the whole of government responsibility when it comes to these matters, not just the Budget committee of Cabinet but all cabinet ministers have that responsibility.

Mr WINTER - Who sits on that committee, Premier? Presumably you and the Treasurer, who else sits on that committee?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we have often tended to a process of committee. Sorry?

Ms DOW - On it, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, you know who is on it?

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, who? You tell us. You are meant to be in charge.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Traditionally, we have not informed people about Cabinet sorts of matters, I think in the interest of transparency, I said that last year, did I not? Open and transparent.

Dr WOODRUFF - Previous governments have done this.

Mr WINTER - You say the words a lot.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not sure about that. But, of course, Treasurer and I, Mr Abetz, Ms Ogilvie and Mr Street, there you go.

Mr WINTER - We are now three months into this financial year, your Budget requires $100 million to be saved. This is from employee expenses, which is the equivalent of about 1000 jobs. How much work has gone on by this razor gang that you have set up in order to make those savings that are required in the Budget?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, you can term it the razor gang if you like, it is not that -

Mr WINTER - That is 1000 jobs that need to go, according to your Budget.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The way we manage internal processes, you would expect us to be very diligent in our approach when it comes to delivering efficiencies in and across government. With the ministerial responsibilities, our heads of agencies are responsible for working through these efficiencies in terms of operational matters.

Mr WINTER - Is each agency required to have a savings strategy in order to meet those what you term as efficiencies?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Each agency will need to ensure they do have budget efficiencies. Katherine would like to talk about the approach and talk about the DPAC approach if you like, but other agencies, of course.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through the Premier, from a DPAC perspective and as a Head of Agency, I am responsible for determining, together with my executive, budget efficiencies that will be applied through the DPAC budget and providing that advice to my ministers, so Premier and other ministers that are responsible for deliverables in DPAC. For example, within DPAC, the budget efficiency dividend to be achieved by DPAC is $969,000 in 2024-25, $1.937 million in 2025-26 and increasing to a structural reduction of $2.905 million in 2026-27. How we will achieve the first years of that is that we are undertaking an establishment management project to improve how salary is budgeted in the department and to optimise how our staffing resources are used to meet the government's priorities of the day, including all new commitments that are funded in the 2024-25 Budget.

Initial work from this establishment management project has identified that budget efficiencies can be achieved through funding staffing establishments based on workload variation, for example, how the staffing establishment is actually being paid. Changing the basis of staffing budgets to this methodology where in the past we have budgeted as to 1.0 FTE for every person and now actually budgeting to what is the workload paid variation throughout the agency and on a long-term basis. Checking, for example, the actual part-time and flexible working arrangements too, for example, 0.8 of an FTE or 0.6 of an FTE, and particularly where that's on a long-term basis, that's how we will budget for 2024-25. Making sure we have the flexibility that if people wish to change their circumstances and move from a 0.6 back up to 1.0, that we have sufficient flexibility in the Budget to reflect that change. We believe that on the basis of this methodology, we will deliver savings in the DPAC budget in excess of the $969,000 target, and could be up to $2 million. That's on our initial assessment. This is not a vacancy control process and will not result in any job losses. Nor will the process impact on the delivery of key government priorities. Further work is continuing on how we optimise the way the department manages its resources and our associated budget allocation, and we will achieve our full budget efficiency dividend targets across the forward Estimates.

Mr WINTER -Chair, the saving strategy answer was great. Are we able to get the savings strategy tabled for the committee?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We'll take that on notice and we can work back through that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, on the Cabinet razor gang committee, why isn't the Health minister there, given that's where the majority of cuts, the hardest cuts, will happen? Why is Ms Ogilvie there?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Because of her ability to contribute. I'm not sure what you're saying in that question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Doesn't the Health minister have more right at the table?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've said collective responsibility across Cabinet, didn't I?

Dr WOODRUFF - But this is the committee where the decisions are being taken about how the cuts will be achieved.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Cabinet makes the decisions, thank you. We have a budget committee when it comes to developing the Budget and not too long after this Budget's passed, we'll be developing other budgets. A lot of work to do.

Dr WOODRUFF - On your tough decisions you talked about making, was it a tough decision to spend $4 million-$8 million on a chocolate fountain and put no funding towards implementing the recommendations of the Weiss review needed to protect against future child sexual abuse?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's not a chocolate fountain.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is just a feasibility study at the moment.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Investing in this community infrastructure to support and enabling part of the community, such as tourism industry. I'm not exactly sure what you're saying. That we shouldn't be investing in tourism opportunities?

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm talking about the tough decision you made not to fund the implementation of the Weiss review and instead to fund a chocolate fountain.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will be implementing the Weiss review and all its recommendations.

Dr WOODRUFF - But there's no money towards that.

Mrs PENTLAND - What sort of public-private partnership would you like the state to enter into to finance the stadium?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. As we move forward, $375 million of investment from the state government and we will take advice on how the private sector investment will come forward. We've received representations from several market players which does suggest that there is keen interest from the private sector to bid for the right to deliver the broader Macquarie Point precinct, including the multi-purpose stadium. We'll be developing a plan for that private sector investment opportunity.

Interestingly, some private sector interest has extended beyond the precinct to include the delivery of the northern access road for example, key transport projects, pedestrian access, affordable housing and port upgrades, which is also worthy of consideration. Commencing a market testing process to identify a private sector partner while continuing with the government-led approach is the way forward. The nature and the scope of this process will be finalised later this year.

Dr WOODRUFF - Clarification, Chair? I understood the rotation was three questions to the Labor Party, two to the Greens.

CHAIR - You're correct, you had two.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, I have no problem with that. Two to independents or JLN?

CHAIR - Correct.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's right.

CHAIR - Mrs Pentland's asking.

Mrs PENTLAND - What's the incentive for private investors, and how will they make a return?

Mr ROCKLIFF - A public-private partnership is one form or another in the precinct. It is one option for attracting a private investment, but there are others and we need to work through the options carefully. The Department of State Growth, along with DPAC and Treasury, are working with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and Stadiums Tasmania to develop the appropriate way forward for the precinct and the broader infrastructural requirements to then test the market and consider the proposals presented.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, there's been a lot of debate over the past week about ways in which government services can be delivered more efficiently. Can you explain what the whole-of-government human resource information system is, how it will be delivered efficiently and deliver efficiencies for the government, and why it was included in the commission of inquiry's recommendations.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question, Mr Shelton. I mentioned in a previous answer today, the human resources information system began its life in the Department of Health, our biggest agency, and will eventually operate across the whole of the Tasmanian State Service. The commission of inquiry recommendation to your question, in relation to the system, called for us to prioritise this work because it enables total visibility of our workforce across all agencies and will deliver a consistent method to manage investigations if needed. Importantly, the human resources information system will help manage information about current or ex-employees who may pose a risk to children and young people.

However, the transformation of government HR systems will also lead to improvements in productivity across all agencies. Indeed, the Tasmanian State Service HR transformation program was a key recommendation of the Watt independent review of the State Service. Our secretary, Ms Morgan-Wicks, knows some background on this given that started in health and can no doubt expand on this response.

I am advised that the Department of Health has been progressing from building and configuring the HRIS system into developing it into a central employee database, a payroll engine, a system that monitors time and attendance, award interpretation for four awards and 22 agreements, as well as recruitment and onboarding. You can see the benefits in relation to delivering efficiencies across agency and across government.

The first of the new system, the HR case management system, is now operational in the Department of Health. It will be rolled out to the Shared Capability and Centralised Investigations Unit in the State Service Management Office in the next few months. The module is expected to be live in all agencies within six months. The benefits of that case management system are profound because it manages reporting, employee conduct and behaviour. Multiple cases or employees are able to be linked for visibility, helping to identify behavioural trends, patterns and contributing factors. A key function of a system, when fully operational, will be to support payroll. This requires extensive and rigorous testing. Thank you for the question.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, in your previous answer you've outlined that there is a razor gang to try and meet your budget targets that you've set. The Budget outlines that there are about 1,000 jobs less at the end of this financial year than there were at the end of last financial year. How is that group that you're a part of going to meet its budget allocation of spending $100 million less this financial year than it did last financial year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Some of those matters were talked through with the secretary. We'll manage this as we do it very methodically, in a very measured approach, very thoughtful, on how the efficiencies will be implemented, ensuring that there will be no impact on frontline services.

Health often comes up in these matters. Frontline services will be supported with more frontline staff, including paramedics, nurses, doctors and other very important frontline people across government now.

The budget efficiency dividend, I spoke about a measured approach, and this is important because it is a far more moderate approach than the Labor-Greens budget in 2011-12. In the first year, I am advised, it equated to $3.73 out of every $100, and grew to $4.95 out of every $100 in the final year. The cuts then equated to $877 million. It is more modest, of course, than the $2 billion of cuts you announced at the election. I am interested to see where the $150 million of yours is coming from as well, I hasten to add.

We are going to take a very measured approach to this. There was big backline impact when it comes to your Labor-Greens budget in 2011-12 and -

Mr WINTER - Have you got the time machine out again, Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - You do not need a time machine to remember because people do remember. It might seem -

Mr WINTER - We should ask the next question. We are not in Estimates 2012, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I was.

Mr WINTER - We are not at the moment, Premier. You've outlined in the Budget a reduction in total employee expenses of around $100 million for this financial year. We are already three months into the financial year. How many positions have been made redundant so far this financial year as part of your so-called efficiencies strategy?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Since 1 July?

Mr WINTER - Yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We can present last year's numbers, of course, to be helpful. Targeted negotiated voluntary redundancies and workforce renewal incentive program payments are available to the heads of agencies as tools to assist in managing their workforce establishment and profile as part of the managing positions in the State Service, which was issued in 2016 and still remains in place today. A total of 21 targeted and negotiated voluntary redundancies were paid for the financial year ending 30 June 2024 with a combined cost of $1.61 million.

Mr WINTER - Sorry, is that just in DPAC or across the public sector?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Whole of government. A total of nine workforce renewal incentive program payments (WRIPs) were paid for the financial year ending 30 June 2024 with a combined cost of $239,200, which is less than some of the figures I've been presented with as a result of the Labor-Greens administration, where we had a total of 554 targeted and negotiated voluntary redundancies and 1013 workforce renewal incentive programs between 2010 and 2014. The total negotiated voluntary redundancies and the WRIPs are entered into voluntarily and by negotiation between the employee and the employer.

Mr WINTER - Is there a target number for this financial year as to how many staff will need to leave the government?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, there's not.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, is the unbudgeted funding for the Weiss review a separate line item or are you including it in commission of inquiry funding? They are very specific recommendations, they are different and additional to the 191 commission of inquiry recommendations. Is it a separate line item?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much for the question and I thank Ms Weiss for her diligence in providing the report and the recommendations. We've publicly committed to implementing all five recommendations of the Weiss independent review. Work to implement the recommendations is underway and being led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in close consultation with the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Department of Justice and other relevant agencies and officers as required. This work will be subject to the same governance and oversight arrangements, including independent oversight of the Child Safety and Reform Implementation Monitor, once appointed.

The initial phase of work to respond to the Weiss review involves policy and legislative development and scoping activities, which are being undertaken from within existing agency resources and in alignment with related recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, can I draw you to the question, please? Is it funded through a separate line item or is it funded as part of the commission of inquiry bucket of money?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The work undertaken by the Department of Police and Emergency Services is within their budget and the commission of inquiry investments as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - So it's a part of the commission of inquiry funding?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In terms of what I've just said, in terms of the work we are starting to undertake for the implementation of the recommendations following the review. Kathrine, do you want to add anything further to this?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - The commission of inquiry reform unit within the Department of Premier and Cabinet has taken responsibility for the coordination of the recommendations of the Weiss review into Paul Reynolds. For example, one of the recommendations which relates to redress requires a significant amount of work to look at what a redress scheme would look like. Certainly, the Weiss review made a start in terms of the recommendations for that scheme, but it was not fulsome in terms of its parameters. If I may reflect as a previous secretary of Justice that looked at the redress scheme for the royal commission into child sexual abuse within government institutions, it's actually quite a piece of work to prepare and advise on options for the parameters of a redress scheme, but that work has commenced and will inform the 2025-26 budget. Funding to do that work is within the commission of inquiry funding which is within DPAC's budget.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, on 29 April last year you committed to managing the Macquarie Point project to make sure it didn't cost more than $715 million. Your recent summary report to the Planning Commission shows that costs have already escalated to $775 million. Will you be Premier enough to apologise for breaking that promise, or was it just a lazy commitment that you made to defend your position at the time?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Really?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, really. People care about $60 million.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are investing $375 million as the state government.

Dr WOODRUFF - Your promise was that it wouldn't cost more than $715 million.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is only costing the Tasmanian taxpayers $375 million.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will you apologise for not being honest with them? You've broken your promise.

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I haven't.

Dr WOODRUFF - You have. Do you just say words and they don't mean things?

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I made it very clear during the election campaign, in full openness and transparency, Dr Woodruff, that we will be investing $375 million and the rest will be coming from private resources.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's not the question I asked. It was about the $715 million promise you made to Tasmanians that the stadium would cost no more than that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - And I then promised $375 million, which is less, in actual fact.

Dr WOODRUFF - A different promise. So, you -

Mr ROCKLIFF - We invest $8.8 million a day in Health and if you multiply 8.8 by 42 it comes to about $375 million - so there you go.

Dr WOODRUFF - Right - promises one day and change them the next.

Mrs PENTLAND - Premier, it's clear that you're not sure how the public-private partnership would work. Is there a big risk here that the taxpayers will be left with the bill for a half-finished stadium?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Private investment in stadia is not unusual and Optus Oval in Perth would be a good example of that. We have had some interest in terms of private development so I'm enormously confident that we will have private interests when it comes to the stadium because it's a big opportunity. We will provide, in a very open and transparent way before the end of the year, the timeline I just gave to the answer to your previous question in terms of the way forward when it comes to the model we will use to attract private investment.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, the government has entered into a strategic regional partnership with both the west coast and east coast councils. Can you tell me why those regions were chosen and what outcomes you expect from these partnerships?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, and I thank the respective mayors of each region for their cooperation. I have had particular dialogue with west coast mayor Shane Pitt over these matters, particularly on a key area of need and partnership, worker accommodation. By working together in partnership, we can overcome these challenges and the west coast has considerable challenges when it comes to employee accommodation across the public service in terms of schools and health, as an example.

We now have two signed MOUs with our regional partners on the west coast and east coast. In 2023, we provided over $1 million to support priority projects under the partnership agreements and this Budget provides further funding which honours the commitments. The partnerships will now move to State Growth for implementation.

The west coast is remote and unique and we know from our discussions under the partnership that the greatest challenge they face are people and workers. This means helping them to recruit and retain more essential service workers such as teachers, childcare workers and health workers, as well as providing housing for these workers to assist the community with their economic diversification and support young people when it comes to development of their skills and training.

The east coast may look a little different, but they too have very similar needs in some circumstances, including workforce development. Finding people is difficult right across Tasmania but is accentuated in outlying and regional areas and we need to be finding workers, housing them, delivering a robust visitor economy and improving liveability and essential services.

As part of our 2030 Strong Plan, we are delivering $10.2 million into these two partnerships, which include key worker accommodation and a number of other agreed priorities under our partnerships with the two communities. I expect we could achieve over time stronger regional communities, improved essential services and a more stabilised workforce for business and industry in those regions. That is the key thing.

Another key thing was also ensuring that strategic regional partnerships are not just between councils and state government but also involving key industry sectors on the west coast, such as mining, salmon, tourism, who are key partners there, and on the east coast involving other key partners as well, and I thank the mayors of Break O'Day and Glamorgan-Spring Bay for their leadership and willingness to work together on those matters.

Mr SHELTON - Following up on that, given that yourself and -

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Deputy Chair. That's not in the Standing Orders, that's a second question.

CHAIR - State your point, Mr Shelton.

Mr SHELTON - Well, others have had continual questions and extended that line of questioning.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, we haven't. It's because of the rotation.

CHAIR - I do allow a degree of latitude in the questions. There has been a number of occasions where I could have pulled a couple of members up a little shorter than I did, but I'm trying to give a little bit of flexibility here.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, I am sure the mayor of Break O'Day, Mick Tucker, has been in your ear about Break O'Day being one of the most tourism dependent areas in Australia. How good will it be to have a team of Tasmanian football men and women running around the mainland with Tasmania on the front of their guernsey's promoting Tasmania as a tourist destination?

Dr WOODRUFF - This is really sickening PR, really sickening, and an abuse of scrutiny. You should be embarrassed to answer that question in a scrutiny committee.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've put on the record many times, Mr Shelton, about what it means for the whole of Tasmanian, including rural and regional Tasmania, particularly around aspiration in regional communities for our young Tasmanians. Thank you for the question.

Mr O'BYRNE - Back to the GBE question, it does have a significant impact on not only the budget but the future of the state. Essentially, there is a cultural problem across a number of our GBEs in terms of their attitude towards Tasmania. They seem to be making decisions in

the best interest of their organisation, not necessarily Tasmania. The only thing that you've mentioned is a redraft of the shareholder expectations and a nice chat and a level of concern. Surely that's not going to fix the problem. What other steps are you taking to fix the issues we have with our GBEs and some of the terrible decisions they're making?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe that I have outlined this quite significantly in terms of the charter and ministerial oversight as well and my desire.

Mr O'BYRNE - That does not give you a legal right to instruct them, do they? It's just an instruction.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's my clear expectation and we are the government of the day. There will no doubt be other governments of other colours in some time in the future and I would expect that the GBEs would follow the government policy there as well without their commitment. What I've come to appreciate and realise is that we do need to ensure that our GBEs and Southern companies are very focused on the team Tasmania approach. We highlighted it also in our Liberal fiscal strategy that we outlined in full transparency at the last election. One of the key fiscal objectives is requiring government businesses to deliver outcomes consistent with Tasmanian Liberals policy objectives: Deliver services to Tasmanians at the lowest sustainable cost while growing our economy and engaging with business and community in a constructive manner.

Mr O'BYRNE - But they're not, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You could point to examples where they-

Mr O'BYRNE - All day, all day.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You could point to those examples and I will take feedback from the community that they can do far better when it comes to this. I agree with you and that's why very deliberately in our fiscal strategy objectives, in the last line 'and engaging with business and community in a constructive manner'. Now that's there for a very clear reason Mr O'Byrne and the reason is the question that you've just given me regarding my expectations and the feedback that I get. I look forward to GBEs later on in the year, where we can further outline not only my expectations, but ministerial expectations, the charters as well, and hear from the GBEs themselves around how they're going to ensure continued focus on being constructive for stakeholders and getting stuff done.

Mr WINTER - Premier, in an earlier answer, the Secretary outlined saving strategies over the next year. I've written them down and rounded them up. They're about $1 million this year, $2 million the following year and $3 million the year after that. There's been a question broadly about what's a frontline service and what's not. Is Service Tasmania considered to be frontline and is Service Tasmania likely to see any cuts or even closures of Service Tasmania centres?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Good question. They are absolutely frontline and they are not subject to the efficiency dividend.

Mr WINTER - Are there any aspects in the department or any components of the department's work that are seen as being able to be not frontline in terms of where these savings are coming from?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Further to the answer that Ms Morgan-Wicks gave in terms of how we can achieve possibly more savings than required, or stated if I can put it that way, but Kathy, would you like to talk about that from an operational point of view?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - From an operational perspective, in addition to the establishment management project we've been undertaking to optimise our budgeting for staffing and to reflect their actual workload variations that are recorded within the department, other opportunities for savings - and I'm aware from speaking with other heads of agencies - we'll be looking for efficiencies, for example, in supplies and consumables, efficiencies in relation to travel. We have greatly benefited through the COVID pandemic in relation to the uptake of online meetings, including encouraging our other states and territories and Commonwealth colleagues to participate in online meetings rather than always face to face.

In relation to fleet management, making sure we have optimised the use of vehicles and allocation of vehicles. Looking at, for example, our lease expenditure and accommodation across government. We often have changing levels due to machinery-of-government changes, for example, which impact for particular departments, where groups may move from one department to another, which then impacts on our accommodation where we may be able to achieve a saving.

Those are various examples. As heads of agencies, we absolutely know the pressure that is on our employees and our commitment to deliver the priorities of the government, and also the effort to actually recruit employees and the time spent to do that. That is why we do look to initiatives such as the establishment management, supplies and consumables or other non-employee items in order to deliver efficiencies in the Budget.

Mr WINTER - Premier, your communications office has now ballooned out to 12 FTEs. Is your communications office subject to any of the vacancy control or efficiencies you've outlined today?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Resources have increased for all MPs, including the Labor Party, including the Greens, as I understand it. And, of course, we have more members of Parliament now -

Dr WOODRUFF - And all the MPs.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Sorry?

Dr WOODRUFF - All MPs, as you say.

Mr ROCKLIFF - All MPs, yes, that is right, isn't it?

Mr WINTER - Yes, to my knowledge.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have more MPs and a broader ministry as well.

Mr WINTER - In terms of that, Premier, we have new arrangements, we have 35 members of parliament. How have you allocated the staffing arrangements across members of parliament? Have there been any increases for independent members. for example, as a part of the new parliament?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I had engagement, obviously, with yourself, the Leader of the Greens, and the crossbench after the election. It was noted that additional resources to support the effective functioning of the House of Assembly due to its increasing size and focus on a collaborative approach would be appreciated. We've worked on developing and determined to provide initial half an FTE per member to use at the party's discretion. That is about greater engagement and also occupational health and safety for existing employees. In terms of staffing per House member, each member is nominally allocated 1.5 FTE and a further $130 000 staffing allowance. We have indicated it's very much up to the discretion of each member how this allocated on a dollar basis to their staff.

To recognise party status, there is an additional staffing allowance for those parties with three members, 15 per cent additional for between three and five members, and 25 per cent additional for five members, I'm advised. I recognise there'd been some ambiguity in the past but in this new constructive parliament I've been seeking to formalise these arrangements so all members can be clear on their entitlements.

Mr WINTER - Are you able to table the staffing allocations across the members of the different parties and independents?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Of course. I'll take that on notice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, can you breakdown the $775 million for the stadium figure so that we can see what was submitted to the planning commission so that we can see what it does and doesn't include? I want to know, for example, does it include contracts that have already been awarded, such as for design works; and does it include the costs of the new access road, the bus mall, moving the Goods Shed and the underground car park?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question and I am happy to answer it, as Mr Street will also be happy to answer some of these questions. The Project Of State Significance submission is a planning document and I'm sure we've got the WT partnership document that Ms Johnston asked for, I believe, will be applied in coming days.

Dr WOODRUFF - Would you like to take that question on notice if you don't have the information at the table?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can take that on notice if you like or I can invite -

Dr WOODRUFF - It's a straight question about whether they're included.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can, but I'd like to provide as much information as possible as quickly as possible, so I'd like to invite Anne Beach to the table for a few questions if you'd like to just touch on that, notwithstanding Mr Street's direct responsibility for this in terms of the stadium infrastructure.

Thank you, Anne, who is the Chief Executive Officer of Macquarie Point Development Corporation.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Premier. It's the same question I asked you. Does the $775 million for the stadium figure include contracts that have already been awarded, such as for design work and the costs of the new access road, the bus mall, moving the Goods Shed and the building of an underground car park?

Ms BEACH - The $775 million is for the stadium works. The project budget does include consultancy work, so it includes the construction development costs which include consultant fees, headworks, contingencies and resourcing, as well as escalation so that does include contracts issued today as part of that full budget.

The car park is included in our planning application because it will be supporting the stadium, but it is a whole-of-precinct outcome so that's not included in the project because it's not specific to the project. It's a whole-of-precinct car park. It won't be open to the public as such as more facilities support the precinct outcomes. It's included the planning application to make sure we have the ability to have approvals there to take that element of the precinct development to market.

The northern access road is a pre-existing commitment. There's funding in the budget to develop the design for that and that's being progressed separately. The bus transition is linked in with the northern access road, so we'll work through the development of that as part of the landscaping of the site.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. You didn't answer about moving the Goods Shed and the actual bus mall.

Ms BEACH - It's not a bus mall. It's a transition space. The northern access road will have a terminal end, so it'll have a turning space and the bus drop-off area will be integrated into that. So, they'll be integrating the northern access road in with the landscaping of the plaza in that space and we'll manage that from a whole-of-precinct approach.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, thank you. Premier, your government's summary report to the Tasmanian Planning Commission says:

> The operating assumption is that any residual funding will be borrowed.

This is backed up by your state Budget, which says:

> Additional expenditure outside the forward Estimates is anticipated to be met through short-term borrowings by the Macquarie Point Development Corporation.

You're clearly spending more than the $375 million you promised Tasmanians and are planning to borrow more to cover those expenses. Are you really going keep pretending that this complies with your election commitment?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We're simply going to invest $375 million, and we will.

Dr WOODRUFF - What about all the rest of this stuff? How is that going to be paid for?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I said $375 million is the Tasmanian government contribution into the Macquarie Point precinct and there will be a federal government contribution as well of $240 million and we expect to attract private investment. I mentioned in my previous answer where the interest has been in terms of areas of private investment as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are ratcheting up the costs. The stadium's obviously getting more and more expensive as we go on, so are you still pretending to Tasmanians that it's going to be private investors who are going to pick up the tab?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not pretending, we will do.

Dr WOODRUFF - Like the fairy private investors?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dr Woodruff, there has been private investment in stadia infrastructure across the country, okay? Perth is a very good example of that. There is private investment in lots of enabling infrastructure projects and I hold the firm view that private investment on what is a -

Dr WOODRUFF - Loss-making stadium.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well -

Dr WOODRUFF - It will be, by your own financial assessment.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You say that, but compared to other stadia it is very favourable in terms of the output, but you are forgetting the broader economy, you are forgetting the impact of an AFL team and the entertainment that will be attracted to come to Tasmania, and the private investment that people make into supporting surrounding infrastructure to support the precinct and the stadia as well. There's a lot to be considered here. I recognise your opposition, which as far as I can tell must only be political, because here we have a virtual wasteland -

Dr WOODRUFF - It wasn't going to be that way; that's what you've created, unfortunately.

Mr ROCKLIFF - with sewage works and an ex-port, and what we've created is an urban renewal project which Tasmanians will be proud of and I am looking forward to to that and all the benefits from that.

Mrs PENTLAND - Have you had any discussions with Hawthorn about continuing to play matches in Launceston?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I haven't directly, beyond 2028.

Mrs PENTLAND - Would you consider it if it stacks up?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am sure minister Street would have engaged this but discussions are happening.

Mr O'BYRNE - I have a question on the stadium. There was some media commentary around the figure that was used, the $715 million to $770 million, and there was some information given in the media that that is the current sort of estimate based on what is being planned. I understand in in the commentary there was talk that that figure may change, go up and down depending on what's in scope and what's out of scope. That is obviously of interest to Tasmanians, so could you expand on that and explain that?

Ms BEACH - Yes, that is absolutely right. Cost planning is a dynamic process and it's important to note that what we've put in to the Planning Commission is at the concept stage, so it's very early in the design stage, and we've included a cost estimate to inform the economic analysis that supports that integrated assessment. It is not the final figure and we're not yet at final design so we have quite a long way to go. We're working through the schematic design and then we'll go through the detailed design that will go through 40, 60 and 75 per cent as part of that contracting process.

As we go through that, we'll be refining. It's important to note, as the Premier said, what we've submitted here is for planning approval, it's not for cost approval, and we've included the full spectrum of activity that would be delivered over time in this space. As we go through that refinement, we can pull back some of those assumptions, so there'll be per square metre rates where there's a fair bit of buffering there. We've allowed for some flexibility. There's quite a bit of contingencies. As we work through the detailed design process we can unpack some of those assumptions and we will find the budget will go up and down on a weekly basis as we work through.

As you can imagine, there's block allocations, as you'll see in the architectural drawings in attachment A to our submission. As we allocate specific rooms, put in doors, adding all those extra wall allocations, unpack the level of finish we're going to have in specific areas, determine what food and beverage will be where, all that level of detail provides a level of specificity that allows us to specifically cost those elements. It is a very early working cost estimate that will continue to change right up until that final design and we have included some contingency in there, so we expect to be able to manage this to budget.

Mr SHELTON - I could ask a lot of questions about the positive outcomes of the AFL team and the stadium but I won't. My question is about the government actions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy to establish a kids' clinic. Can you provide information on how many clinics are established and how you will know that the whole strategy is working?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton. The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, It Takes a Tasmanian Village, was launched back in 2021 with an investment of $100 million for a four-year strategy for children and young people aged between zero and 25 years of age. We're now in our third year of the strategy and the establishment of kids' care clinics was a key part of our commitment in the strategy, as you've highlighted. There are now 18 kids' care clinics established. There are 12 in southern Tasmania, four in the north and two in the north-west and to date they have enabled over 5000 appointments for more than 1700 vulnerable children to access community-based multidisciplinary paediatric services. These are free services, I would add, so they assist vulnerable families with cost-of-living pressures, as you can particularly appreciate in recent times.

A total of $6 million over three years was allocated for the establishment of these clinics that provide targeted health care as well as support for vulnerable children and families with a focus on early identification of children's and young persons' particular health needs and also wellbeing concerns.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's a pity you set up and funded a taskforce which was counter to the commission of inquiry's recommendations, and you're not closing Ashley.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Chair, these are important so if I may just finish very quickly. The clinics are based in local facilities, child and family learning centres, neighbourhood houses and outreach services. The first was established in Kingston Neighbourhood House. All kids' care clinics are run by the Tasmanian Community Paediatric Team. In the second half of 2024, we'll be evaluating how the strategy is going, what is working well and what might need to be improved upon - good evaluation should always do that - as we move towards the next four-year plan. There are ongoing commitments but we look forward to the next four years as well based on continuous improvement, of course.

Mr WINTER - Does your government have any plans to privatise parts of the Public Trustee?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Minister Barnett has responsibility for these areas. We recognise the important work of the Tasmanian Public Trustee providing essential services to the community to manage and act as trustee, attorney, executor -

Dr WOODRUFF - Sounds like you're leaving the door open.

Mr ROCKLIFF - or administrator for financial affairs. Since the 2021 review of the Public Trustee by Damien Bugg AM KC, the Tasmanian Government has been progressing reforms to the administrative and operational practices of the Public Trustee, completing 26 of 28 recommendations.

I thank the Public Trustee, led by CEO Todd Kennedy, for their engagement and commitment to implement the recommendations and would like to acknowledge the considerable effort the Public Trustee has put in to improve client satisfaction.

In July 23, the Treasurer directed the Tasmanian Economic Regulator to inquire into the Public Trustee's fees and charges for clients required by legislation to use the Public Trustee's services. The regulator delivered the report of the inquiry to the Treasurer and Attorney, I'm advised, in February this year. The Tasmanian Government will release the Tasmanian Economic Regulator's report in due course.

Both the Economic Regulator's report and the 2021 independent review into the Public Trustee have raised questions about the appropriateness of the business model for the Public Trustee and the Regulator, suggesting that there may be merit in more closely examining other administrative models for the business.

To provide assurances to government on structural change of the delivery of regulated services of the Public Trustee and what represents a best-practice approach to deliver more effective, efficient and cost-effective services to clients, the Government will conduct a short, independent review of the Public Trustee.

The independent review will also provide advice on whether the commercial will, estate and trustee services currently provided would be transferred to the private sector to allow the Public Trustee to focus on the delivery of -

Mr WINTER - You are privatising the Public Trustee?

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - You're actually going to get rid of the Public Trustee.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, how can it be the Public Trustee?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are all working through this and we do not need to raise our voices.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am just concerned about where you are working towards - privatisation.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Okay. To allow the Public Trustee to focus on the delivery of non-commercial services and recommendations of the Regulator's report. I am advised the anticipated independent review will take six to eight weeks to complete.

Mr WINTER - What components of the Public Trustee's current operations are your government considering privatising?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As has been stated by the Attorney-General, Minister for Justice Guy Barnett, and Michael Ferguson, the Treasurer, it will be restructured with the commercial will, estate and trustee services currently provided to be transferred to the private sector.

Now, we have spoken about how we came to this, in terms of Damien Bugg's recommendations, and -

Mr WINTER - You put a media release out one minute after I asked the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we've hardly drafted a media release in one minute.

Ms DOW - You must have a lot of resources in your comms office, Premier.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Both the Economic Regulator's report and the 2021 independent review into the Public Trustee raised questions about the appropriateness of the government business model, the Public Trustee, given the competing tensions between maximising revenue and protecting the interests of vulnerable clients.

So, we've been into a model that best protects the interests of vulnerable clients and that is the matter.

Mr WINTER - You've talked about the issue here, which is the vulnerable clients - this is about them. How can their interests be better served in the private sector rather than in the public sector? I mean, how low has your government possibly got to privatise the Public Trustee?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I say, the Public Trustee will -

Mr WINTER - Is this a money thing or is this an incompetence thing?

Mr ROCKLIFF - This is a better delivery of services thing.

Mr WINTER - The question was, Premier, how can these services that protect vulnerable Tasmanians, the most vulnerable Tasmanians, possibly be better served in the private sector than in the public sector?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The changes that we are making, as we have said, and it's been articulated by the Attorney-General and the Treasurer, is about ensuring better services, particularly for vulnerable Tasmanians.

Mr WINTER - How, Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There has been recommendations put forward and we're listening and acting on a number of those recommendations. It is about continuous improvement, as I say, better service delivery, better supporting vulnerable Tasmanians.

Mr WINTER - What are the amount of savings that are planned to come from this change? Is the Public Trustee exposed to your efficiency dividend?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There will be a restructuring analysis to determine the final model and any investment that we continue to make will be clearly articulated.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is a shameful announcement from your government and it just shows how terrible your priorities are. We have been talking about failing to invest in critical health and social infrastructure by choosing to fund things like the stadium and all manner of other things which are not on the top list. However, I never would have dreamt that under your government you would privatise the Public Trustee, after everything that organisation has gone through. After the work that has been done building up the Public Trustee, after the dark days in the Bugg review, it has turned around. At this point you are actually going to pull it out from underneath the most vulnerable Tasmanians. How can you honestly call this -

Mr ROCKLIFF - It will actually make it better.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why do you not put the work into the public employees and the organisation so that they can do the job, which you apparently think they are not doing properly, that you think the private sector is better at doing? Why don't you do that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - This is about protecting vulnerable Tasmanians and improving the service to vulnerable Tasmanians.

Dr WOODRUFF - Give me an example around Australia where it has been better for vulnerable people for the private sector to come in, profit-making, and look after their interests, especially vulnerable people. Give me an example of where it is better?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Some services might be closer -

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Give me an example of why you think this will be better? You can't.

Mr ROCKLIFF - There has been a number of reports done. The economic regulator's report recommended it, was it in February 2024? Have you read the report?

Dr WOODRUFF - Are you doing the job as Premier looking after vulnerable Tasmanians?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, absolutely, more than any other government in the history of Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, let's talk about your priorities on putting money into the stadium. One of the other things you are not costing, money that could be going into vulnerable Tasmanians that the Public Trustee represents, is going into paying to get entertainment to Tasmania.

What has been costed for the requirement for the state to pay for event attraction funding in the stadium budget that has been proposed? How much money is going towards attracting events to Tasmania? Because they're sure not going to come by themselves.

Ms BEACH - The analysis included in the planning application is full cost, so they are not necessarily new costs. So, this is not in assumed any additional event funding as part of the project funding.

Dr WOODRUFF - I didn't understand. It is the case, is it not, that we will have to spend the money to attract events? How much has been costed for that?

Ms BEACH - The analysis has looked at considering a number of different costs through the stadium development. The project does not assume any of the project funding will go towards event analysis. Event funding on a year-to-year basis is a decision for the government from its event allocation each year.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, it's a future cost that is not put into the project? That will come out of another part of the government budget towards attracting events to go to the stadium?

Ms BEACH - Event funding is an allocation the government would make each year.

Dr WOODRUFF - But it is stadium-specific event attraction that will come out of other budget areas?

Ms BEACH - It would be a decision as to the event funding allocated that year as to what it is spent on, so it may not be an additional spend.

Mrs PENTLAND - Premier, your Gender Budget Statement confirms that about 11 per cent of girls and women aged 15 to 24 are not engaged in work or study. That is way above the national average of about 7 per cent. What are you doing to change this? You have your High Vis Army which is great for the men because we know that only 3 per cent of women get involved in construction. Are you targeting women in employment between 15 to 24?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As you've correctly pointed out, and thank you for the question, in terms of the High Vis Army. it's available to everyone, first -

Mrs PENTLAND - But it does favour men, being only 3 per cent of women involved in the construction industry.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, and there has been work to improve that, as I understand it. I remember there was significant effort years ago, and quite possibly still is, I expect, to have more women engineers as well. When it comes to women's representation across a number of fields, representation in politics, the Tasmanian three-year trend, as demonstrated on page 27 of the Tasmanian Gender Budget Statement, is improving. We're better than national comparison. Women in leadership and managerial roles is improving comparable to the national average. Women in self-employment is steady and is comparable to the national comparison. Flexible working arrangements are improving and better than the national comparison.

Mrs PENTLAND - Just specifically to 15- to 24-year-olds, if you look at that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I want to commend the Department of Premier and Cabinet and others who have worked on the 2024-25 Tasmanian Gender Budget Statement. It is very comprehensive and it's being improved upon every year, which is commendable and important. I am very proud of the fact that our government produces a gender budget statement.

I want greater participation of women in our workforce. Tasmania has fared well in recent years when it comes to participation in the workforce. I stand to be corrected, but the figure of about 140,000 women participating in the workforce was, at some point in time, a record, which was very pleasing. No doubt you can point to areas of continuous improvement there.

Mrs PENTLAND - We've been a tourism, obviously, minister, as well, we know that 58.6 per cent of women are in hospitality. Would that be an area where you could identify some incentives for 15- to 24-year-olds to engage where there's going to be a larger uptake with women in that industry?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The industry is performing well already, you're saying, but you'd like to?

Mrs PENTLAND - In reverse to the construction industry, we know that there's 58.6 per cent in Tasmania women that are engaged in hospitality. Obviously, that's more than men. So, perhaps you could incentivise 15- to 24-year-old women to get involved with tourism to help bridge that gap of the difference between 15 and 24.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm well aware of your experience within the tourism and hospitality sector so I'd be more than happy to engage with yourself and ideas that you have. We engage

continually with the hospitality sector. That could be a part, we've got the Boosting the Future of Hospitality and events commitment and $3 million investment into the Greater Customer Experience program by the Tasmanian Hospitality Association. It will provide free support to tourism and hospitality businesses across the state. I'll be interested in your ideas and thoughts on this because of your experience within the industry sector.

Mr SHELTON - To follow on a similar line of questioning, congratulations to the Premier and government for the budget gender statement. It is wonderful. What percentage of women are in senior leadership positions in the State Service? And what efforts are being made in the State Service to ensure workplace equality and respect?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I appreciate that question very much.

Can I also just say to Dr Woodruff, I mentioned the February 2024 report when it comes to the economic regulator. It is February 2024, but released today.

Women make up about half of the Tasmanian community, so it is important they are equally represented in positions of leadership and decision-making across our State Service. In 2016, our government set a target of women holding at least 40 per cent of senior executive positions by 2020. We achieved that ahead of time, Mr Shelton, and exceeded it. In fact, as of June 2024, women now occupy 54.8 per cent of senior executive roles, based on paid headcount. In addition, all agencies have committed to the Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards and have developed agency action plans to report against the standards.

A key initiative in supporting women across government is the Women Supporting Women in Leadership program that supports and mentors women in the State Service in their leadership journey. In November last year, the Women Supporting Women program launched its leadership strategy 2024-27, which aims to provide more opportunities for women in leadership to share experiences, learn new skills, network and develop leadership capacity. An action plan to support and promote women's wellbeing is developed each calendar year and is contributing to a more inclusive and equitable workplace across the state sector.

Mr WINTER - Premier, there's been a number of scandals that have been outlined from the Public Trustee over the last few years. We had an elderly man in hospital having his lease terminated and his home cleared without his knowledge, a woman was prevented from using her own money to buy Christmas presents from her family and there's been compensation claims for young children. How will privatising the Public Trustee help those vulnerable Tasmanians who have been so badly let down?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is not privatisation of the Public Trustee. There have been many reviews recommending significant improvement across the way. Some services will be brought closer to government, such as the Department of Justice, and what you've just outlined is what we want to avoid. The decision has been made following extensive consideration of the 2021 independent review and the Tasmanian Economic Regulator's recent inquiry into the Public Trustee's fees and charges, both of which raised questions about the appropriateness of the existing government business enterprise model.

To provide assurance to the government that the structural change represents the best-practice approach, an independent examination will be undertaken to inform detailed planning for implementation. This examination will cover matters relating to determining if the

Public Trustee is fit for purpose, including if it achieves effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery to the Public Trustee's core client groups, including representative persons and other clients required to use Public Trustee services; is sustainable under the structural model prescribed in the *Government Business Enterprise Act 1995*; and the suitability of an agency model as the new structure for delivering effective and efficient services to the Public Trustee's core clients.

Mr WINTER - Won't privatising the Public Trustee reduce the ability of your ministers and to have that oversight that's been so badly let down for Tasmanians who are supposed to be looked after by the Public Trustee?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Subject to being informed by an independent examination, it is anticipated that the new arrangements will be implemented in the next 12 to 18 months. As to investigating commercial services to the private sector, these services that are not the Public Trustee's core services, okay? The services you're referring to will be closer to government to avoid the cases you outlined.

Mr WINTER - What are those services that you're looking to privatise?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I say, we'll be working on these matters and the Attorney-General will be working through these matters. I can go through some of the key findings.

Mr WINTER - I don't need to see that; I don't need to hear that. I was asking what components of it are you looking to be privatised?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We'll work through these matters, but the core services, we want better services for vulnerable Tasmanians. We've had the economic regulator's report -

Mr WINTER - Do you think the answer to that is to commercialise it?

Dr WOODRUFF - Why didn't you explain it to the Legislative Council? You put out a media release the second he finished talking this morning.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, please let the Premier -

Dr WOODRUFF - Timing? Didn't want to front the Legislative Council members?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - These are the Estimates of the Department of Premier Cabinet. We have had the 2021 review and the Economic Regulator report. Are we to ignore all the findings in those reports, is that what you're saying we should do? The regulator wasn't able to assess whether the Public Trustee's fees and charges reflect the efficient cost of service delivery for individuals. The Public Trustee's costs are too high and the average cost of providing services to representative persons in Tasmania was among the highest in the country and more than three times higher than in Victoria, where a supported decision-making model has already been implemented. Why wouldn't we want to continuously improve not only the services to vulnerable Tasmanians but the cost of services?

Mr WINTER - So, you think that commercialising this service is a good way to improve the Public Trustee?

Mr ROCKLIFF - What I'm saying is we need to improve our services -

Mr WINTER - So, you've given up on it and you're going to hand it over to the private sector because you can't manage this and you can't protect those vulnerable Tasmanians.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, on Mr Shelton's recent interest in the area of women in the public service, will the government commit to the Commonwealth Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) reporting?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question and I am happy to provide an answer about that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will your government commit to that reporting?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am happy to consider WGEA reporting and take that on notice. We report on a number of matters in terms of gender information but -

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I take that as a question on notice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, if you'd like. Happy to answer it, too.

Dr WOODRUFF - The cost estimate on the stadium of $775 million in the financial impact report does not include $55 million of so-called value management strategies, in other words, critical stadium infrastructure such as LED ribbon lighting, PA systems, audiovisual equipment and food and beverage fit-outs. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation's financial impact report says it is unprecedented and unlikely for the private sector to engage in this type of investment. Premier, will you be truthful with Tasmanians and admit that these costs will just become an extra stadium debt?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dr Woodruff, I respect your position when it comes to the stadium. I don't agree with it, but you have a position. We're investing $375 million into enabling infrastructure like we invest into schools, hospitals, roads, bridges - and we can have both. We can invest in essential services, we can invest in frontline services - which we are and will continue to do - and we can invest in enabling infrastructure, as every state of Australia has. I am not of the view that Tasmania needs to be a special case where we miss out.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, do you disbelieve that assessment? I'm just finishing up on this, Chair.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, I have given the call to Mr O'Byrne.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, Chair. My question through the Premier is to Ms Beach following on from the question from the Tasmanian Greens on economic modelling. The paperwork in the proposal released last week outlines a 1500-seat conference centre or the ability to host that. Why was that number arrived at and what would that mean in context to the conference market in Hobart and Tasmania?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question and I appreciate that very much. Ms Beach, would you like to answer that question?

Ms BEACH - We looked at a few different options and we did go for 1500 persons seated as you noted. And that's important because there are a number of offerings already in the CBD and more broadly, but particularly in the CBD. It was important that we got offered above 1100, which we're already able to offer.

CHAIR - The time being virtually 11.00 a.m., I'm going to suggest that we have a break for approximately ten minutes. We'll be back here at approximately 11.07 a.m.

The Committee suspended from 10.57 a.m. to 11.08 a.m.

Mrs PENTLAND - Election spending. So, Premier, how much discussion was there during the campaign about the level of election spending that was appropriate? Given February's budget outlook report confirmed just how unsustainable the state's finances were, how was it decided to announce a further $1.4 billion in new spending? If you had your time again, would you make the same promises, or do you think you would be more prudent?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. We, in my view, invested wisely in making the decisions we made, not only to support local communities but also, importantly, on infrastructure, upgrading hospitals, reaching into primary healthcare services, for example, when it comes to GP services, GP guarantee, and those areas of responsibility that really fall within the Commonwealth.

But Tasmanians only really care about the services themselves, not who delivers, so we're reaching in to support that, notwithstanding the good partnerships we've had with the urgent care centres and the like. So, I'm very comfortable with the commitments that we made. We're very mindful of the investments that we're making to ensure that they could lead to a sustainable budget position.

Most Tasmanians would agree that we're investing in the right areas, including health and education and public safety and infrastructure, and that's reflected in the Budget where we have got that balance right between a sensible pathway to surplus and investment in appropriate areas that Tasmanians care about, reaching into the cost of living, for example, and supporting Tasmanians through what has been a nationwide, if not global, cost of living crisis. The renewable energy dividend was part of our commitment in terms of supercharging the renewable energy dividend, housing infrastructure, for example.

So, I am comfortable with the level of investment we're making. This was, combined with our fiscal strategy, sensible, measured in response, and, in comparison to the other major political party vying for government, being the Labor Party, far more sensible.

Mrs PENTLAND - Can you just expand on the Commonwealth part, like just the Commonwealth responsibility? Are we picking up the price tag for the Commonwealth responsibility because they are not delivered?

Mr ROCKLIFF - What I am saying is that the Commonwealth have that responsibility for primary health care largely, whereas we're in charge of the acute care service delivery when it comes to our hospitals. My view is that when it comes to attracting GPs, for example, and

more primary healthcare services, the Commonwealth could do a lot more. We are finding we have GP services that are stretched, particularly in regional areas, and that is why matters such as our 9000 bulk billing appointments, the GP guarantee and the employer service model that I announced in January 2023 with the Prime Minister are important. Urgent care centres are again a Commonwealth investment but they are also in partnership with the state government. The Commonwealth really should be grabbing the primary health care bull by the horns rather than neglecting it, and we are reaching in to boost it, along with reducing red tape when it comes to pharmacies and the like as well, which I have spoken about in parliament before.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, this Budget has $8.3 million to expand Service Tasmania's digital services. What does that mean for Tasmanians and what will the funding deliver?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much for that, Mr Shelton. As members may know, Service Tasmania's digital portal myServiceTas was launched in April this year. This provides Tasmanians with a secure single myServiceTas login so they have access to Tasmanian government services in one place, anytime, anywhere.

In the first five months, 42,000 accounts have been created, and as of 8 August this year, just over 7000 car registration renewals and 2600 driver licence renewals have been successfully processed. Tasmanians can also check their driver's licence or registration, check demerit points or sign up as a new driver to the Plates Plus course. Importantly, this new service complements all existing Service Tasmania facilities, the 27 locations of the phone services and the website. The digital portal adds to the suite of options to deliver government services and is not replacing any services that exist already.

Local Tasmanian business Intuit worked with us to build this first-of-its-kind portal in Tasmania. We committed $4.3 million in the 2021-22bBudget, I remember that, and now we have committed a further $8.3 million over four years to keep this great new tool operational as well as developing further services on the platform. For example, a new service added to the portal on 29 August was to give landowners the ability to apply for a fire permit or to register an intention to burn. Additional upcoming services will include temporary upgrade permits for heavy vehicles for transfer and disposal of vehicles, bulk vehicle registration renewals for organisations who operate vehicle fleets that help Tasmanians and businesses get their business done in an easier, more effective way.

Mr WINTER - Premier, I want to ask about caretaker conventions. During the recent election, there was a €50 million payment to Finnish shipbuilder Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC). During the Public Accounts Committee inquiry, the former chair of TT-Line, Michael Grainger, outlined that he had advice, which I think was via Treasury, that this did not trigger a need to tell the minister and therefore trigger caretaker conventions. Was DPAC consulted about this advice and can you or the secretary explain why variations to existing transactions do not trigger caretaker conventions?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. As to caretaker conventions, Ms Morgan-Wicks can speak to that in terms of DPAC advice and the like, noting that Ms Morgan-Wicks was not secretary during caretaker.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - In relation to caretaker conventions in themselves, they are published and managed by DPAC and are available on our Department of Premier and Cabinet

website. I was not the secretary of DPAC during the caretaker period so I cannot comment in relation to advice provided by the then secretary of DPAC in relation to that matter.

Mr WINTER - Can you take that on notice, then, just the specific question about whether DPAC was consulted about the advice of the TT-Line?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Mr WINTER - Thank you. Further to that line of questioning, is it your view or DPAC's view that the advice that existing transactions don't trigger caretaker conventions applies regardless of the quantum of the variation? In this case it was $80 million that TT-Line was advised didn't trigger caretaker. Is there a quantum that would trigger caretaker conventions?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In terms of a key set of criteria?

Mr WINTER - For example, if it had been half a billion dollars, would that have triggered caretaker conventions?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have section 4 of the guidelines for caretaker conventions, major contracts and amendments, which may provide further information for you but I can get that information if we've got it. It is on a case-by-case basis, I'm advised, to note dollar value.

Mr WINTER - Regarding the arrangements that were in place during that, are you satisfied that the TT Line, a government-owned business, was making decisions to pay $80 million of Tasmanian taxpayers' money to an overseas shipbuilder? Was there any point in time in which your government was engaged in those conversations and if so, what was that engagement? Are you satisfied that they made that decision without your government signing off on it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is a question best asked to the shareholder minister at the time.

Mr WINTER - You are the Premier.

Mr WINTER - I wasn't engaged with it, but we're happy to provide some further advice in terms of criteria and the like.

Mr WINTER - Do you think it's okay that TT-Line made a decision to bail out a Finnish shipbuilder without seeking the approval of your government to do so with $80 million worth of taxpayer money?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's very important that our government business enterprises and state-owned companies operate in an open and transparent way and I expect a team Tasmania approach to these matters. If there needs to be further refinement of the caretaker conventions and indeed the criteria, like we do across all of government, we want to have the best possible system.

Mr WINTER - The question still hasn't been answered.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, my question is in relation to the cost of the stadium. Ms Beach confirmed earlier that the moving of the Goods Shed and the building of the

underground car park have not been included in the submission for costs on the stadium, the $775 million. Can you please tell me any information you have about how much they're expected to cost?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I wouldn't have that information at hand.

Dr WOODRUFF - Maybe Ms Beach could?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm impressed with the very pragmatic approach to the Goods Shed, though, and the visuals there with the see-through roof to be able to visualise the Cenotaph as demonstrated in some of the pictures. It looks very impressive and takes into account -

Dr WOODRUFF - The question is how much is it going to cost to move, along with the car park?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That will be determined. I'm not sure if we have any figures, but again, this is a planning matter.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you confirm for Tasmanians that you have or have not costed the move of the Goods Shed and the building of an underground car park, which are both required for the stadium?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I named a number of matters this morning. Ms Beach, would you like to speak to this, please?

Ms BEACH - We are currently scoping up the car parking and our intent would be to take that to market, to test the market to see the response to that.

In relation to the Goods Shed, there are a couple of different options. One is that it is disassembled, stored offsite and then reassembled in the location we have outlined in our POSS application, which is to the north of the site where the original tram shed was located to align with the rail lines. Another is that we try and relocate it as one parcel and we have had some representations to suggest there are some businesses that can do that. We will need to go through a process to test the different options to work through which of those is the most feasible and cost effective.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you table any information you have that has been done on the preliminary work in costing the move of the Goods Shed and the building of the underground car park, please?

Ms BEACH - That work is still very preliminary and will involve market testing and we're still working through the options.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, the original cost for the stadium was $715 million, with funding to come from the state of $375 million, the feds for $240 million and the AFL for $15 million to bring to a total of $630 million, which left a shortfall of $85 million that you have been saying the private sector will pick up. Last week, we heard that your promise was broken and the price has actually increased to $60 million. We also found out from the budget papers that there is an extra $55.2 million in so-called value management strategies that Tasmanians will be paying for, so the current cost is now estimated to be $830.2 million,

a shortfall of $200.2 million. We've just heard that doesn't include moving the Goods Shed and the cost of building the underground car park. Are you still pretending that the private sector is going to pick up that tab?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, it will. I thought you said it would cost a billion dollars.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, it's obviously going to cost more than a billion dollars, just like retrofitting the ACT stadium cost more than a billion dollars.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I don't know, but anyway, we're putting $375 million into it.

Dr WOODRUFF - You're pushing it that way?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's a good investment and it will be funded by the private sector and, gee, I look forward to it because it's fantastic. I just don't quite understand what the Greens have against jobs and aspirations for young people. I don't quite get it. This is a huge opportunity for our state -

Dr WOODRUFF - You're so out of touch with reality. You're just playing with this money, an extra $200 million-plus on top of what you've promised. It's just a game for you, isn't it?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr O'BYRNE - My question, Premier, it is not related to the stadium. Over the last decade there has been a deliberate policy across departments by government to engage workers on short-term contracts, rolling contracts and casual contracts, quite precarious forms of employment which have made it difficult for people to commit to Tasmania and to get home loans, et cetera. We are at the point now, particularly in Health, where you've institutionalised agency staff and locums, who cost the Health department and Tasmania significantly more money. Do you do you believe that is a problem? If you do, what are you going to do to unravel that? That is one of the biggest issues in terms of dealing with a health workforce.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. There is a challenge, I will agree with you on that, Mr O'Byrne, not unlike the challenge of our community sector, for example, when it comes to the importance of compounding indexation to support their growth in terms of their support by moving to five-year contracts. It's all about providing that certainty and being able to secure that workforce. The more certainty you can provide, the more secure the workforce will be and the more likely people will be to stay in Tasmania. I understand the reason for your question. When I was Health minister, we announced back in March 2023, if my memory served me correctly, putting Ambulance Tasmania employees and paramedics on permanent contracts, which is certainly leading into that space you are talking about regarding more certainty and less contractual basis.

Locums have been a problem for a long time, which is why we're working with organisations such as Brand Tasmania on workforce attraction and the work they have done. I commend Brand Tasmania on attracting a workforce. I haven't been to some of the information sessions. Certainly, our Brand Tasmania stand in terms of workforce attraction stands out and is attractive to people to enquire about working in Tasmania.

The State Service has experienced growth in its workforce over the past year and as at the end of June 2024, the Tasmanian State Service headcount increased to 36,931 from 35,275 the year before, reflecting an increase in 1696 employees. Over 6400 positions were advertised externally on the Tasmanian government jobs website. In today's market it is important that we are responsive in our recruitment efforts to ensure we get the right people for the right jobs at the right time to deliver the essential services for the Tasmanian community. The increase in headcount and FTEs since 2023 demonstrates the net growth in employees in the Tasmanian State Service and the success of filling those vacancies.

I'll provide one example to you in terms of moving from fixed to permanent for our paramedics. ED1 was reissued on 29 July this year to incorporate commitments from the 2022 public sector union wages agreement to allow permanent part-time employees to have their appointment varied to include additional hours worked regularly for at least 12 months on an ongoing basis. We're funding those hours, as an example.

Mrs PENTLAND - We've heard this morning about the changes to the Public Trustee. What would it take for you to privatise a GBE? Mr O'Byrne accurately pointed out some of the failings of the state's GBEs. Is the government actively considering privatising any of them?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, the changes to the Public Trustee are all about making sure vulnerable Tasmanians are looked after and get better service from the Public Trustee. It's about making it better.

Mrs PENTLAND - That could be said about Metro too.

Mr ROCKLIFF - These changes will improve Public Trustee services for all Tasmanians but in particular vulnerable Tasmanians. We've had two independent reviews into the Public Trustee and we're acting on those results to make it better for Tasmanians. If you have two reviews to say it could be improved, then we must heed those findings and improve services through the Public Trustee for vulnerable Tasmanians.

When it comes to GBEs more broadly, privatisation is not part of the government's agenda in this particular budget. We will not be selling the Hydro and all those things people speak of when we talk about privatisation, but to be able to be in a position to privatise an asset there would have to be a lot of consideration, a lot of consultation, a lot of due diligence and a lot of work done to make sure there is an absolute net benefit to Tasmanians. No decision has been made on selling any GBE.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, I understand that the Sorell Service Tasmania centre is being moved into a new building that's being built for Service Australia. It's rather unusual to co-locate state and Commonwealth services like this. So, what are the benefits for Tasmanians in moving the two together and are there any extra costs?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, for the question. It's not unusual to co-locate Service Tasmania and Services Australia, and already, in Sorell, as you'd be well aware as a local Lyons member, Services Australia is currently a tenant in the Service Tasmania service centre space. Around the state there are a further three co-located service centres which combine Service Tasmania and Services Australia and 13 Service Tasmania sites that act as agents for the Commonwealth business, including Centrelink, Medicare and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The new Services Australia purpose-built facility in Sorell is scheduled for completion in October with occupancy planned for late November. This new centre will offer improved amenity for the local community and make it easier for Tasmanians in being able to do business with multiple layers of government in the one place. In fact, co-location was supported in the Watt independent review of the state service which recommended enhancing service delivery with partnerships with other layers of government.

Sorell, as you would be acutely aware, Mr Shelton, is a growing population centre and this new service centre will provide a fantastic contemporary service that will meet the needs of the community well into the future and my advice is that Service Tasmania is one of the busiest sites, with around 144 customers per day.

And I am also advised that all existing Service Tasmanian staff will transfer to the new site and financial implications for the state are minimal with a small increase in ongoing rental costs and a small contribution towards capital fit out costs directly related to the Service Tasmania model such as IT and other dedicated equipment, and I'm advised that these additional costs can be met within additional operational budgets.

I have some further information to table, Chair, which pertaining to the question that Mister Shelton asked and what's happening. For transparency.

Mr WINTER - Premier, during the election campaign, TT-Line made an $80 million payment to RMC without formal approval from you or your shareholder minister. Do you think that is appropriate?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we have been through these matters, Mr Winter, before in parliament and these are big decisions for the government business enterprise to make. When it comes to these decisions, government should be informed of these decisions and the best interests of Tasmanians, as I've said before. Where there are improvements-

Mr WINTER - Are you satisfied that your government was informed?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we've been over this. This was a commercial matter for the board under existing contractual arrangements, I'm advised that the board considered this the only viable option, as the alternative was to potentially go back to market for a new ship build. This would have cost around 30 per cent more for what we are now paying and resulted in a significant delay. That's also important to note that given the increase in materials, the vessels are now, assuming, worth more as well. And that decision was made.

Mr WINTER - Premier, in relation to Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC), there's been evidence provided by TT-Line's board that there's some inconsistencies between the evidence provided by your deputy and their knowledge of what occurred. How have you satisfied yourself that at all times your Deputy Premier and former minister for infrastructure has been open and honest about when he knew that there was a potential bailout required for TT-Line?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, minister Ferguson, the Treasurer, who has done a fantastic job, I have to say, in pulling together this Budget in difficult circumstances. Minister Ferguson has made a very clear statement on the 26 August 2024. Mr Ferguson has been scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee as has the TT-Line as well. Mr Ferguson has really done an

extraordinary job when it comes to pulling together this Budget in very difficult circumstances, and Mr Ferguson has outlined in a statement regarding his decision and disappointment, in many respects, and he provided the Public Accounts Committee with a lot of details regarding the handling of the new *Spirit*s and associated infrastructure.

Mr WINTER - Premier, your Ministerial Code of Conduct requires that your ministers act with honesty and integrity. There is serious evidence now being tended to the TT-Line inquiry, and a media statement issued by the TT-Line former chairman and board, that your deputy's statements have not been accurate. How have you satisfied yourself that the Deputy Premier has been honest with Tasmanians?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Minister Ferguson, the Deputy Premier, is an honest person.

Mr WINTER - Have you made any investigations, any inquiries, yourself?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Ferguson is an honest person. He has been scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee, who will determine a number of matters in relation to the TT-Line inquiry. But I have a lot of time for Michael Ferguson and his honesty.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, we understand your office contacted the Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) ahead of the release of the concert of your vanity project: the stadium. Is it true that your office asked the MPDC to change the musician depicted in the promotion because she looked too much like Taylor Swift? Is that because it would be embarrassing to imagine that we would actually be able to attract events like that? Does your office usually engage itself, does your Premier's Office and the government media unit usually engage in the communications plans for the MPDC?

Dr WOODRUFF - Is this how you are managing things?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not really sure what you are trying to get at. I have made comments in the past about how good it would be to have Tay-Tay in Hobart, but people say that is not possible but possibly could be. Who knows? Tay Tay, one day, could be -

Dr WOODRUFF - My question is do you get involved in that sort of managing of the MPDC from your office?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we work with various areas across government when it comes to matters and I am happy to be open and transparent, as I always am, about the stadium project and I cannot think of a single project that has had more scrutiny than Macquarie Point stadium precinct and the stadium itself. I am happy for people to come down and entertain Tasmanians. We are missing out now - and why would I not want a number of international and Australian acts to be playing in what will be a capacity of some 31,500 thousand people?

Dr WOODRUFF - Whenever we ask questions about failures of management by ministers in the health, education and housing portfolios, you always say that is a matter for those ministers, but you are actually micromanaging the work of the MPDC ahead of managing the output and the effectiveness of those other portfolios. Is that really your priority?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My priority is to do what I can for Tasmanians.

Dr WOODRUFF - It does not include people who are waiting for a hospital bed.

Mr ROCKLIFF - To provide the best possible services and, as my time as minister for Health, we increased the FTE in our public hospitals, we upgraded our hospitals or invested in our hospitals to be upgraded -

Dr WOODRUFF - What about Mr Jaensch in Children and Young People and Ashley, the children who are still languishing there and you are not engaging in that problem?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, the call has been given to Mr O'Byrne.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, the Premier did not answer the question.

Mr O'BYRNE -. Housing is obviously one of the biggest issues confronting Tasmania. During the election, you announced a levy on short-stay accommodation. There has been no mention of it since the election. What is happening with that? And will you listen to the calls to redirect any revenue from that short-stay levy into supporting homeless services in the important work they do, instead of further into the market?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will take that particular part of the question on notice. We are working on the levy as we speak, in terms of implementation. We have already earmarked, hypothecated, if that is the better word for it, to support housing affordability matters in terms of stamp duty investment. That has already been done. I note your comments about the size of the levy.

Mr O'BYRNE - Saul Eslake did talk about the revenue side of the Budget. This is one element where you have already announced a levy, where some revenue could be raised. Instead of putting it in the area you have announced, will you move that into supporting homeless services?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are already committed to where that will go.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, you are ruling that out?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, because we have already said where it would go. I want to continue that because this is what we committed to. But we are keen to support homelessness services. The agreement we have nationally around the housing initiative altered the emphasis towards homelessness, in terms of that federal and state government contribution. We have that greater emphasis on homelessness rather than affordable housing, which was part of the arrangement we signed up to with the federal government.

Homelessness support needs to be, as I am sure you will appreciate, more than a roof over a person's head. As critical as that is - and I often say that every Tasmanian has that fundamental right to be safe and have a roof over their head, there is more than that. That is why the Budget provides $46 million each year to help Tasmanians into safe and secure housing. Initiatives such as the 40-bed Women's Housing Service to be developed at Old Bethlehem House will be supported when it comes to this output. The Budget also delivers $900,000 over two years to establish key development coaches at each Safe Space site, helping Tasmanians overcome trauma and other barriers that can get in the way of someone finding a secure home.

CHAIR - Mrs Pentland.

Dr WOODRUFF - There was already two for the independents and JLN, I think.

CHAIR - I am giving latitude and being fair and balanced.

Dr WOODRUFF - Just on the Standing Orders, it is at the discretion of the Chair to give the JLN and the independents two; it's not a requirement. We just had two from Mr O'Byrne.

CHAIR - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I have given the call to Mrs Pentland.

Mrs PENTLAND - Interest on the government debt will rise from $179 million in 2023-24 to $441 million in 2027-28. Together with the cost of making pension payments to the remaining members of the now-closed defined benefits superannuation schemes, interest payments will absorb 9.3 per cent of total cash revenue by 2027-28, up 5.6 per cent in 2023-24 and well above the government's fiscal strategy target of 6 per cent. You would have spoken to a lot of business leaders like I have since the Budget was handed down. Do you concede there's a nervousness in the business sector about the amount of debt the state is taking on?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. Well, as I say, the debt is manageable. I thank you for the question. What would make business and industry more nervous is if we had a slash-and-burn approach to the Tasmanian government and budget. That would mean we'd take public funding out of the budget far too quickly, as I believe it was taken out in the 2011-12 budget. That has a negative and constricting effect on the economy and confidence, so it is important to have a managed approach to this. I am not ignoring debt. Your question is a very sensible question and a good one, but our debt is manageable. That's why we want to have greater efficiencies across government while still delivering the services as well. We want a growing economy. I appreciate the reason you've asked the question, but my answer to that is that the debt is manageable but we need to ensure that we achieve our efficiencies as we've outlined in the budget process.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, Labor has called our 100-day plan a gimmick, trying to tell Tasmanians that our government isn't doing anything. Can you put to rest these claims by detailing what the government has been delivering since the 2024 election?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I'm not sure why the Labor Party talk about this as a gimmick because it is a key measure of accountability. On the last day of the election campaign, we outlined our 100-day plan and delivered significantly, including $250 in energy credits to hundreds of thousands of Tasmanians and $300 to small businesses. We slashed public transport fares in half, saving passengers many dollars every week. We have abolished stamp duty and 133 first home buyers have now realised their dream of home ownership with the savings as a result of that.

Our recruitment blitz began in April and has already delivered many extra health professionals at the front line. We have launched new incentive packages for nurses and midwives and GPS. We committed to 78 deliverables we set ourselves, with 187 additional initiatives that were completed. We are also ensuring that we continue to deliver over the next 100 days, and the next and the next. It's an important measure of accountability in terms of what we committed to in the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future and keeping us as

ministers accountable to our commitments working alongside our departments to ensure that we deliver for Tasmanians. It could be as significant as stamp duty relief or as important as making TV in hospital free for patients, which is also part of what we committed to in our 100-day plan. Thank you for the question.

Mr WINTER - Premier, during the election you announced a so-called stability clause and said:

> If re-elected, we will amend section 32 of the *Constitution Act* to provide that if an elected member ceases to be a parliamentary member of a political party for which they were elected, then their seat becomes vacant and a recount occurs.

I can't see any evidence of that in your 100-day plan or your second 100-day plan. How is progress on that going and will it be retrospective?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the member for his question but there have been other key matters of priority which have taken precedence over the commitment you refer to. My advice is that we are taking and seeking advice about that commitment, but there are other key areas of priority such as the ones I just mentioned when it comes to our 100-day plan and our next 100-day plan. It is my expectation that they will deliver, which is very important for the Tasmanian people.

Mr WINTER - Would your policy apply to members of the JLN who ceased to be members of the party to become independents?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It will not be retrospective and if you were removed from a party, it wouldn't have applied anyway.

Mr WINTER - Well, that's not how your policy reads, Premier. Is this a policy that you liked when it suited you when it was the two former Liberals leaving the Jacqui Lambie Network and signing a supply and confidence deal with you? You're quite happy with it? Is this the sort of policy where you just pick and choose when it applies and when it doesn't?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have said it will apply with no retrospectivity. You mention the JLN but it wouldn't apply there anyway because of the circumstances under which they left.

Mr WINTER - That's not what your policy said.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Nonetheless, we'll get some advice.

Mr WINTER - What's the timeline for the tabling of this bill, Premier?

Dr WOODRUFF - Your government's been in power for 10 years. Coincidentally, the State of the Environment report that was overdue by 10 years has just revealed to Tasmanians the terrible state of our environment. Do you accept that the poor state of our environment, with more than three-quarters of the indicators showing we're in a bad state and declining, is the result of your government's decision-making and your policies and actions?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are a lot of areas we're invested in supporting sustainability and our environment. I was pleased to see the Tasmanian State of the Environment report tabled in parliament by Mr Ellis, the Planning minister.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's a pretty devastating read.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The report has been prepared by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and I note the responsible minister is the minister for Planning. I acknowledge the important role the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania has also played in contributing to the data and reviewing reports for 17 of the environmental indicators, as well as providing input through the preparation of case studies and other feedback where appropriate. The State of the Environment report is an important means of documenting baseline environmental data, trends and risks across Tasmania and is a significant body of work. The report is broad ranging in scope, significant in length and highly technical in nature a. It touches on many areas of government, I accept that, but also industry, community responsibility and -

Dr WOODRUFF - The question, Premier-

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is important that we take the time to consider the findings, seek advice and formulate a measured and consolidated response to the report. I can also say -

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you accept that your government's policies have contributed to the state of decline? That is the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - What I accept is the need for continuous improvement. I accept that there's been many areas where we have invested in Tasmania alongside community groups, as well being identified in the report and the importance of the volunteers and the Landcare grants and all those types of things. The report itself is a combination of many hours of work by individuals and organisations, environmental organisations, research bodies and government agencies assessing environmental conditions and trends, authoring case studies, contributing data sets and contributing to quality assurance processes, including EPA Tasmania. BirdLife Tasmania, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, University of Tasmania -

Dr WOODRUFF - To the question, Premier.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The report makes 16 recommendations across a range of areas including managing waterways, and we've had a huge improvement when it comes to the natural resource management of our waterways.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Chair, 45, relevance. I understand that the Premier is going through, but can he please come to the question?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, I can't direct the Premier. He can continue to answer the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I do not accept the premise of the question, so the answer is no.

Dr WOODRUFF - Had no impact in a negative way at all?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I do not accept the premise of the question. I remember in the late 90s when I was chairing the Mersey Natural Resource Management Group, where we had fishes, irrigators, dairy farmers, environmentalists, all key stakeholders along the Mersey River where we produced a -

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, Can I move to my next question? Since the Premier will not answer this one.

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, this is important because it is important that everyone works together on continuous improvement.

Dr WOODRUFF - Hold on, hold on. Let us just be real about what is happening in that report. Do not talk about continuous improvement when you are destroying forests, when you are doing no action. Well, can I move to my next question?

CHAIR - No you may not. You have used your two -

Dr WOODRUFF - No, I have not, Chair. Excuse me, I did not, I was trying to draw the Premier to the question. Are you prepared to have species go extinct? Is that the legacy you want? No action at all. You make no commitment to change on the basis of this terrible report.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, Mrs Pentland has the call.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, you know, it will be your legacy.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dr Woodruff, we will consider the highly technical report and in a very considered manner respond to the recommendations of which I would value your input and others around.

Dr WOODRUFF - You have got thousands of pages of input, just do something.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mrs PENTLAND -. This Keeping Children Safe document that you have tabled today, on page 10, it has the notifications of state service employees' suspensions from duty as a result of allegations of child sexual abuse. There are 32 employees on this list and you said that a reason for them being suspended without pay would be working with vulnerable people registrations being suspended. Could you just let us know how many of these 32 have had their registered working with vulnerable people registration (RWVP) suspended and also how many of these 32 employees are on full pay?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. If you just allow me a minute to work through this. We went through some of these matters I know in the scrutiny hearing.

Mrs PENTLAND - I did ask that question. It was taken on notice. It is going to be published today. I do not know if it's been made public already, but you have answered some of those questions.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The question on notice, I understand, has gone back to the committee?

Mrs PENTLAND - It has, yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Perhaps I will throw to Ms Morgan-Wicks to provide detail on that question.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Thank you. Through the Premier, Mrs Pentland, we prepared an answer on the data relating to registration suspensions for working with vulnerable people in the question on notice, but noted that related to the table at the previous scrutiny hearings. I would need to take on notice to do a further update to the RWVP just in case individuals have changed within this list of 32. I just want to check back to that data and make sure I am giving you the correct information.

Mrs PENTLAND - Can you give some information on the 32 that are on full pay?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through the Premier, this list on page 10 of the document tabled or the routine disclosure that is on available on the DPAC website is the length of suspension for state servants currently suspended on full pay.

Mrs PENTLAND - So, they are all on full pay?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - All 32 on that list are currently suspended on full pay.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. Premier, I note that no member yet today has asked you about what action is being taken right now to make life more affordable for every Tasmanian. So, my question is, can you, the Premier, outline what the 2024-25 Budget delivers in terms of cost-of-living support?

Mr WINTER - We read the Budget. So, it sort of gave it away.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you.

Dr WOODRUFF - We read the media releases.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Good and I thank you for -

Mr WILLIE - You can read the Budget. It is there.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank you for reading the Budget and acknowledging the significant effort that we are investing in, quite rightly, I have to say due to the cost-of-living crisis globally, nationwide, and Tasmanians are not immune to that. That's why we're investing $550 million to support cost-of-living measures. Now, that includes around $450 or $460 million in concessions moving forward as well; $250 renewable energy dividend for households and $300 for small businesses.

I've mentioned before, cutting public transport fares in half - so, ferries and buses for example - which is having a significant benefit. There's also, for example, an expansion to the Ticket to Play with $100 vouchers now available for children of people who receive the Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement in the previous financial year. There's a Ticket to Well-being program as well, which is $100 for those listed in the Services Australia healthcare or pensioner concession card to use for registration and membership costs.

Two thousand 2000 more loans for the no interest loan scheme - the NILS do a fantastic job. Continuing to related energy efficiency measures in social housing properties as well, and - a really important one, not just for cost of living, Mr Shelton, as you appreciate, but for education engagement, when it comes to expanding the school lunch program as well. That is a cost of living measure but the anecdotal feedback that we've got as a result of that investment is that we are engaging young people, and some young people with their first time in education, as a result of supporting a healthy lunch at lunchtime, which I am proud of, in that sense, but it highlights the vulnerable circumstances with some people.

Mr WINTER - Premier, you have, to my knowledge, three current confidence-supply agreements with Mr O'Byrne and the two former JLN members. Ms Johnston has recently described what she has as a working arrangement rather than a supply and confidence deal, and then I read in the press only the other day, I'll quote Mr Jenner, he added that a 'verbal confidence of supply agreement' between himself and the Premier remained intact for the time being.

Can you outline what is in that verbal supply and confidence agreement and what certainty can that provide to the business community that's certainly looking for confidence at the moment?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Just that. Verbal agreement, shake of the hand.

Mr WINTER - What are the terms of this verbal agreement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Confidence and supply.

Mr WINTER - On what basis?

Mr ROCKLIFF - On the basis of, well -

Mr WINTER - Did you know he's about to vote against the Budget? So, he's about to vote against supply next week. He's announced that. So, you're saying that you have a verbal agreement with him about supply and confidence at the time when the person you've made a verbal agreement with says they're about to vote against the Budget. So, what sort of agreement is that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, firstly, I do appreciate the confidence and supply agreement from the crossbenchers that have given that commitment in terms of written commitment, and I welcome that and I thank crossbenchers for providing that stability, and I am very happy with the functioning of the parliament, the new 35 members.

We have not got everything through. Most things, we have. Other parties have got matters through as well, which is the will of the parliament, which is good. It is working well. My view

is that it can increase in terms of stability through good communication, open dialogue, being pragmatic, being sensible in our discussions, engaging with each other, a government that has a sensible approach to crossbench negotiation, a government that is not arrogant, but a government that is willing to be pragmatic with matters forward. My personal view is that the parliament has worked well. There have been opinions on the floor of the House and elsewhere, and individual members have the right to do that, but I am confident that, moving forward, we will continue the stability in the interest of Tasmanians.

Mr WINTER - In the same month as your coalition agreement with the Jacqui Lambie Network ended, 570 jobs were lost in Tasmania, which makes up to over 6000 since you first took the Tasmanian government to minority. Do you see the relationship between confidence and jobs and a strong economy? And what are you going to do to resolve these issues so that you have proper confidence supply agreements in place with the crossbench?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I think you are putting too much emphasis on the JLN agreement in terms of the 570 jobs. We have created 47,000 jobs.

Mr WINTER - You are the one that said minority government would crash the economy, crash jobs and crash our health system.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I also accepted responsibility for forming a government in the best interest of the Tasmanian people, a government which has the confidence of crossbench and, in terms of supply and confidence, a parliament working far more effectively, in my humble opinion, than 12 months ago because we are all in this together. There is an element of robustness in terms of how we approach our different perspectives, as we should. There is also, in my view, an element of trust that we have all been elected by the Tasmanian people. More members of parliament and the Tasmanian people would expect us to work together in a common-sense manner. I do not believe the Tasmanian people expect us to agree on everything, but what they would expect us to do is act in the best interests of Tasmanians and not be disruptive.

Dr WOODRUFF - I want to ask a question about the circumstances surrounding Ms Gale's resignation as the head of the State Service. Can you please tell me whether it was her decision to resign or yours, whether you were surprised at her decision to resign and why the position was not advertised? In saying that, I want to in no way reflect on the qualities and qualifications of Ms Morgan-Wicks. But, in light of the commission of inquiry, don't you think we should have advertised that position, just to give confidence to Tasmanians about our processes in these matters?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have an enormous amount of confidence in Ms Morgan-Wicks. She is a very capable person that led Tasmania through the pandemic in many respects in terms of the Health responsibility and a large part of the commission of inquiry responsibility. It is the premier of the day's call, as it has been previously, to appoint the head of the State Service. I appointed Ms Morgan-Wicks, and Ms Morgan-Wicks is doing a fantastic job.

Dr WOODRUFF - What about the first part of the question about the decision for Ms Gale to resign?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It was Ms Gale's decision.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, your government has made no progress on treaty and truth-telling in the three years since Peter Gutwein, as then premier, promised that action would be taken. There was, as you know, an encampment outside parliament a couple of months ago and you met with members of the Aboriginal community and promised that you would act. Is it your intention to legislate a process for treaty and truth-telling for lutruwita/Tasmania in this term of government?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are a few different schools of thought here between Aboriginal communities and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC). My understanding is the TAC wants a legislated treaty. In my view, there needs to be a broader conversation involving the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and the Tasmanian community as well. Everyone has to be brought along this journey. I'm engaging with Aboriginal communities. I stand to be corrected in terms of the exact date, but I believe I'm meeting the Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Communities Alliance (TRACA) on 1 October, for example. On country, at the end of this week, as well, on the wukalina walk where members of the TAC will also be accompanying me there - listening, learning, trying to find a way forward.

I was as disappointed, as everyone else was, with the outcome of the referendum in October last year. It did highlight, if nothing else, the significant gap still when it comes to incarceration rates, educational attainment, life expectancy, job opportunity. We have failed as a nation, when it comes to the support of our First Nations people and we need to do far better. That is why my focus is on those areas of Closing the Gap but also continuing along the truth-telling journey.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will you create that process, will you commit to enacting a process, which is what Peter Gutwein committed to, whether through legislation or another process, by the end of this term of government?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll be seeking advice from the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as to the best way forward, but my focus will absolutely be on those areas of Closing the Gap, those areas I speak of. There are also a lot more areas when it comes to the need to close the gap. We are held accountable as government across the nation when it comes to reporting and the like.

Mrs PENTLAND - Back to this again, page 10, is confirmed that those 32 workers under investigation have been suspended on full pay. Why isn't there an automatic suspension put on their Working with Vulnerable People accreditation? I understand they're entitled to a fair investigation and the presumption of innocence, but if it is deemed that they're unable to continue work, shouldn't that extend to other community activities?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Probably just to add to my previous answer, noting that the 32 on page 10 are currently suspended with full pay, the table on the previous page notes that 34 public servants are currently suspended in relation to allegations of child sexual abuse. That's towards the bottom of the table there: currently suspended with active ED5 investigations underway. You will note that difference of two. In terms of each of the employees, it may not necessarily be a requirement of their statement of duties to hold a registration to work with vulnerable people. That will depend. Not every single member of the TSS is required to hold that registration. We are, however, looking through the commission of

inquiry recommendations at extending the number of public servants required to hold Working with Vulnerable People registration.

When we do receive a notification of an allegation of child sexual abuse, we're obviously alerting all relevant authorities. We will also seek to alert the registrar of vulnerable people. If an employee, for example, held a registration due to their work to manage a hockey team or a soccer team in their private life, it would alert the registrar that we had made that report of an allegation of child sexual abuse. We are trying to make sure that every single relevant authority is aware if we, in the public service, receive that type of allegation of child sexual abuse.

Mrs PENTLAND - A different question now. Have you sought advice from TASCORP as to how a change in the credit rating would affect borrowing costs?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have not personally. It's a good question for the Treasury Estimates, Mrs Pentland, but the direct answer to your question is: I haven't sought advice from TASCORP.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, Labor insists on erroneously claiming that the 2024-25 Budget includes more than 700 forecast job losses. From my understanding of the Budget and the information provided, in the Treasury forecast over the Budget and forward Estimates, there is a net forecast increase in the numbers of Tasmanians employed across the State Service. Can you explain how the Budget supports this net increase?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, for your question and understanding of the Budget, which is important.

Mr WINTER - You've given him so many Dorothys he's had to get some new ones in.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr WINTER - He's run out of Dorothys.

Mr SHELTON - Well, I am talking about the Budget.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Employment has sustained record high levels for nearly three years. In fact, as of August 2024 the unemployment rate of 4.3 per cent continues Tasmania's record run of low unemployment, nearly three years at or below that mark. In August 2024, there were 281,078 Tasmanians in work, including 137,105 women in work and I mentioned the figure of 140,000 before. A total of 46,000 jobs have been created since March 2014 when we were elected to government. The unemployment rate is 3.6 per cent lower than the 7.9 per cent at the peak of the former government. Tasmania has the strongest wage growth in the nation, recording a massive 5.1 per cent for the year to June 2024. The annual growth rate is a full 1 per cent higher than the national average and represents the largest annual growth in wages for Tasmania since the ABS started measuring in 1998.

An important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is creating jobs. We need to ensure that Tasmania remains the best state to live, work and raise a family. Participation rates are often brought up as well for discussion and so they should. The participation rate of 60.8 per cent for August is in line with the 10-year average and higher than it was in March 2014 when we came to government. It's well understood that Tasmania's

participation rate has been lower than the national rate due to the age profile of our state's population and hence a smaller labour force when it comes to the demographic.

We've announced our population policy as well. I've mentioned the median age in Tasmania a number of times and how it has increased over the last 50 years. There is a need to shift that demography to increase and enhance our productivity in Tasmania, and a number of our policies go some way towards that.

Mr WINTER - Premier, how much public money did you spend on your Facebook and Instagram ads for your political pages last financial year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can get that figure for you if you like, but it is good information being provided to the community and more recent information.

Mr WINTER - Speaking of that, Premier, how do you assess what sort of content is applicable for public spending to be spent on? For example, you've got ads with you in front of a car saying. 'Vote 1 Jeremy Rockliff', that appears to have been subsidised or advertised, paid for by public money. There's a raft of posts that have been boosted that don't appear to have any actual public information that Tasmanians need to know. What policies are you using to ensure that public money is being properly spent on the basis of public information, not on your own political needs?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My understanding is that the information we support through advertising is information that would be helpful to Tasmanians. I can get a breakdown of costs if you like, Mr Winter. I am happy to provide that.

Mr WINTER - Premier, is there a DPAC policy, for example, which is used to make decisions about what content is being sponsored using taxpayer money?

Mr ROCKLIFF - With the content we sponsor it is important that it is good information for the Tasmanian community. I stand to be corrected, but recently we had the emergency cuts which I believe was supported through investment of advertising as well, or sponsorship, as you call it. That is good information that people should be aware of in terms of access to grants and the announcements that we made, not political information.

Mr WINTER - Premier, you had a video last week with you pouring water down a drain that appears to have been sponsored. Was that taxpayer money used to sponsor that particular ad?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That was about the Budget, as I understand it.

Mr WINTER - And you felt that was good information?

Mr SHELTON - They're out there fixing the roads and all.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will seek information around the examples you use in terms of sponsorship in the interests of full transparency.

Mr WINTER - So, you will take that on notice, is that right? Thank you.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, you talked before about closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Tasmanians and I note that Ashley Youth Detention Centre, which has an over-representation of Aboriginal children, remains indefinitely open on your watch. In this year's Budget you have only committed $600,000 in this financial year, but nothing at all in the forward Estimates towards Closing the Gap and you have previously said that your focus on Closing the Gap means that is an excuse for you not to pursue a truth-telling process or treaty bill.

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I didn't say that.

Dr WOODRUFF - You actually did in parliament; that was your reason. Can you explain why you have failed to provide any funding towards implementing Closing the Gap in the forward Estimates?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Closing the Gap is our focus and -

Dr WOODRUFF - Where is the evidence that you care? It's not just words.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can seek some information for you. Our Budget includes $600,000 -

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, this year.

Mr ROCKLIFF - to progress commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including the development of a second Tasmanian implementation plan. This funding is in addition to the $5.3 million Closing the Gap capacity-building grants funds provided to Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations in 2023 to build their capacity to deliver services in their local community and specifically address Closing the Gap targets. The national agreement, developed in partnership between state, territory and federal governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, commits to a new way for our government and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to work together to improve the lives of Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, to the question - why haven't you put any money into the forward Estimates for this?

Mr ROCKLIFF - This Budget includes $600,000 -

Dr WOODRUFF - Only this year, not in the following years.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Our agencies, as part of their existing approach to these matters, also invest in Closing the Gap -

Dr WOODRUFF - How much in the forward Estimates?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Closing the Gap is part of our heads of agency performance agreements as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, your government has not tabled a Closing the Gap annual report since 2022. This is your priority issue for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. When will you table the next report and how are you proposing to develop a second implementation plan if

you haven't even reported on the government's progress towards Closing the Gap for two years? You have no money in the forward Estimates and I don't accept that pushing it into other agencies to do that work without any money is meaningful.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I mentioned the $600,000, but future funding is being considered after the new implementation plan is complete. That will be considered in future budgets as well. That new implementation plan funding in this year's Budget will continue activity and maintain the Commonwealth partnership.

Dr WOODRUFF - But you haven't reported on 2022, so what's going on? You haven't reported on your implementations for the previous period, so how can you talk about developing a new one when you haven't actually reported since 2022?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The annual report, I'm advised, will be ready this year.

Dr WOODRUFF - The annual report from two years ago, and the annual report for last year as well?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We've been working very closely with stakeholders, as I'm advised. A report will be ready this year, as I understand it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Two annual reports that you have missed plus the one this year. So, three annual reports?

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Just checking, Chair. Reports for 2022, 2023 and 2024? Annual reports are meant to be annual.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I accept that, and other jurisdictions have similar arrangements to Tasmania, but we will endeavour to release the report as soon as possible, but also make that commitment.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you see why Aboriginal Tasmanians don't think you're sincere when you're using this as your excuse not to progress treaty and truth telling?

CHAIR - Order. Mrs Pentland has the call.

Mrs PENTLAND - It's again been confirmed today that your stadium depends on securing a substantive private investment. Isn't there an onus on the government to lock in something soon? Or are you prepared to start the project of this size on the hope that public-private partnership (PPP) will be secured somewhere down the track?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thanks for the question. I reiterate our investment of $375 million. I outlined this morning a timeline around our work regarding PPPs, but also other ways we can attract private investment and the models that we will use, and I expect that to be for public consumption at the end of this year. We do have some time and we want to lock in a private investor sooner rather than later, but I'll be working through the process now and updating the community when we finalise the model moving forward.

Mrs PENTLAND - Do you regret the lack of early engagement with the RSL? Has that relationship been damaged permanently?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe we can work with the RSL in very constructive way. A number of members of the Returned Services League that have contacted me that have an opinion that is supportive of the new stadium. We've had good conversation with the CEO of the RSL and the acting president of the RSL in recent times, which, I've said before, and our Minister for Veteran Affairs has as well, in terms of progressing a good neighbour charter, for example, good consultation with the RSL moving forward and I believe that we can create something very special but also very respectful of the Cenotaph and, acknowledging the importance of this, with the RSL moving forward.

I do acknowledge some of the concerns and I'm very minded to engage in a very positive and constructive way with the RSL as a key stakeholder. I believe we can create a Macquarie Point precinct which can complement and respect our returned servicemen and women.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, you've mentioned the commission of inquiry in the Budget. Can you just brief the committee on the commission of inquiries costings and the timeframes around that place?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can. In the interest of time, we're committed $424.5 million in the 2024-25 Budget and forward Estimates for the ongoing implementation of the reforms. Building on the funding of the $55.1 million provided last year, and this includes $97 million for 2024-25. The funding will further enhance how agencies work together to improve systems and processes as we progress the recommendations to create a child-centred system through the Child and Youth Safety and Wellbeing governance structure. Agencies are taking a coordinated, proportionate and strategic approach to meeting the needs of children and young people, while ensuring that we continue to address all recommendations of the commission of inquiry. I mentioned these in other areas of scrutiny, but some of the initiatives include:

- $42.4 million for the Department of Education, Children and Young People;
- Providing about $34 million to continue to support a child-centred, rights-based approach to reform the out-of-home care system, much needed for the partnerships between government agencies and the community services sector;
- Approximately $4.8 million to progress reform to the Tasmanian youth justice system, including the development of a youth justice model of care designed to support a therapeutic approach;
- $1.2 million for school education focusing on complaints management, reducing harmful sexual behaviours and education regulation;
- $17.7 million to the Department of Health to support the continual development of a child safe culture in our health services, provide mental and physical care for children in detention and implement a new human resources information system;

- $10.9 million for the Department of Justice to continue to lead a coordinated cross-government approach to the 54 commission of inquiry recommendations requiring legislative reform and ensure we have the right legal framework in place to protect our children and young people; and

- $12.8 million for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management to support initiatives such as the $8 million to continue the work of the arts centres to provide immediate trauma care, and $2 million for the management of information for protection of children.

There are a number of other initiatives, including $700,000 to establish the new Commission for Children and Young People, $2 million to provide support for victim survivors and whistleblowers-

Dr WOODRUFF - In the interest of time, could the Premier please be brief? We've only got a little, a few minutes, left for the scrutiny committee.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is a very important question and I thank you for it.

Mr WINTER - Have you or any of your ministers, to your knowledge, had any discussions about the TT-Line potentially needing to berth its new ships in Singapore until the new infrastructure is completed?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I say, we're taking advice on matters relating to the infrastructure and we have Mr Ben Moloney and Peter Gemell as well and when we work through the infrastructure and the way forward, I will then make decisions on the ships and where they are berthed in the interim and those matters.

Mr WINTER - The question though, Premier, are you or your ministers or TT-Line considering berthing the new ships in Singapore?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We'll make these decisions -

Mr WINTER - It's a yes or no, really, isn't it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There could be a number of options we're considering, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - So, Singapore is -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we could consider a number of options and there is no option we are ruling in or ruling out. There has to be a sensible way forward but the first piece of the challenge, if you like, is securing the berthing infrastructure as soon as possible.

Mr WINTER - Why would Singapore be considered as a location to berth the new ships? For what purpose would they be there?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We need to make decisions on the berthing infrastructure first and then make informed decisions on when we bring the ships online and as soon as possible, clearly, but -

Mr WINTER - Do you accept that there is going to be a period of time where our new ships are going to have arrived and there will not be appropriate berth infrastructure available for them to operate from?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is a challenge, clearly, but I need to be able to get the right advice to make informed decisions on the way forward, Mr Winter. You would appreciate that there will be options on how we can best utilise our investment in the two new ships, but we need to make sure we get the decisions around the infrastructure right.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, at the recent Liberal State Council meeting, a scheduled motion on the future of the greyhound racing industry was shunted to the end of the day and then never debated. Are you afraid to hear your membership's views and that they might be opposed to the industrialised cruelty of animals in racing?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I'm not, I welcome it. I have been in a number of Liberal Party state councils where the motion has been debated and argued very vigorously by the proponents of the motion in terms of a policy idea of ending greyhound racing and I commend them for it.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Premier has expired. We will have a short five-minute break and proceed to the examination of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality.

The committee suspended from 12.37 p.m. to 12.45 p.m.

CHAIR - Welcome, Premier and Minister for Tourism and Hospitality. Minister, please introduce the persons at the table for the benefit of Hansard.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Chair. To my right is the acting CEO of Tourism Tasmania, Vanessa Pinto, and the secretary of State Growth, Craig Limkin, and to my left is Ned Whitehouse, my chief of staff. I have a very short opening statement, Chair.

CHAIR - All right, I will just get through this. The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality is one hour. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask the question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

I do remind everybody that the microphones are sensitive so I would ask you to be mindful of Hansard and be careful when moving your folders, documents and water glasses around the table. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I would ask that members speak one at a time to assist with this. Premier, you indicated an opening statement.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much, Chair. I'm very pleased to be here today to answer the committee's questions relating to our government's ongoing investment into the tourism and hospitality industry. Our tourism and hospitality industry is an economic powerhouse house and I'm absolutely thrilled to be the minister once again. It injects some $3.5 billion dollars in visitor spending into the Tasmanian economy each year and employs 50,000 Tasmanians, which equates to more than 12 per cent of Tasmanian employment.

The 2024-25 Budget drives the delivery of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future and cements Tasmania's reputation as a world-leading destination that will continue to go from strength to strength. The Budget secures more than $31 million in additional funding for the state's tourism sector over the next four years, demonstrating our support for the industry. The Budget also invests more than $10 million into the hospitality sector over the next four years to deliver workforce growth, job-ready training, visitor attraction and business support. We are backing in our tourism and hospitality industries, making sure Tasmania remains a world-class travel destination.

I am very proud of the work being undertaken by our key tourism industry partners, the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania (TICT), the Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA) and our four regional tourism organisations, to grow our visitor economy and support our local businesses. I'm also very proud of the unique offerings, experiences and products being developed and offered by tourism and hospitality businesses across the state. I look forward to continuing to work with the industry to grow our visitor economy and capitalise on our competitive advantages. I'm also very proud of the work of Tourism Tasmania, particularly when it comes to the very good marketing it undertakes for the relatively small investment compared to other states. The bang for our buck when it comes to the investment we put in and in return, an incredible $3.5 billion visitor economy year on year as it's been in recent times is a credit to all involved. I welcome your questions today and am happy to provide further information as required.

Mr WINTER - Can you confirm you've set up a Cabinet subcommittee to oversee the *Spirit of Tasmania* project?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There is a Cabinet subcommittee for *Spirit of Tasmania*, yes.

Mr WINTER - When was that set up and who's on it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll have to take the question on notice in terms of when it was set up. It involves shareholder ministers, me, and that's it.

Mr WINTER - So, that's you, minister Abetz and minister Ferguson, a three-person subcommittee. In terms of the decision by minister Ferguson to step away from the Infrastructure portfolio, do you think it passes the pub test that the same minister who seemed to be resigning from all responsibility for this project is now sitting as part of the three-person subcommittee overseeing the rescue of the project that he has already taken responsibility for having put in this position in the first place?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, he is the Treasurer.

Mr WINTER - So, what changed when he left that portfolio? He's still on the subcommittee, he's still a shareholder minister for TT-Line and TasPorts and he's still overseeing the project, so what's actually changed?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm the Infrastructure minister and I take a very deep interest in the project and the way forward when it comes to our intervention, if you like, through the employment of Ben Moloney and Peter Gemell. The subcommittee of Cabinet is one thing, but more important is the stakeholder engagement moving forward with industry stakeholders.

Mr WINTER - Are you aware that senior staff at one of your GBEs is openly telling people you plan to park the ships in Singapore in order to save money and the embarrassment of having to park them here in Tasmanian waters?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We'll make these decisions when we have the required information before us to make these decisions. I need to do due diligence on the infrastructure and the berthing.

Ms BADGER - As the minister responsible for the activities of the Coordinator-General, I've got some questions on the tourism expression of interest process and the web portal that gives updates on the accepted concepts. The public relies on the accepted concepts web portal on the Coordinator-General's website for updates on the projects. Businesses also rely on it for confidence. Some of these projects are highly controversial. You would appreciate that many people love these places affected by the projects, so they want to be kept up to date. There are multiple examples of inaccuracies, including projects that have been withdrawn for more than six months, but they're still on the site without it being updated. Can you please ask the Coordinator-General to apply his coordinating skills and see that the website is updated much more frequently? For example, weekly would be good.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. We do want to provide timely information for the community. We take our responsibilities in managing the extensive reserve estate very seriously and remain committed to delivering the tourism expression of interest process, given the important role it plays in facilitating sensitive and appropriate tourism projects within Tasmania's national parks, reserves and the Crown lands. From the Maydena Bike Park, Derwent Valley, Freycinet Lodge on the East Coast and the Blue Derby Pods Ride in the north east, we have been seeing great projects, great successes with the help of the tourism EOI process.

Ms BADGER - They're great and they're all up-to-date on the website. Just looking at the ones that aren't up-to-date - the accepted concepts, not the projects that have come through the EOI process.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I will take advice

Ms BADGER - Happy to take that on notice -

Mr ROCKLIFF - and ensure that we have, unless anyone else at the table has some information that will be of assistance to the member for Lyons.

Mr LIMKIN - The Department of State Growth supports the Coordinator-General on their administration functions. I'm more than happy to work with our business services team to

ensure the website is updated. I don't know about weekly. We continue to update them regularly. But we will work with the Coordinator-General to make sure that they are contemporary and continue to inform the Tasmanian community.

Ms BADGER - Great. Yep, certainly more than six months. Appreciate that.

A recent RTI has revealed that the Office of the Coordinator-General has incurred $300,000 in travel and entertainment expenses. This sits on top of an extraordinarily high wage. These are extraordinary numbers for an office designed to facilitate projects which are generally either stalled or withdrawn. Premier, how many projects of the Office of the Coordinator-General successfully progressed to full operation in the last three years?

Mr ROCKLIFF - This is the Tourism and Hospitality output. I'm happy to provide answers to your question. It is in the Major Investment session and Mr Perry will be here for that, which is at the end of the day. More than happy to get Mr Perry at the table to answer your questions in an open and transparent way.

Mrs PENTLAND - What is the government doing to keep simulating the winter visitation? We saw a drop-off when Dark Mofo took a year off. And how about in the northern half of the state?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The winter visitor economy has always been a challenge and we've had one-year hiatus of the normal Dark Mofo, albeit we had some aspects of Dark Mofo, including the swim, Winter Feast and the like. When it comes to Dark Mofo taking a break this year, we secured events across Tasmania to boost those visitation numbers that I spoke of before. As part of our commitment of supporting winter events, we provided $100 000 for eligible events to secure funding through the winter edition of our Event Marketing Tasmania program and this funding to your question was fully expanded with 11 events supported, including the Beaker Street Festival, Festival the Voices, The final Huon Valley Winter Festival and the Tassie Scallop Fiesta in the north.

Hobart also hosted the Australian Hockey Men's Masters Tournament, with over 4000 competitors, which was great and boosted the Southern occupancy rates by more than 70 per cent. In addition to attracting and growing event content, we are heavily investing in our offseason tourism campaign. This offseason campaign is part of our largest ever investment in the winter marketing initiative aimed at boosting visitation to the regions as well as supporting jobs and businesses during the traditionally quieter travel period between May and August.

This year's campaign by Tourism Tasmania invited Australians to become a winter person and immersed themselves in a truly unique Tasmanian Offseason holiday and worked very well. Offseason offers were available across Tasmania between May and August. More than 445 tourism operators were involved in the campaign, providing 661 unique winter experiences and events for visitors to book.

We have increased investment in marketing, which saw advertisements in NSW, the ACT, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania across multiple platforms and funded important content partnerships with Broadsheet Media and Qantas. Of course, the offseason also include investment in airline partnership to boost capacity, drive demand and encouraging booking throughout winter and the shoulder seasons and we also are delivering a $500 000 Regional Hospitality Revival Fund which provides grants to support

hospitality businesses in regional Tasmania and continuing to deliver our visitor economy strategy, providing $12 million to attract more events in business events to Tasmania, invest in our tourism and hospitality workforce and deliver a 10-year visitor economy infrastructure plan and there was a function in the north, your question on the weekend my daughters attended the Junction Arts Festival as well to try and boost other numbers there.

Albeit this is spring, but winter is always a tough time for the visitor economy. It's resilient, however, but looking forward to Dark Mofo coming back next year and a marketing campaign continuing.

Mrs PENTLAND - I met with the Launceston Chamber of Commerce, who have a fabulous idea for a convention centre in Launceston. Is the government delaying a feasibility study into making a Launceston Convention powerhouse?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not that I'm aware, that we're delaying anything, but-

Mrs PENTLAND - Will you commit to a feasibility study for Launceston?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, a key action under the Visitor Economy strategy is the development of a demand and feasibility study for new convention facilities in Launceston. This budget is allocated $300 000 for this work and under our plan for Tasmania 2030 strong plan for Tasmania. We have also committed $250 000 towards a Northern Tasmania Festival infrastructure plan as well.

Now, these two projects will have different outcomes obviously, and the respective in terms of the respective stakeholder groups, governor arrangements and research requirements will overlap no doubt. But I'm advised that the Department of State Growth has included stage one of the demand work for the Convention Centre study within the scope of the Northern Tasmania Festival infrastructure plan as well.

And this will deliver a more integrated and comprehensive analysis of opportunities to grow northern Tasmania events and the Department of State growth has executed a funding agreement with Visit Northern Tasmania to manage the development of the Northern Tasmania Festival Infrastructure Plan and this agreement will include stage one of the demand work for the Convention Centre study and the initial piece of research will then inform a more detailed feasibility study of the convention centre, for which a separate $300 000 has been allocated, I am advised.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, just recently the Tasman Hotel was named among the top 50 hotels in the world, voted for by international experts from the hotel and travel industry. Tasmania's tourism hospitality industry has enjoyed a string of prestigious awards both nationally and internationally in 2024. What impact do these achievements have on the industry?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, for the question, I congratulate the Tasman Hotel and congratulate all those involved in the precinct, and I took great interest in the development of that site and saw it grow from a huge hole in the ground to the respectful way they have managed the heritage and the Art Deco buildings as well, and it has been a really top-class effort and these awards are a reflection of the tourism and hospitality operators more broadly and their dedication to delivering what is top tier products and experiences.

One of the world's biggest global news outlets, The New York Times, has listed Tasmania in its top 52 places to visit in 2024. A very proud achievement and Tasmania was only one of two Australian locations to make the annual list, alongside Brisbane and other global destinations such as Japan, Iceland and Chile.

It has a very big global following in terms of The New York Times, which I commend all our operators for that. We have got the wukalina Walk listed in The Times's world greatest places, which I will be experiencing later on in the week.

Devonport named Australia's top tourism town as well. Tasmania made 29 on The New York Times 2024 list, having previously made the list in 2018 and number 33 that is the much-anticipated list compiled annually by New York Times travel editors and travel experts, who select the most desirable travel destinations.

Of course, you mentioned the Tasman Hotel which was named among the top 50 hotels in the world, voted for by international experts and from the hotel and the travel industry and this is fantastic international recognition. It's one of a growing number of high-end and luxury accommodation businesses investing in Tasmania that is creating jobs, that's boosting our economy, adding confidence to Tasmanian tourism and hospitality sector and developments from international brands including Novotel, Double Tree by Hilton and Crowne Plaza are a testament to the strength of Tasmanian brand tourism industry and unique hospitality offering.

I congratulate everyone for their recent success from The Tasman to Devonport to wukalina Walk. It is quite an achievement.

Mr WINTER - Premier, when did you first become aware that the new *Spirit*s *of Tasmania* would not be operating this summer, and how was that communicated to you?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, there's been quite some dialogue since the election on these matters. I can find a timeline for you if you like, Mr Winter. I believe I have answered these questions already in parliament. For the record, the most important thing for me is to ensure that we can get these ships up and sailing up the Mersey River as soon as possible.

Mr WINTER - So, you're taking on notice the date on which you found out?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm happy to take these matters on notice. Absolutely.

Mr WINTER - When did you tell the tourism hospitality industry that these *Spirit*s wouldn't be operating this summer?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, wanting to engage, we had a forum with the tourism and hospitality stakeholders a month or two ago, and I have a Premier's visitor economy advisory council as well, and we work through these matters about various options and timeframes. Again, I'm still taking advice on matters pertaining to the berth 1 and 3 infrastructure.

Mr WINTER - You'll be aware that particularly on the north west, there was a huge expectation that the *Spirit*s would be operating this summer. I sat across from hospitality operators in Devonport who told me how excited they were that the *Spirit*s were about to start operating and I had to tell them that it wasn't going to happen. Why wasn't it communicated to

the industry, to those businesses either in hospitality or tourism that this wasn't going to happen? Do you understand the investment that they have made? Their time, energy, their capital that's gone into gearing up for these new ships that hasn't happened. Why was the communication so poor with them?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we are communicating with the tourism sector, including West by Northwest, they're a key stakeholder in this and we did have a roundtable - for want of a better word for it - in recent times, including the Mayor of Devonport was there as well and engaging in key stakeholders wanting to keep the communication channels open. I've provided that commitment and we will ensure that we are communicating effectively. I understand the disappointment, Mr Winter. I'm very disappointed. You're disappointed. They are disappointed. The Mayor is disappointed. There is not a single person that I've ever met that's not disappointed about the delay of these ships that the associated infrastructure

Ms BADGER - Premier, one of the problems that Tasmanians have with the tourism EOI process is the lack of transparency. Looking at that web portal, I'm particularly curious about the Circa Morris-Nunn floating hotel concept for Recherche Bay. The website says it's been an accepted concept but it appeared years ago and there hasn't been anything since. On the website one condition is very clear that proponents must demonstrate significant process towards seeking project approvals in order to continue in the EOI process and they have to give that proof within six months of being accepted. In adhering to that condition, as it hasn't happened with this project, can we assume that the Recherche Bay proposal has been withdrawn or discontinued by the Coordinator-General?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much for the question. I'm more than happy to put these questions to the Coordinator-General later on. My apologies, I was interrupted because I want to provide an answer to your previous question as well. As per the established process and change to project status, such as withdrawals, are noted at the relevant subsequent assessment panel meeting to the change. Then they are progressed through the normal processes including probity and other sign offs before the website is updated. It is a lot of surprise that there may be differences between RTI materials and the website on occasion because of timing. There's no attempt to hide any withdrawals and the OCG will investigate whether any changes should be made to internal processes for maximum efficiency and transparency in light of the timing.

I am made aware that on Monday 8 July the Cradle Base Camp experience submitted by the Tasmanian Walking Company was incorrectly changed to project withdrawal as a result of an administrative error. This error was rectified on 12 July and the website listing was changed back to the correct status which is in which is in formal assessment and approval processes such as reserve activity assessment underway, if I've clarified at least the first question.

Ms BADGER - Premier, after COVID there was a growing recognition from destinations around the world that are reliant on nature-based tourism, such as Tasmania, to shift towards a regenerative focus at low to no impact with high yielding opportunities and New Zealand's really led the way in this space. They've made it a mission to become a dark skied nation. They have three dark sky sanctuaries and five reserves. Tasmania has far superior dark skies, Premier. When are we going to get a dark sky sanctuary in south west Tasmania, as has been proposed by several community groups? What steps are being taken?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. I was recently in the Tasman district and had a briefing from either the council or sectors of the tourism, because I had a roundtable, with the tourism sector and they spoke about this a lot. There are some criteria around dark skies in terms of the breadth of it and there is some work to make sure it fits within that criteria. I'm just going from memory here, but you're right in terms of Tasmania continuing to be the drawcard for our natural landscapes and visual fields as star attractions.

Mrs PENTLAND - Can I just add to that, Premier? The International Dark Sky Association recognises that south-west Tasmania is one of the highest-rating dark sky areas on the planet and are willing to help in any way possible. As minister, have you or will you engage with them to help progress the proposal?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'd be very interested to work with them. I will put on record a few matters pertaining to this question.

We have significant reserve estate in Tasmania. We're fortunate to have over 800 reserves offering an array of locations, including the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area where people can enjoy attractions free of any light pollution. Dark sky and tall tree tourism proposals can help grow our visitor economy, create jobs and deliver new tourism offerings. If proponents are considering these opportunities within our parks estate, I encourage them to engage with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to learn more about the expressions of interest process which supports appropriate tourism projects within our unique parks and reserves.

I am interested in this. I wasn't aware of this tourism opportunity until a couple of decades ago. Who's the planetarium chap, Martin, in the north?

CHAIR - George.

Mr ROCKLIFF - George. Who said that, the Chair? He came out to Sassafras and talked about the stars and all those types of things and said that light pollution is the biggest killer of these opportunities, so it sparked my interest all the way back then and then reacquainted my interest when I went to the Tasman the other day and spoke to a number of people who are very keen to get this up and running. Notwithstanding the engagement with Parks, as I've said, I would be interested in meeting proponents to get an understanding of their objectives.

Mrs PENTLAND - I guess the proponent has to be the Tasmanian government as the landowner of the national parks in this case. No other tourism operator can declare that area -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, the people behind the idea to push the Tasmanian government to this area. Are there any limitations to this that we can think of from the tourism sector? Anyway, I'm a big supporter of it. I don't know too much about it but I'm interested in it.

Mrs PENTLAND - Premier, do you concede that tourism businesses, especially in the north and north west, have planned around the new *Spirit*s coming online? What would your message be to those businesses who are now going to feel significant financial pressure while they wait for the new ships to commence operation?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've reflected my views when it comes to the *Spirit* readiness, or lack of. I acknowledge that a number of operators may well have invested and planned for the arrival of the new ships. The two existing ships will still be running and operational, so there's still

that opportunity there and there's still the need to invest in increasing the demand of the two existing new ships. Of course, 40 per cent more capacity for freight and passengers will bring more visitors to Tasmania and allow our exporters to export more high-quality produce.

I empathise with those who have made decisions. I've already put on record my feelings around that. As part of our $12 million investment into the visitor economy strategy, we're committing significant funding to deliver priority infrastructure projects that will help us prepare for the arrival of the new *Spirit*s.

We have coupled this with an additional $4 million to Tourism Tasmania for marketing initiatives that will drive visitor demand. Tourism Tasmania continues to work and will continue to work with the *Spirit of Tasmania* opportunities to encourage visitation to the state to ensure the increased capacity provided by the ships is optimised, including for our regional visitor economies.

In addition to these investments, we're working hard to maximise visitor numbers for the 2024-25 season. In line with past practice, TT-Line will continue to offer additional day sailings to meet demand over the peak season. Tourism Tasmania will deliver its off-island summer marketing push with their Come Down for Air spring/summer campaign. Tourism Tasmania will also work with peak industry bodies to design an intrastate marketing campaign to encourage more Tasmanians to travel within our state and visit local hospitality venues. Indeed, we're investing some $5 million through our Events Tasmania Attraction Fund to secure more events and businesses events to the state. I've already mentioned Devonport in terms of their recent award as well.

I convened a tourism roundtable in August and will meet the tourism stakeholders again on 1 November to provide a more detailed update on the progress of the new *Spirit*s and the enabling infrastructure. As I've said to Mr Winter, I recently met with the Premier's Visitor Economy Advisory Council, and T21 meetings, to ensure a strong united approach to these key issues and opportunities facing the industry. I know that Tourism Tasmania regularly communicates well with the industry and has just finished their second industry update roadshow for the year, visiting all regions across the state.

Additional day sailings, which has been put on the table when required, has always been the policy of our government and that will continue. TT-Line has run double sailings during peak passenger and freight periods to cater for increased demand. Last financial year the company ran an absolute record number of 199 day sailings, I'm advised. Extra day sailings are provided on the basis of customer demand and will continue to be provided on that basis.

Mrs PENTLAND - Just a follow-up question. When you provide those extra day sailings and extra trips to and from, what are the passenger numbers? Are the ships full?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll take some advice in terms of the exact occupancy, if I can put it that way. We can find more information for you if you like and TT-Line will be here for GBE scrutiny hearings as well, but if I can find some information to your question I will be able to let you know.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, it was great to see on the front page of the *Mercury* over the weekend that direct flights to New Zealand are recommencing from Hobart Airport in October.

Could you please outline what the government is doing to make the most of these opportunities?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much, Mr Shelton. I am very pleased that Air New Zealand has confirmed it will resume those direct flights from Auckland to Hobart on 27 October 2024 with three flights per week scheduled until the end of March 2025. The flights will be Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday and this will mean an additional 24,000 international seats inbound and outbound to Tasmania over the next five months.

This is a huge vote of confidence in our state and our tourism industry, so well done to them. It shows the high demand for our unique tourism offerings and world-class food, wine and spirits and nature-based experiences and adventure sports such as mountain biking, for example. Tourism Industry Council Tasmania CEO Amy Hills described the return of the New Zealand flights as a sign of confidence and Hospitality Association CEO Steve Old declared it fantastic for the industry.

Tourism Tasmania is continuing to invest in the New Zealand market to grow visitation by Kiwis to Tasmania and we have committed that $5 million for a dedicated aviation fund to partner with domestic and international airlines to increase capacity and access to new markets and developing an aviation strategy, which is in the stakeholder consultation phase, and our government, through Tourism Tasmania and the Department of State Growth, is working closely with the airlines and airports to strengthen capacity and frequency of flights on Tasmanian routes, especially heading into spring/summer peak season and work is underway on the $130 million Hobart Airport upgrade, which will see the runways strengthened, and I thank the federal government for that investment of funds - very much appreciated.

This will allow the airport to accommodate larger aircraft and enable direct international flights to Asian hubs, and I know the Department of State Growth and Tourism Tasmania are working hard to establish new international flight routes, attracting visitors from new markets and creating new export opportunities. They'll be able to add value, I hope, to that work already underway when I embark on a trade mission in November, as expected, in terms of meeting with airlines and the like. It is very welcome to have Air New Zealand flights back between the 27 October and March, as I've stated.

Mr WINTER - Premier, you promised in your State of the State Address last year that you would deliver a cableway at Cradle Mountain. This follows on from a 2018 election pledge for a $60 million cableway, including $30 million from state government and $30 million from the private sector. When will the project start, and what's the estimated cost of it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I stand to be corrected, but I think I saw a *Mercury* article in about 1890. A cable car, 1890.

Mr WINTER - Cradle Mountain, you say?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Oh, did I say Cradle Mountain, sorry, I thought you meant Mount Wellington.

Mr WINTER - No, Cradle Mountain.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Oh, right, sorry.

Mr WINTER - Different non-delivered project.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Because I did say something about Mount Wellington.

Mr WINTER - Might get to that later, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Of course, in that state of the state speech.

Mr WINTER - Yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Both, of course, are progressing now and Mr Abetz made sure of that. I'm a big believer in cableways, cable cars, Cradle Mountain and, indeed, Mount Wellington, because of the low impact, sustainable transport option and also all abilities option for people as well when it comes to accessing our precious areas, but also enhancing our visitor experience.

Our commitment is supported by the provision of $30 million over the next four years in the 2024-25 Budget.

I have written to the Prime Minister and Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure regarding them to recommit Commonwealth funding for this nationally significant project. We haven't got that funding yet from the Commonwealth but I am pleased to report that we are making good progress on delivering key elements of the master plan.

To your point and Mrs Pentland's point, I know this is a very key project for northern and north-western -

Mr WINTER - Do you understand the frustration? It's been six and a half years since -

Mr ROCKLIFF - I understand the frustration -

Mr WINTER - Six and a half years is a long time. Is there a DA?

Mr ROCKLIFF - One hundred per cent I understand the frustration, which is why we've committed still our $30 million of investment now, but we're making progress on the master plan.

Mr WINTER - Right. Six and a half years.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, you've seen the visitor centre there.

Mr WINTER - Six and a half years.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You've seen the visitor centre and the Dove Lake viewing shelter as well. We're working hard to deliver both the new Parks and Wildlife Service visitor centre and Dove Lake viewing shelter that are key elements of the master plan and exceptional additions to the Cradle Mountain experience. Work is continuing on the remaining area, including much-needed staff accommodation, the Gateway Precinct development and the key sustainable transport solution in the form of a cableway.

The Tasmanian Government, through a request for expressions of interest process, sought developers and committed up to $5 million to help create a high-quality alpine village for the next stage of the Gateway Village Precinct.

Negotiations with the proposed developer and the required related infrastructure planning and development at Cradle Valley, I'm advised, are well progressed. Additional staff accommodation in the Cradle Valley region is an identified priority and the Office of Coordinator-General is continuing its investigations and assessment of relocatable and purpose-built housing options to address this need. The other key element of the masterplan is the improved transport solution between the Gateway and Dove Lake, with a cableway being the preferred option. We remain committed to a sustainable transport solution to connect the Gateway Village Precinct and Dove Lake. We continue to work with the stakeholders and the Australian Government on finding the best pathway forward.

Mr WINTER - If the estimate for $60 million was made six and a half years ago, we know what infrastructure costs have gone up. That's reality. You've allocated $30 million. Do you have an updated costing for the cableway project?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The latest - I'd have to take that on notice.

Ms BADGER - Could I just jump in here about clarity on that funding? The latest business case that was RTI'd in April 2023 said that costs were at $190 million for the cableway.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Correct.

Ms BADGER - There's $61 million line itemed in the Budget. Am I recalling correctly, you've said you're allocating $30 million, and have requested the remainder of the funding from the federal government, which would be $160 million, as of April last year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's $30 million for most of the present time, and request still for $30 million to at least match that at this present time. Do you have any further information to that, Mr Limkin?

Mr LIMKIN - I understand that the Office of the Coordinator-General is currently updating the business case at this stage. We do not have a confirmed plan or updated figure at this stage, but we are in the process of updating it based on the most relevant and recent information.

Ms BADGER - I wanted to touch on regenerative tourism again. It's fantastic to see that the Islander Way regenerative tourism project on Flinders Island has been funded. That's the only project that we can see. What other regenerative tourism projects are you investing in and are you investing in opening up niche markets - things like avian tourism or birding, we've touched on dark skies already, and things like geology tourism and even dam tourism, which have a low impact, but bring very high-yielding tourists into the state.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Before I throw to Ms Pinto, can I say I am a big fan of regenerative tourism. I met with the then Flinders Island mayor a couple of years ago, it would have been when I first became tourism minister and Premier, about Islander Way. Not your direct

predecessor, but the member for Braddon and I were on a unity ticket, would you believe, when it comes to the geo trail across the north-west coast. He advocated very strongly for that, and I do believe that is a good strong tourism offering. There are other unique experiences, as you've highlighted, which fall into that experience tourism but are also low impact in terms of carbon footprint as well. Vanessa, do we have any further information for Ms Badger on the regenerative tourism opportunities?

Ms PINTO - The visitor economy strategy that was launched last year in about September has a really strong focus on positive impact. It's looking at the positive impact for visitors that travel to the state, but also for Tasmania itself. A key part of that is looking at where we can seek to leverage and bring to the fore some of the elements in Tasmania that we're all very proud of that fall into that positive impact space. At a localised level, if I can give you an example, the tourism industry council is working really closely with operators all around the state. That's with the assistance of funding that's come through from government as a part of the visitor economy strategy to help operators in the way that they manage their operations to reduce emissions and also in the way that they manage waste, for example. When it comes to specific opportunities, you were mentioning dark skies earlier. Wherever possible, we work really closely with our regional tourism organisations. Discover Tasmania South has also run with that as a part of Dark Mofo this year, positively encouraging local operators in Hobart to turn the lights off after a certain time in the evening to facilitate that. There are a lot of different initiatives that are being undertaken at the moment to look at supporting a position of Tasmania that has a positive impact, not just to visitors but also to Tasmanians.

Mrs PENTLAND - I want to ask a question about the Regional Tourism Loan Scheme. What has the take-up been like for the scheme? In what ways do tourism operators know about the scheme? How much has been allocated so far?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. We relaunched it at The Cove, at Bruce and Kim Robinson's place, a number of months ago. The opportunities Ms Badger speaks about, in terms of tourism entrepreneurs, they can avail themselves of this opportunity, I'm sure, through the process. I am not sure how many people have taken up the tourism loan scheme as yet. We could get that information. Craig, do you have the uptake to date?

Mr LIMKIN - We can get that for the member.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will take that on notice.

Mrs PENTLAND - You said you launched this at The Cove recently. Was there a scheme prior to this one for tourism, or was it just a business growth scheme that tourism operators were tapping into?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There was a scheme like it, if not the same, because I think the COVID beneficiary of that was, from memory, a tourism loan scheme.

Mrs PENTLAND - There was a RTALS loan and that stopped pre-COVID, then during COVID there wasn't a scheme.

Mr ROCKLIFF - There was a Tourism Development Loan Scheme prior to that.

Ms HURWORTH? - How much was allocated for that scheme and what was the take-up for that particular scheme?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will take that on notice in the interest of accuracy. Starting with your question on the existing scheme and how much that's been taken up, I think we relaunched it, it must have been a couple of months ago now, from memory.

Mr SHELTON - With the discussion around where we're going with tourism and infrastructure and Cradle Mountain, and that sort of thing, I understand that the expression of interest process has been released for the development of a tourism adventure hub at the Dismal Swamp site. Can you please tell the committee more about this project and the benefits to the north-west coast of Tasmania?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, I am pleased about this. This was an election commitment from the federal government back in 2022. I have been engaging with Senator Anne Urquhart on this and a number of other matters around this. We worked hard to achieve the signing of the $12.5 million deal between the Australian and Tasmanian governments to attract tourists to the far north-west coast. Under the agreement, $12.5 million will be provided to allow the remediation of the old Dismal Swamp site and the development of a tourism adventure hub to draw many thousands of new visitors to the far north west. I was at the opening of the slide a number of years ago where then premier Lennon did the honours of going down the slide, as I recall.

The original study into the project indicates that the tourism hub will create more than 81 ongoing jobs and generate an additional $12.5 million annually in gross regional product. The project is expected to attract an overall investment of around $40-$50 million, providing a significant economic injection into the region. The vision for this site is for it to become a world-class visitor hub for cultural and nature-based experiences within the broader far north-west region, which is expected to attract an additional $9 million in annual visitor expenditure across the state. We expect the operation to feature a range of accommodation options and immersive nature-based experiences and I was delighted to see the expression of interest for the site released over the weekend following a market sounding earlier this year.

The CEO of West by North West Gabriella Conti said on the weekend:

> The Dismal Swamp redevelopment is an exciting opportunity for the far north west, allowing visitors to immerse themselves not only in agritourism experiences and world-class produce, but nature-based experiences in the Tarkine, Australia's largest temperate rainforest.

This is welcome. The commitment of the federal government was $12 million at the time, I believe. We played a role in the state parliament as well with the regulation matters that needed to be upgraded, so it was a good partnership indeed with the federal government.

Mr WINTER - Premier, I want to ask you about your aviation fund that you announced during the election and is also listed in the Budget.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The $5 million fund?

Mr WINTER - Yes, the $5 million aviation fund leveraging all-round opportunities to increase capacity and enter the Tasmanian market. Can you explain how this will actually work, how you'll measure success and how the money will be spent this year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, good questions. I have some information on it here, but in the interests of time I might throw to either Mr Limkin or Ms Pinto for that answer.

Mr LIMKIN - The Department of State Growth and Tourism Tasmania are working with the airports and industry to currently develop program guidelines for that fund. The focus is very much on attracting new entrants to the market so the guidelines and programs are focused on that at this stage. However, it will also provide the opportunity for Tourism Tasmania to use that money for destination marketing if we go into a new market, similar to what government did when we entered the New Zealand market originally. There was an arrangement set up with Air New Zealand and at that time Tourism Tasmania also focused on destination marking to increase that interest. Ms Pinto will talk about that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - This is $5 million over four years.

Mr WINTER - Yes, I noticed it's spread out over the four years.

Ms PINTO - Yes, that's correct. As we seek to increase capacity through new routes either domestically or internationally and with the increased capacity coming online at Hobart Airport, the focus is obviously on the international market and specifically within Asia, being a junction point for flights coming in from around the world. As the secretary outlined, that focus would be on developing, in parallel with the airport, guidelines around how that funding would be applied and in relation to destination marketing, it would come in the form of marketing that would seek to warm up a market.

The secretary referred to New Zealand. I can note that with the New Zealand flights coming on very soon, it's very exciting for October through to March this year. We've been active in that market in the lead-up just to encourage that market to be frequenting those flights and maximising those bookings.

Mr WINTER - What discussions have been held between the management and board of Tourism Tasmania and the board of TT-Line about the delays to the new ships?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Good question for the Tourism Tasmania board.

Ms PINTO - The chair of the board of Tourism Tasmania sits on the Premier's Visitor Economy Advisory Council, a very important forum whereby discussions that are pertinent, such as the *Spirit*s key matters, are able to be discussed in that forum. That's a valuable environment for those discussions to occur and the Premier noted those discussions have happened just as recently as within this month.

Mr WINTER - What view has been expressed by Tourism Tasmania to TT-Line and the government about its reaction to the delays? Have they raised any concerns about the ongoing lack of communication from TT-Line with Tourism Tasmania?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's a question for the Tourism Tasmania board, but I expect -

Mr WINTER - Not the CEO?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm sorry?

Mr WINTER - We have a CEO, don't we?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thought you mentioned the board. We're all disappointed, Mr Winter, and we all want to have open dialogue and strong communication when it comes to these matters moving forward. I've outlined I'm next having a stakeholder engagement on 1 November. We will increase our Premier's Visitor Advisory Council (PVAC) meetings as well, which was an outcome of our next meeting. We normally meet quarterly and we'll have increased meetings to ensure that strong communication is strengthened moving forward. I can't speak for Tourism Tasmania necessarily, but do you want to add anything, Vanessa?

Ms PINTO - An important part of the PVAC governance associated with the visitor economy strategy are a series of working groups. We have a demand working group with representatives from Business Events Tasmania, Events Tasmania, ourselves at Tourism Tasmania and the TT-Line. That forum meets on a regular basis to discuss demand opportunities and how we work together. The Premier noted earlier the opportunity with increased day sailings. From Tourism Tasmania's perspective, we would be seeking to leverage every opportunity available to work with TT-Line to market that.

I'd also note that as part of PVAC in 2023, a really comprehensive study was undertaken across the state to look at the degree of infrastructure investment that would be needed in caravan and camping sites. The Premier noted that the government's most recent investment, the latest $12 million investment into the visitor economy strategy, will provide a foundation for directing that investment in the most permanent way.

Mr WINTER - When was Tourism Tasmania told that the new *Spirit*s would not be operating this summer?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll have to take that on notice, Mr Winter, and see if we can find that answer for you. We'll see what we can do there. Mr Limkin has an answer for Mrs Pentland.

Mr LIMKIN - On the question regarding the latest election commitment, I am advised that it opened on 10 July 2024. The Department of State Growth has had a good level of inquiry to date. We have had three applications received to date. One application has been approved and two further applications are currently under assessment, both in regional locations, one in the west and the other in the south, both in the accommodation sector, which is addressing an essential need program.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality has expired. The committee will suspend its proceedings until 2.30 p.m. this afternoon.

The committee suspended from 1.45 p.m. until 2.30 p.m.

CHAIR - Welcome, Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, to the committee again. Would you please introduce persons at the table for the benefit of Hansard?

Mr ROCKLIFF - To my right is Craig Limkin, the secretary of the Department of State Growth. To Craig's right is Denise McIntyre, the Deputy Secretary for strategy, housing, infrastructure and planning. To my left is Ned Whitehouse, my Chief of Staff, and then Cynthia Heydon the department secretary for transport.

CHAIR - Thank you and welcome. The time scheduled for estimates for the Minister for Infrastructure is three hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and handed to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

I'd also like to remind you that the microphones are rather sensitive, so I ask you to be mindful of this for Hansard. Be careful when moving your folders and documents around the table. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I would remind members only to speak one at a time to assist with this.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement or remarks?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Chair, and thanks members for being on the committee. Our infrastructure sector is delivering nation-leading sustainable projects connecting people and places. Infrastructure is critical to our economy. It fundamentally shapes the way we live and it serves the needs of both present and future generations. It is the building blocks strengthening our communities, industries and the economy. Infrastructure delivery also creates deep social impact and generates lasting and meaningful social benefits. If we grasp the opportunity for local employment and wealth generation for small and medium enterprises, it can drive skills development and employment pathways for young people and support better outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged members of our community.

We know that having a strong pipeline of works ensures industry confidence and provides job security. That's what we're delivering. However, we can always improve. Our new secretary has been working on a proposal for our governments to strengthen our planning, delivery and value for money. Since becoming Minister for Infrastructure, I've charged him to deliver this proposal to me by the end of the year so the government can consider the recommendations in the 2025-26 Budget. However, we're not waiting and we are moving forward to further enhance the role of the Department of State Growth's Infrastructure Tasmania division to deliver specific projects for responsible agencies, whether projects or whether bespoke, complex or outside of the agencies or businesses' normal agreement.

Infrastructure Tasmania is already progressing delivery of some significant projects. They had over $400 million to support Tasmania's growth. This includes UTAS Stadium redevelopment project in Launceston and the Northern Suburbs Community Recreation Hub. They will also deliver the early works and construction of a Pontville site.

We will further enhance our project assurance framework and delivery agencies to ensure the state's infrastructure projects are being effectively developed and delivered on time, on budget, and in accordance with our government's objectives. A stronger governance framework will be in place to focus on sound investment; value for money; the client's interest and outcomes; encourage collaboration; draw upon the combined breadth of experience across

interested parties to deliver the best possible outcomes; define roles and responsibilities for the delivery agency; client agency and related parties; identify a single point of contact for intra-government and external communications and stakeholder engagement through an agreed communication strategy and stakeholder engagement plan protocol; provide a single point of financial accountability and reporting lines from business case to readiness for service; leverage the site's project assurance framework to monitor and provide timely reporting on project status; emerging risks and issues; mitigation actions; create flexibility to adapt and respond to changing circumstances throughout the project life cycle; and facilitate smooth transition from construction to operation with an appropriate transition period.

It is clearly an exciting time for infrastructure development in Tasmania. We look forward to delivering on the pipeline of projects to support the state's continued growth. The importance of infrastructure investment is highlighted by the flow on effects. It is across the civil, commercial, domestic, residential sectors right around the state and the $5.1 billion infrastructure investment will deliver key job-creating projects, providing new and upgraded assets across our health system, roads, bridges and schools.

We're making critical progress with the development of Tasmania's largest ever transport infrastructure project, the $796 million new Bridgewater bridge, supporting more than 1000 jobs, including the creation of close to 700 new jobs for Tasmanians. Importantly, and by design, a significant portion of the project's design and construction activities have been delivered through subcontracts with Tasmanian businesses, with more than $12 million being spent with local contractors each month as we approach the bridge's mid-25 completion.

I'm pleased to say that is part of the greater Hobart traffic solution. Construction of the Transit Lane Connector project has now also started to create an extension of the Southern Outlet with an additional traffic lane between Davey and Macquarie Streets. Indeed, we are getting on with the job of delivering infrastructure projects in all corners of the state. I thank everyone for their involvement in that and, of course, included in that is also the critical importance of training and workforce development, which I can come to a bit later.

Ms DOW - Premier, I'm going to kick off with an e-mail that I received from one of our constituents late last night. Ronnie from Zeehan wrote to me about the state of the Murchison Highway. They say:

> The potholes are causing damage to about three to four cars daily. State Growth, being the government, are doing very little. To put a claim into Stornoway, you need to jump through hoops. People on the west coast can't afford to buy new wheels or tyres every time we need to go up to the coast for medical reasons, and Rockcliff is telling the media we have the best roads in the country. The man is delusional. We need your help.

Premier, what do you say to Ronnie from Zeehan, and when are you going to fix the potholes with your pothole blitz on the Murchison Highway?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question and thank you to Ronnie for expressing this view. I did receive an e-mail similar to that, it would have been last night. I'm not sure if it was Ronnie or another person that was very concerned about the state of the roads and potholes and others, of course. There are significant potholes around the state road network, including

on sections of the Bass Highway between Deloraine and Latrobe in the north-west as a result of the severe event that started in late August.

We are well underway with our pothole blitz around the state and maintenance contractor, Stornoway, has three crews working on the Bass Highway, as well as crews on other roads to complete longer-term repairs.

We are committed to longer-term management of the state's roads, ensuring they are not only maintained but designed for longevity and road user safety.

As the new Minister for Infrastructure, I have requested a briefing from the department about construction standards of our roads and whether there are improvements that should be considered. The 2024-25 Budget includes $117 million in funding allocated to bridge and road maintenance for this financial year. I would like to thank road users for their patience during what has been a challenging time.

Ms DOW - Premier, the question was in relation to the Murchison Highway and when those potholes will be fixed.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, and we can come to that in just a moment. As I say, we have made the commitment, $117 million.

Incidentally, the public can make claims for compensation for vehicle damage that occurred on a state road, and they are encouraged to check the Transport website if they believe they do have a claim.

A number of roads across the state were impacted by this weather event in recent times, including the Lyell Highway, Highland Lakes Road and Lake Dobson Road. I am aware of the significant number of potholes more broadly. I thank people that have provided me with feedback. We can get an exact timeline on Murchison if you would like.

Ms DOW - That was the question.

Mr LIMKIN - Since 26 August 2024, 270 potholes have been identified on the Murchison Highway, with 156 repaired in the last week. So, not this week, last week, with crews using hot mix where possible to ensure a long-lasting repair.

Maintenance crews have been working on both the Murchison and the Rigley Highways everyday this this week and last week and will continue to do it until we have finished them. Well, I appreciate road users are concerned about the issues and we are prioritising the work as quickly as possible. I have also indicated to the West Coast Mayor last week similar information and committed to keeping him informed on the progress of the highway as quick as possible.

Ms DOW - Premier, why did it take up to two weeks for you to provide a statement or any form of information around the dangerous potholes that had developed across our road network right across the state? What did you learn from your briefing that you sought on potholes and your pothole blitz? What actually is your pothole blitz? Can you outline exactly what it is or is it just another slogan from your government?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, we were very exercised in terms of power reconnections over the two weeks of the extremely bad weather. Important to stand up the grants and the support for Tasmanians that are impacted by extreme weather events. I detailed a number of, if not all, those grants this morning in my Department of Premier and Cabinet Estimates where we have reached and supported Tasmanians for a variety of reasons.

I applaud the road crews around Tasmania that are working on fixing the potholes in recent times.

Ms DOW - What did you learn from your briefing Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have sought a briefing because we have to fix the potholes clearly, and that is the pothole blitz, but it is broader than that. I get a lot of feedback from the community in terms of the state of our roads, how can it be improved. Aware of infrastructure ministers' comments on a number of these matters, I get feedback directly.

Ms DOW - Yes, but what are you doing about it Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I get regular feedback, either through social media, more directly from former employees of the Department of Main Roads, for example. I am taking great interest in these matters. One, ensuring that the roads in terms of new roads are well prepared, good base, using the right materials. I want to ensure, when it comes to road repairs and contracts and the like, that we have the right emphasis. I am also interested in consulting with industry around these matters and wanting to get industry players around the table so they can talk to me and I can listen to them about how we might improve the situation of our roads. Extreme weather and rainfall does impact on our roads, and as I said -

Ms DOW - Not only that, though, Premier, you have new roads like the road that has just been completed, the Bass Highway at Table Cape that has only been down for a matter of months and it has already got huge potholes in it. Why are the roads deteriorating in the timeframes that they are?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, that is what I am seeking answers to, honourable member. Let us be very considered in all of this. I am interested in feedback from industry, those that repair roads and those that make our roads and see what can be done for improvement. One, do it first and do it properly, but also the immediate priorities around the pothole blitzes, I say, the consequences of not having those fixed in a timely manner, albeit the road crews have been out there in very difficult conditions for the last number of weeks doing just that. I commend them for it and just talking to the lads on the side of the road the other day about some of their experiences and ideas, I take that back and I want answers on how we can improve the road network.

Ms DOW - I think everybody does, Premier.

Ms BURNET - Premier, thank you for your introduction and talking about such things as the Bridgewater bridge and how that is a project which has been on time and on budget. I know that we have quite a number of projects in the pipeline, particularly after reading the Macquarie Point project of State Significance papers. Clearly, it was quite good timing, really, to be able to see those papers. But, given the projects that we have - the existing projects such as the Southern Outlet, the Bus Rapid Transit, Tasman Bridge, the corridor projects, which are

being funded in conjunction with the Australian government, and, also, given that we've got a significant housing shortage and ageing infrastructure in our schools and hospitals, and a housing crisis, do we have the capacity to deliver any of these other projects on time and on budget?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question and we'll endeavour to do all we can to ensure that they are on time and on budget. I'm happy to further explore your question but I want to pick up on one of the areas that you raised and that was the Tasman Bridge.

The Tasman Bridge was opened in 1965 and it carries among the highest volumes of traffic of any part of the state road network, more than 70,000 vehicles per day. Pedestrian and cyclist safety has been a concern for some time due to the narrow shared-use pathways and the height of the safety barriers both on the water and roadsides of the paths.

I'm aware, of course, of a 2016 coroner's report that recommended structural modifications to the bridge for reasons of human safety. This is a serious and highly sensitive matter that requires respectful and responsible discussion.

The bridge is also a highly visible landmark and, with very high usage, there are public expectations in relation to this project that need to be addressed, which is what I'm doing today.

The coroner's report was the basis for the Tasman Bridge Upgrade Project and, in 2020, the Australian government committed $65 million, matched by a $65 million contribution from the Tasmanian government for the total investment of $130 million. The key objective of this upgrade was and continues to be human safety. I am pleased to advise that objective will be delivered.

The original design concept for the bridge released in 2022, was for the construction of cantilevered three-and-a-half metre wide paths and safety barriers. Since that time, more detailed engineering investigations and modelling of the bridge structure above and below the water has found that the wind load and additional weight of the proposed new pathways on each side of the bridge would have potential to overload the foundations during extreme wind events. These investigations found that the additional cost of strengthening the foundations to accommodate that design would cost hundreds of millions of dollars and be extremely difficult to undertake, according to expert advice I've received from the Department of State Growth.

In short, the very large cost increase and difficulties in construction have made the original concept of three-and-a-half metre wide pathways unviable, but, given the importance of this project, however, we've been determined to press on with an alternative, keeping in mind the key objective of human safety. We have undertaken detailed wind modelling to determine that it is possible to construct a three-metre high safety barrier on the water side and a 1.4-metre high roadside barrier over the length of the bridge without compromising its structural integrity.

While the amenity that may have been provided by the three-and-a-half metre wide pathways is not achievable due to engineering constraints, we have determined the project can be delivered with the provision of widened sections of pathway to allow passing and will improve pathway connections on either side of the bridge.

We have shared this information with our Commonwealth counterparts and they are understanding of the outcome. This information that I'm providing today has been shared with key stakeholders on a cross-agency working group, as well as Lifeline. Now, there are a number of individual stakeholders who have been personally informed, and I thank you for the question.

You mentioned the Tasman Bridge and I thought I should update the committee at the earliest possible timeframe.

To your very good question on our capacity for delivery, I can speak to the 10-year infrastructure pipeline, which was most recently updated in October 2023, capturing commitments in the 2023-24 state Budget, the pipeline includes around $27 billion in infrastructure projects. Since being first released in July 2018, the pipeline has doubled from its original $13 billion in listed projects. The 10-year pipeline allows our key infrastructure leverage schedule to be planned and executed more efficiently, making sure each dollar invested has the largest possible positive impact on our economy. Importantly, this kind of investment not only delivers the infrastructure our state needs for tomorrow, but it creates jobs, keeping businesses operating and provides a cash injection to the local economy, as I referred to when it comes to the Bridgewater bridge, but we are committed to continuing to improve the pipeline through engagement with industry.

The industry reference group is led by Infrastructure Tasmania to ensure the pipeline is relevant and meets those key industry needs. In April 2024, the Secretary's board requested the pipeline update align with the budget cycle. The next update is to be conducted following the release of the 2024-25 Budget and will be released publicly before the end of this calendar year. Aligning the update with the next budget ensures that industry and asset owners have access to that up-to-date information about the status of the infrastructure projects, particularly projects that are funded through the State Budget.

Ms BURNET - Regarding the second part of my question about the priorities, we have the possibility of having an AFL stadium built. There are all these things that have been on the books for quite some time. How will those priorities land?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe that you're asking me a question about the priority of the same project as opposed to priority of other key projects, which I think's the point that you're making.

We can deliver all, in my view, given that the completion for the stadium project is July 2029. Midway through 2029 is the information that I have, so, we have to go through the planning and process the priorities you've highlighted in other areas, but we'll continue maintaining our roads, developing infrastructure buildings, upgrading hospitals.

We have a lot of health infrastructure to continue developing as well, particularly in mine and Mrs Beswick's electorate of Braddon, but the stadium should not impact in terms of the delivery. We're aiming for end of 2028 but it may well be a little later. I believe that we can do it and many others.

Given what I have just said about the construction of the Bridgewater bridge, which has gone extremely well in terms of progress to date and that'll be completed, my expectation is by the middle of next year. While the workforce won't be directly transferable to the stadium, I'm advised, but there may well be some transferability in terms of skills, but I'm not advised that

it will be directly transferable. I believe we can finish the projects that we've committed to. It's been difficult with the disruption of the pandemic in terms of supply chains, workforce development and the like, but our investment in skills, I would hope and expect, will help facilitate projects being on time.

Mrs BESWICK - Your government has made it clear that the Saul Eslake report was released too early for the Budget to be properly considered this year. When it comes to the infrastructure spending, how likely are we to see some of that advice being taken into the next project?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for that question, and it did land a little late for the Budget development in terms of Mr Eslake's report. That's not the fault of Mr Eslake, it's the just the Budget process in this election year. The Treasurer and I have both said that we respect Mr Eslake's views on matters. We don't always agree, but we'll take his advice seriously and continue to engage with Mr Eslake and, no doubt, some of the areas that Mr Eslake has put forward will be visible in the next budget that we deliver. Thank you.

Mrs BESWICK - Are we likely to see the prioritising of some infrastructure based on that, like, of the ratio of the social and economic benefits consideration?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we will make these decisions. We have a plan moving forward with upgrading our hospitals; $188 million to invest in our schools and upgrading our schools. We will, by the beginning of next year, have Legana and Brighton completed. But the north-west mental health precinct - I am sorry, I should have mentioned Ms Dow's electorate as well, of Braddon. We will make these considerations in a sensible way that reflect community needs and sentiment.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. Premier, abandoned and derelict vessels are a concern across Tasmania's waterways, in particular, in the Tamar River, where they are an unsightly environmental mess and, at times, a navigational hazard. Given the historic limitations of the current laws in removing the vessels and recovering costs from the owners, what is the government's plan to address this?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thanks, Mr Shelton, for the question. Derelict vessels, as you would no doubt agree and I have seen the Treasurer speak of this, often present risk to navigation, the safe use of waters by the public and the environment. Vessel owners have the ultimate responsibility for their vessels. It is, therefore, important that vessel owners are held to account for the cost of managing and disposing of the derelict vessels as you have termed them.

We are committed to, at the last state election, introducing tougher laws to fix the growing problem of abandoned and derelict vessels as part of our commitment. The Department of State Growth is preparing a policy position paper for consultation this year, which will inform the legislation that the government brings before the House.

The improved laws will include new powers to require evidence of regular maintenance, to inspect vessels and recover costs of rehabilitation from owners. They are intended - this is the legislation or the laws - to empower authorities to board and inspect vessels where they represent a navigational or environmental risk, including in cases where ownership of these liabilities is contested by owners or estates of deceased owners. The derelict vessels are a particular problem in the Tamar River. That is why I mentioned the member for Bass, the

Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, on these matters where a number have been left abandoned, including as a result of bankruptcy and the death of owners as well.

Since we announced this policy, there has been another incident where a sizeable vessel, the *Wyuna*, broke its anchor and drifted onto a reef in the lower reaches of the Tamar. I am looking at the Chair here, as the member for Bass. If not for the fast action of TasPorts in this circumstance, the towage operators, this could have resulted in a very significant navigational and environmental hazard. Abandoned vessels have been allowed to legally shift from privately held assets to expensive public liabilities, with some owners, including the beneficiaries of deceased estates, having no legal responsibility for the cost of remediation.

So, we will act to enforce stricter responsibilities on owners, including being registered and keeping the vessel in regular maintenance in return for the privilege of enjoying our public waterways. I look forward to bringing this legislation to parliament to contemporise the law and hold boat owners accountable for their deteriorating private assets before they become public liabilities in that sense.

Ms DOW - Premier, I am still not clear exactly what your pothole blitz is, whether or not it has additional funding allocated to it, and, in fact, who is actually paying for your pothole blitz.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The funding for has increased from, I think, $112 million to $117 million this Budget. It increased funding -

Ms DOW - The maintenance?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Maintenance, more broadly, which includes $31.2 million from the Australian Government in 2024-25. This included $50.2 million for three regional road maintenance contractors-based services. The remaining is for pavement resurfacing and line marking, bridge maintenance, bridge and pavement renewals, tree safety risk management, roadside mowing and slashing, and digital asset capability improvement across the state road network, and any costs related to the impact of extreme weather events on the state road network, or initial cash flow from the infrastructure maintenance budget, pending a decision to apply for funding assistance through the Australian Government's Disaster Recovery funding arrangements for eligible events.

Ms DOW - Will you be applying for funding from the feds for your pothole blitz?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, if it comes under the Australian Government's disaster recovery funding arrangements, possibly. Indicated to the affirmative there.

Ms DOW - I mean, yes, there was an extraordinary weather event, but potholes on our major road corridors aren't a new thing, Premier. They've been occurring now for years, particularly on the Bass Highway. You can't attribute it all to a one-off weather event.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Water is the enemy of roads, as I've said.

Ms DOW - Climate change is, it seems.

Mr ROCKLIFF - If you're talking about sections of major highways, including the Bass Highway, and, loath to talk about the area close to where I reside, Parramatta Creek and the like, you've been there many times, and it's frustrating, I'd have to say, bloody annoying for me, for you, for road users -

Ms DOW - Not just annoying, it's very dangerous. Incredibly dangerous, particularly at night.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've said that. Danger. I want roads to be built and built properly, fixed and fixed properly. I want to get to the bottom of how we can improve our road -

Ms DOW - When do you expect to be at the bottom of that, Premier? When do you think you'll know what your further actions will be around the road network, pavements, what you need to do as a government to improve road surfaces across the state?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, I have to get to the bottom of what is the real problem. Weather is a problem, you have to acknowledge that. But are there other factors as well? We've already reached out to the Civil Contractors Federation. In terms of that organisation, we want to get all key parties together. This is in train and being worked through now. I want to sit round the table and talk to people who have far more experience in the road maintenance and road building game than I have and will ever have.

Ms DOW - How long do you expect that to take before you come to some sort of decision?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm hoping to convene that in the next number of weeks. I would expect, albeit I have trade missions and the like coming up, but we'll get that happening as soon as we possibly can. When I get feedback directly - and I get some pretty direct feedback, some of which is not suitable for public consumption on social media - from people who had skin in the game in this area, and I know people go back to the Department of Main Roads days, the old DMR. Things are a bit different now in terms of heavy vehicles. We have B-doubles, number of vehicles, et cetera, I have people talk to me about the type of gravel we use and some of the gravel's got too much sand in it, therefore it washes away from the aggregates and it creates a challenge.

Ms DOW - Would you agree that your government has lost the ability to build a road to the Tasmanian road conditions?

CHAIR - Order. I have given the call to Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - I want to go back to the stadium proposal, and appendix N in the report. I don't know if you read that one. The executive summary has a significant number of projects and the costs associated with each of those, things like the northern access road, which is touted as $33.9 million, the event bus plaza, $16.2 million. It talks about a Collins Street redesign and a possible active transport bridge. There are considerable costs associated with those. In all, there's a cost between $174.3 million and $186.78 million. Some of these have not been funded. How do you intend to prioritise these projects?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've covered this a fair bit today, earlier on the day we had Anne Beach from the Macquarie Point Development Corporation here, who would be more than happy to

provide a one-on-one briefing with you, I am sure. We talked about private investment opportunities and unlocking that potential, but this is a broad urban renewal project.

Ms BURNET - An expensive one.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, yeah, but we have to grow with the times and get with the times, frankly, and ensure that we do provide opportunities through investment in key enabling infrastructure. The stadium is part of that, but the precinct, whatever was built there, albeit the stadium, infrastructure needs movement of people in and out quickly, accepting that would need upgrades of infrastructure. We need upgrades of infrastructure right across the state as the population increases and things are built and those types of matters.

Ms BURNET - I do not think that has really answered the questions. Obviously, making a city better is one thing, but as far as the priority, this list is long and it's vast. It includes park and ride, it -

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's great. There was no park and ride. You'd be happy with that.

Ms BURNET - I am happy with park and ride. It's a considerable expense in relation to delivering this project.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is good for the people. Park and ride facilities, it's great, reduces traffic congestion.

Ms BURNET - Premier, it is the cost and I will be asking the Transport minister plenty of questions around getting people to and from places.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Often I get questions on the right location: 'Is it this?' and 'It should be out in the sticks', and all those sorts of things which would add to the challenge when it comes to traffic congestion and getting people there. If you go to Melbourne, the MCG, the Rod Laver Arena, Adelaide Oval, stadia infrastructure very close to the CBD and other amenities. We are in walking distance from hotels in the CBD, entertainment venues in Salamanca and elsewhere, and no doubt there will be more close to the stadia as well, where people can walk or use other forms of mobility to these areas rather than drive a car and cause all sorts of traffic congestion. Of course, bus public transport will be critical to this. Not only buses but also the ferry network as well.

Mrs BESWICK - You briefly mentioned there about planning for population growth. What are our strategies for planning for population growth? A lot of our current strategies seem to be saying that we're not growing even though we've already hit our population plans 10 years in advance. What are we doing now?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We released our population policy in around early July, the third or fourth, from memory, which was about trying to change that demographic shift, particularly the median age. When I was one years of age in 1971, the median age of Tasmania was 26. It's now 42 or 44. The median age of Australia is 37. Our policies within the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future were all about trying to change that demographic shift through policies about attracting young people here, keeping young people here, and the like. Population growth and increased economic activity are putting pressure, for example, on the greater Hobart area and the road network, particularly across arterial corridors and Hobart CBD streets. Effective

transport planning and traffic management is vitally important in order for Hobart to retain and improve its liveability, which is a key part of this, and particularly to remain globally competitive in attracting visitors and new residents.

The Greater Hobart Traffic Solution has committed some $217 million in funding for short and long-term transport initiatives to manage peak commuter demand across the Greater Hobart area. The Greater Hobart Traffic Solution implements key aspects of the Hobart Transport Vision and the Hobart City Deal. These are a number of areas of which we've already - we've got a rapid bus strategic business case, that is happening, Mr Limkin, at this present time as well. Member for Clark, you'd be interested in this as well, from the northern suburbs. There are a lot of matters we're considering when it comes to population growth. I'll point you to Nick, to the population policy which we released, which is extensive.

Mrs BESWICK - I guess I mean from a broader infrastructure planning point of view.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have our pipeline.

Mrs BESWICK - Great, we've got buses planned in Hobart, but what are we doing -

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have our pipeline of works, as I mentioned before. No doubt when we develop the north-west mental health precinct, there will potentially be infrastructure requirements there in terms of upgrades.

Ms McINTYRE - We have a comprehensive plan. We are working on 10-year strategies across Australia in terms of infrastructure - road and bridge infrastructure, bus network planning. We're doing a major network plan in the greater Hobart area, we're looking at a rapid bus transport network for Hobart. We're also working on a broader Keep Hobart Moving strategy. Hobart is obviously or potentially the most congested city in the state at the moment. We will then roll out these plans to the other urban centres.

Mrs BESWICK - What's the time frame for some of those?

Ms McINTYRE - We already have a draft Keep Hobart Moving plan. It's been out in the public domain. A public consultation will be going to government for endorsement in the coming weeks. We're already started work on business case for the rapid bus network. We're working on the ferry masterplan, the expansion of ferry services and building ferry infrastructure along the Derwent. We are working on road upgrades as well.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. I will talk this afternoon about highways and roads and that sort of thing. I can recall in 2014, the Midlands Highway upgrade and the fact that the Midlands Highway was falling apart under the previous Labor government. On the bottom end of that highway, there is the Bridgewater bridge, which was only ever talked about. It is now growing before our eyes. Can you provide some perspective of the scale of this infrastructure project as well as update the committee on when we can expect to drive over it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, for that. I remember a lot of the discussion about the Midland Highway and I recall the former Minister for Infrastructure calling it a goat track, although I do not think he was Minister for Infrastructure when he called it a goat track. That was in around 2008, from memory. The Bridgewater bridge project is the largest transport infrastructure project in Tasmania's history and we are very proud of where we have come to

in terms of this. Those of us who regularly traverse the existing causeway and the bridge - in fact, some 20,000 vehicles do this every day - would have seen the progress on the side of the river, coming into Hobart on the left-hand side. The independent Major Assessment Panel approved this $786 million project which was the first to utilise the Major Projects Assessment process.

The new Bridgewater bridge will feature a four-lane standalone structure and a three-metre-wide path for pedestrians and cycles. It will include great separated interchanges on each side of the river, enhancing traffic efficiency and safety for motorists. It would also provide a huge boost for the local economy. I have mentioned already supporting an estimated 1000 direct and direct jobs and a minimum of 25% of those new roles to be recruited from Brighton, Derwent Valley and Glenorchy municipalities, which is fantastic. My advice is, to date, that the project remains within budget and on target for construction completion in mid-2025.

The project's purpose-built precast concrete production facility in Bridgewater is producing 1082 concrete bridge segments needed to build the 1.2-kilometre deck for the new bridge. Currently, an average of 20 segments have been produced each week, weighing between 50 and 90 tonnes and measuring 15 metres wide. Now, they are stored on site before being transported to the northern and southern abutments of the new bridge, where they are lifted into place with special lifting devices and cranes. The precast facility employs around 90 people, which is fantastic, and the project reached a major milestone in mid-July 2024 with completed construction of all 46 of the main bridge piles. I have mentioned the $12 million, haven't I? Upcoming works include implementing traffic changes near the course by roundabout in Granton, ongoing concrete pours for bridge piers, ongoing production of concrete bridge segments at precast facility, ongoing construction of the new bridge broaches, segments deliveries to the north and south sides of the river Derwent and ongoing erection of bridge segments in the north and south using special segment lifting devices. This has been a very big project that those involved can be very proud of.

Ms DOW - Premier, this will be my last pothole question for today, but there will be many more - putting you on notice. I am hoping that you will be able to provide, similarly as you did for the Murchison Highway, a breakdown of the total number of potholes on the following respective road corridors and outline the total number that have been filled to date: the Huon, Tasman, Bass, Channel, Southern Outlet, Midland Highway, Lyell Highway, Lenora, Illawarra Road and East Highway.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The total statewide potholes since the 26 August 2024: South potholes identified a total of 684 and repaired a total of 584. North potholes identified a total of 1132 and repaired a total of 1110. North west potholes: identified 1622 and repaired 1148. Maintenance contractors continue to make a conservative effort to address potholes, including those in the Bass Highway, in addition to managing the impacts from the severe weather across the broader network.

What I will do, if it is okay, because I know this north west figure is of interest to you particularly and understandably, we might see if we can get a breakdown for the Murchison Highway. Is that possible?

Ms DOW - I did provide a list. Could I provide that list on notice for each of those corridors?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes. Did you read that into the *Hansard*.

Ms DOW - I did give it to the *Hansard*, but we can put it on notice.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, if we can get that for you. Just bear with us on time but we will see if we can get that sorted.

Ms DOW - Thank you. My next question is in relation to your budget infrastructure spend. Treasurer Michael Ferguson says your government is spending more on infrastructure. Why is it, then, that you will be spending $300 million less on infrastructure over the forward Estimates?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have a graph here, on page 119, chart 6.1, Agency Infrastructure Investment 2018-19 to 2027-28. I am looking at budget paper 1. That's outlined there.

Ms DOW - Over the page, you will see there is a decline across the Estimates on the next table.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have got the visual presentation there. I think what's important is the work that everyone's done to get the dollars out the door, which has been a remarkable achievement, and increasingly so over the last number of years. That has been no mean feat because our infrastructure has been considerable in terms of our investment moving forward, but you can have investments moving forward -

Ms DOW - The point is that you are actually spending less, $300 million less. Why is the Treasurer espousing record spending when you are actually spending less?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is a $5.1 billion committed infrastructure investment in the Budget, which is significant: $1.9 billion in roads and bridges and other transport infrastructure over the Budget and forward Estimates; $649 million over the Budget and forward Estimates on hospitals and health facilities, which is 12.75 per cent of total infrastructure spend; $359 million on schools and education infrastructure, that is more than 7 per cent; $356 million, again 7 per cent, in infrastructure supporting tourism, recreation and culture; and the $1.2 billion to be invested in infrastructure by government businesses, which is 23.5 per cent of total infrastructure spend in that sense.

It is important to continue this infrastructure spend because, as Andrew Winch said recently, all the dollars spent on investment in infrastructure ends up in cafes and service stations and shopping centres around Tasmania, Andrew is the CEO of the Civil Contractors Federation. This is significant. This financial year's investment is more than four times that of the previous government, which is significant. Not only is it significant in terms of the dollars when it comes to the investment, but also what we are getting out the door as well.

Ms DOW - The Treasurer is saying that you are $5.1 billion. I am not getting the answers.

CHAIR - I can't help you if you don't like the answers. Please ask another question or I will move on to Ms Burnet.

Ms DOW - The Treasurer says that you will be spending $5.1 billion on infrastructure over the next four years.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Ms DOW - In reality that is half-a-billion dollars less than your first budget as Premier two years ago. How is that anything else other than a cut to infrastructure spending?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Are you saying we did well in the first year?

Ms DOW - Not at all, no. You say that you're spending less but you're saying that you're spending more. I just want you to be truthful.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we are. It's there for everyone to see. So, was it $4.3 billion in last year's budget and $5.1 billion in this year's? Anyway. It's significant.

Ms BURNET - Back to the stadium, Premier. Already, we've gone over $60 million in the likely forecast, or the spending for the stadium. It's up to $775 million already. On that front, that means it would be one of the most expensive pieces of infrastructure per head of population, at about $1347 per Tasmanian.

If we go back to this list of infrastructure projects, there's a significant amount which haven't been funded. The northern access road hasn't been properly funded, the funding is not identified for the Hunter Street car park and even the event travel behaviour campaign, really vital to get this project over the line in anybody's books because you can't have a dysfunctional transport system, that's unfunded as well. Who is actually going to pay for these unfunded projects?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The public infrastructure projects?

Ms BURNET - Yeah, these are public infrastructure projects.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, I think you're making an argument that if it wasn't for the stadium, that all those projects would be funded. Is that what you're saying? I think that's what you're saying, or won't get done?

Ms BURNET - I'm saying that they're not funded.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I can say that they will get done and you've added up some cost there, of course, above the $375 million that we're committed to. We're investing $375 million, okay? The federal government are putting $240 million into the Macquarie Point Precinct, and we'll expect to get additional funds from the private sector. We went through that quite a bit this morning in Estimates. If you're asking for an update on those individual projects, I'm happy to provide some of that. Do you have any, Craig?

Mr LIMKIN - I just want to be clear that these projects that you've listed are actually not part of the stadium. They are transport projects that the government has committed to through various strategies. As Ms McIntyre said, the Keep Hobart Moving strategy has been out for consultation. It lists in there the northern suburbs transit corridor and the rapid bus networks. The Department of State Growth has been undertaking strategic business cases for

these projects and we continue to do that, as consistent with government policy, to identify the costs and the way forward. Even the northern access road, this Budget contains funding for the department to undertake the preliminary work and the planning work to enable that project to proceed.

Ms BURNET - We'll just get onto the bus rapid transit because, from my reading of the Budget, there is very little detail. There was a big announcement in July in relation to how brilliant this was going to be. Where and how much priority are you putting on the bus rapid transit and when will it be delivered?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, firstly, I'm very excited about it.

Ms BURNET - That's good.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We're committed to delivering an effective public transport solution so we can utilise the northern suburbs transit corridor. What I'm excited about is the opportunity of densification along the corridor in terms of mixed housing -

Ms BURNET - It's been on the books for a long time.

Mr ROCKLIFF - which is exciting because it provides that medium-density housing that we spoke about in the population policy, Mrs Beswick, as well. Affordable housing but also close access to a transport corridor as well.

Ms BURNET - It has been talked about for a long time with very little action.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Planning for the corridor is being progressed as part of a proposed greater Hobart rapid bus network for which the strategic business case, as we have said, is being developed to examine the benefits, costs and risks.

Mr WINTER - Exciting. Another state, another report, another strategy.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am so pleased you are excited. We agree. We are all excited and that is fantastic. Rapid buses have a potential to deliver direct, frequent and high-quality public transport across -

Mr WINTER - Minister Abetz was talking about trains the other day.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Greater Hobart and stimulate urban renewal -

Mr WINTER - Are you a train guy or a bus guy?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am a 'get it done' guy. Gets things done, I am.

Mr WINTER - Are you serious? 10 years?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, I am serious and I am going to get it done, absolutely.

Ms BURNET - Getting back to the BRT and coming in to the stadium. When is that, Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The current strategic business case being developed is considering staged implementation of a rapid bus network which could involve a two-lane busway on the transit corridor, as well as transit lanes and stations on transport corridors in the south and the east of Hobart. If the results of a strategic business case are favourable, a detailed business case will then be required as part of the planning process to request Australian Government funding to design and construct the project.

Mr WINTER - I think you have really hit it now.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Planning activities are currently being funded from the broader Hobart Public Transport Infrastructure Planning Fund, where $38.5 million has been committed by the Australian Government and $13.5 million from the Tasmanian Government.

Ms BURNET - Getting back to my original question, when will the BRT be delivered?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are working on -

Members interjecting.

CHAIR - Order. We are going to move onto Mrs Beswick.

Mrs BESWICK - I have had a few councils mention to me that the heavy vehicle income that they get to support their road networks has been the same for the last 20 years. There has been no increase in that despite heavy vehicles obviously getting a lot more income to the government for their registrations and things like that. They would really like some more support to look after their roads with these great big B-doubles and things like that - you know, wrecking them. What can we do there?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. I stand to be corrected but it is the methodology that is the issue. I have engaged with the Local Government Association of Tasmania on this, particularly the mayor of West Tamar and the mayor of Break O'Day when they had those respective roles, if my memory serves me correctly.

It is more than methodology and how it is all calculated that they want some change, to which we are unable to commit at this particular point in time. Minister Abetz may well be the responsible minister for this. Ms McIntyre, do you have any further information?

Ms McINTYRE - This is actually funding that is provided through the Commonwealth Government and it is a formula that is developed by the Commonwealth and the Australian

Government, so it is not state funding. It comes through state Treasury, but it is through the Commonwealth Government.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is the answer. I was right in terms of the methodology aspect of it and I know the LGAT have been advocating for it. I need to get across it a bit more before we decide if we can replicate on their behalf for some change, but I understand it is a concern to them.

Mrs BESWICK - In terms of tenders and development of big infrastructure projects, what is our policy and how well are we implementing policy in our circular economy and using Tasmania's own resources, so things like [inaudible] Australia to build our big bridge?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Big fan of the circular economy and it came up just the other day, I was somewhere about industry or business. It will come to it in a moment, but the more that we can have a circular economy when it comes to closed farming systems, for example, utilising crushed rubber when it comes to road materials, other forms of aggregate, if I can put it that way. We have a Tasmanian industry participation policy, 30 per cent of - the circuit economy question though, could you expand on that please?

Ms McINTYRE - We are working on a combination of - so, the government has mandated a 30 per cent component waiting for Tasmanian industry participation plan. There has to be a significant component of Tasmanian industry for use of Tasmanian products in the tender submission and it's 30 per cent of 18 of the total assessment of the tender.

Mrs BESWICK - Is it 30 per cent of deals or 30 per cent of the waiting?

Ms McINTYRE - It's percentage participation plan is around Tasmanian businesses and employing Tasmanians, but they can actually provide information about use of Tasmanian resources as well. In the civil sector a lot of the input into roads is actually sort of local quarry stones, et cetera. Things like steel are imported, but the majority of materials within a civil road project for example, would be local material.

Ms BESWICK - That is well implemented as interest policy?

CHAIR - I remind the members' questions are to be directed through the Chair.

Ms BESWICK - Sorry.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. Premier, the freight capacity upgrade program has a low profile, but it's highly important to our economy. Can you please update the committee on the state's investment in this program and what will be delivered for our important road freight sector?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The profile of the freight capacity upgrade program, which is five years and a $100 million commitment from the Australian and Tasmanian governments to improve state road and bridge network. It's an opportunity to increase freight capacity and ensure continued utilisation of key urban and regional freight routes throughout Tasmania with the strengthening and replacement of bridges and the strengthening and rehabilitation of pavements. The program will contribute to the continued growth of Tasmania due to the

movement of significant freight and support industries that undertake special purpose vehicle and oversize and over mass heavy vehicle movements across our network as well.

The program will maximise certainty for industries with a reliance on freight such as agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, mining and manufacturing industries and minimise long term costs associated with bridge and pavement replacements. Component one of the program, valued at $40 million, is currently being delivered on roads and bridges statewide, with progress detailed in the following.

Pavement strengthening and rehabilitation project's progress: Construction is complete at 15 sites including seven Bass Highway sites, two on the Lyell Highway and one on each of the Fingerpost Secondary Road as well, the Huon Highway, Midland Highway, Colebrook Road and Esk main Road. Construction is near completion at two sites with one side each on the Murchison Highway and Fingerpost Main Road. The design is being finalised for the remaining four sites which include one site on each of Arthur Highway, Brooker Highway, Lyell Highway and Tasman Highway.

The bridge strengthening and replacement project's construction is complete at Pipers River Bridge. Tenders have been awarded for nine bridges in which carbon fibre is proposed to be installed. Coal Creek Bridge replacement is currently in tender phase. Construction is expected to commence in late 2024, this year. Advertising of tenders is planned for late 2024 for the Ring River bridge, the Wivenhoe rail underpass, Charles Street bridge and Coal Creek bridge, and design is also underway for Sassafras Creek bridge as well.

Ms DOW - Premier, in August the former minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, said it would take four to six weeks to scope the berth 1 project at Devonport Port and determine the estimated cost. It's now been six weeks. Have you received advice about how much it will cost? If so, what does that advice say?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Four to six weeks. So, the six weeks is up. As I've said this morning, I'm still expecting advice to be in in a few weeks' time, in mid to late October. I haven't got any updated advice for you today, but I know Mr Moloney and Mr Gemell are working hard in this area. I want it to be thorough, I want to get it right, and I'll be communicating very clearly with the Tasmanian public on this.

Ms DOW - I thought you took over because it's urgent, though.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have to get this right, Ms Dow.

Ms DOW - What date did you say that you'd be able to provide advice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mid to late October, I'm expecting. Probably 21 October and onwards, I would expect that. You can hold me to account when it comes to that, if you'd like.

Ms DOW - Last Thursday, you said in parliament that you would be meeting with Ben Moloney and Peter Gemell in the not-to distant future. Has that meeting taken place?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I haven’t met them yet.

Ms DOW - Last month you told the House that TT-Line would be paying for berth 1 upgrades. The acting chair of TT-Line then told the Public Accounts Committee that it hadn't been determined who would pay. You then told the House that taxpayers would pay. Is your most recent answer correct, or will the money from your patch-up job at berth 1 have to come from the state Budget?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we'll make those decisions when we have all the information before us to finalise that decision.

Ms BURNET - Premier, my questions are around Mac wharf 6 and the access road linking that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - So berth 6?

Ms BURNET - Yes, berth 6. That's right. It seems like there is not a great deal of detail about the Macquarie Wharf upgrades, but given the proposed major works in the vicinity and competing projects, how will you prioritise this upgrade given the Antarctic gateway status is very important to Hobart and the state, and it's worth $183 million across the whole spectrum of the economy?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, it's huge. I agree with you. This morning you would have been engaged with other committees, but we did speak briefly about berth 6 and my engagement with minister Plibersek on this issue. We had a very constructive meeting last week, which builds on the constructive meeting we had a few months ago. In fact, we had a conversation again earlier this year as well, if my memory serves me correctly. We've engaged three times this year, two face-to-face, around Macquarie berth 6. We're not too far away from an agreement. Our state and federal officials have been working very hard on this in recent times. I look forward to finalising that, getting agreement from the federal minister. I can report that we're both very pleased with the progress when we met the other day - when I say face-to-face, it was video. I was hoping she could see me, but it was video.

Ms BURNET - Have the detailed plans been produced in relation to these works?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Limkin has been involved in these discussions.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, Premier. The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD), through the Commonwealth department, provided a user brief earlier this year. Based off the user brief, TasPorts has been working through what the designs need to be to enable to fulfil the requirements of AAD.

The costings that we are negotiating with the Commonwealth on are based off the preliminary design and that user brief, and I do want to say it's a very preliminary design. What we want to do is spend the time to work through with AAD to make sure it is fit for purpose for their new vessel. And, so, we continue with TasPorts to have those conversations. As the Premier said, we are collectively, the department and also TasPorts, committed to finalising a deal so that we can present it to government as quickly as possible with our federal colleagues so that the AAD and Hobart will continue to be the gateway to enter Antarctica.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. Well, first of all, Premier, talking about the previous question when it comes down to the Bridgewater bridge and, as a northerner driving down past it, I just get excited all the time when I see the advancement that's taken place every time you come past it. So, from a northerner point of view, it's fantastic to see that one day our -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. The benefits are being spread far and wide. I've got a company on the north-west coast that benefits from it.

Mr SHELTON - Yes. One day our trip into Hobart will be that little bit quicker, but in that question I did also mention the Midlands Highway and, Premier, in 2015, the former Hodgman government embarked upon the single largest upgrade of the Midland Highway in the history of our key north-south link. Can you please update the committee on progress towards the completion of the Midlands Highway 10-year action plan and what are the safety benefits of the upgrades?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton. I know you travel far and wide in the electorate of Lyons, including on the Midland Highway as well, and it was back in May 2015 when both the Tasmanian government and Australian government launched the Midland Highway 10-year action plan.

This is a $605 million commitment over the 10 years - huge investment for the Midland Highway, the single biggest, I expect. With all but 10 kilometres completed, it is a much safer and more efficient highway for all users. Since works began, 24 projects have now been completed, with 40 kilometres of projects completed over the last construction season, and there are currently no significant road works projects underway.

Before the 10-year action plan started in 2014, there had been 16 years, in fact, just 13 per cent - 16 years of the previous government just 13 per cent of the Midland Highway was rated at AusRAP 3 stars. By the time the highway is completed early next year, the entire highway will achieve that 3-star standard. And, as I say, all about 10 kilometres of the 153 kilometres of the Midland Highway work is complete.

We are on the final stretch and are expecting all projects to be wrapped up in 2025. I do want to have a shout-out to all the people that have been working on the highway. I know it's been a cause of frustration for a number of commuters, given the different speed zones which are there for safety and those matters, but we respect the public's patience while these important upgrades are completed.

Some sections of the Midland Highway have been duplicated to four lanes, that's two in each direction where it is warranted, higher traffic volume areas, typically near Hobart and Launceston.

Once completed, the highway from Pontville roundabout to Breadalbane will be about 35 per cent two-lane and 50 per cent three-lane and 15 per cent four-lane sections. The overtaking lanes are strategically located to provide safe overtaking opportunities in both directions of travel. Importantly, there's been a significant increase in safe overtaking opportunities along the Midland Highway with a flexible safety barrier preventing head-on collisions.

The final project, which is north of Campbell Town, Stage 2 between Campbell Town and Conara, so it's a 10-kilometre piece of road there, is programmed to be awarded in late 2024, this year, pending regulatory approvals including Australian government's environmental approvals and the final section works will include road widening, junction improvements, extending steel shoulders, additional overtaking lanes and installing a flexible safety barrier as well.

A lot of work has been done. I commend the Australian government as well, of all colours over that time, which I appreciate and, most importantly, the people and the contractors that have worked on it.

Mr SHELTON - I have had a closer look than most to the highway, so fantastic job.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thought you would, Mr Shelton, given you travel extensively. Of course, you have walked it, haven't you?

Mr SHELTON - Yes.

Ms DOW - Premier, I find it really concerning that there's no sense of urgency around you making a decision on berth 1, given that economic consequences that each year that those ships are delayed to our economy, particularly in the north-west, in your electorate, and given that you gave a specific time frame to the public that you would make a decision on this. Is it that you have avoided making decisions because you did want to be scrutinised at Estimates about that decision that you make? Or you have you been too preoccupied thinking about berthing the new vessel in Singapore?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The answer to all that is no, that big preamble to the question. We are taking very considered advice on all these matters. We are committed to delivering the key port infrastructure upgrades to the Port of Devonport to support the arrival of *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels as quickly, safely and as efficiently as possible. Tasports has completed initial works at the location of Terminal 3. That is to become a Devonport berth for the new vessels.

Ms DOW - We are talking about berth 1, Premier.

CHAIR - Order

Mr ROCKLIFF - TT-Line received possession of the main site in July and is working to deliver the new Terminal 3 as soon as possible. I understand the angst in the community, I spoke to the Devonport mayor just yesterday when we were at the Spreyton Cricket Club season launch together and I understand the mayor's desire to get this resolved and decisions made as soon as possible.

Absolutely. I agree with you, it is critically important, but what is also important is that we make the proper decision with the best information possible, accepting a few weeks after the six-week time frame. But we have got to get it right, Ms Dow, and I want to have the experts provide me with the advice as to the best way forward, and I could not be clearer about that.

Ms DOW - Premier, can you explain the process to confirm the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels will be safely able to operate in the Mersey? The process that you have been through to ensure that they will safely be able to do that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Are you referring to the eventuality of berth 3 or are you referring to the berth 1?

Ms DOW - Berth 1 in the first instance.

Mr ROCKLIFF - My advice is that these decisions will be made independently of me, certainly, because the harbour master has a lot of -

Mr WINTER - That is the question. Can you explain the process on how this works?

Ms DOW - What does the harbour master do?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will just explain it, the harbour master is critical in all these matters, providing that objective advice.

Ms DOW - Have you had any issues raised with you about the ability for the new *Spirit*s to operate in the Mersey?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have engaged with stakeholders, yes, where the questions have been raised with me.

Ms DOW - By the harbour master? Marine pilots?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have spoken about this on radio and I've engaged with Mr Kelly to hear his views, as well, as part of my engagement, and I would expect that Mr Gemell and Mr Moloney will also be engaging as well with all stakeholders. Certainly, that is my expectation.

Ms DOW - Is it your understanding that tugs -

Ms BURNET - Thank you, Chair. Premier, just to go back to the Tasman Bridge, and I understand the sensitivities around this, but on table 6.4 in the Greater Hobart Traffic Solution, page 141 of budget paper 1, the Tasman Bridge funding and the Southern Outlet are put together. There's only $2 million budgeted from the federal government for this financial year and $6.7 million from the state. Could you tell the committee how much will be spent on the Tasman Bridge at this point, given your explanation previously?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The total project is $130 million, which we're sharing $65 million to $65 million state and federal. That's the answer to the totality of the Tasman Bridge.

Ms BURNET - Given those changes that you hinted at or spoke of -

Mr ROCKLIFF - In terms of the rescoping exercise, my understanding is that what I've spoken about today in terms of the safety barrier and the widening, albeit the cantilever of 3.5 metres is too wide for wind and other structural matters, the rescoping, Ms McIntyre, is that $130?

Ms McINTYRE - The $130 million is the total budget for the Tasman Bridge pathways and strengthening. The scope needs to be more developed before we can provide detail about

what the actual budget or what the cost will be of the rescope work. There will still be potentially some pathway widening. There will be bridge strengthening. Both the internal and external barriers will come at a really high cost and there will be connection improvements to the pathways at either end.

Ms BURNET - That's on either end. I have major concerns in relation to the fact that you can't, effectively, widen that very narrow area to ride or walk, particularly if you have other pedestrians or riders coming towards you. I just can't understand why this cannot be widened effectively for what was a great community concern when there was consultation?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I respect the reason for your question. All the analysis, including wind analysis, if I can call it that, with the wider cantilever of 3.5 metres, the wind and the fact that the bridge was built in 1965, the structural integrity of the bridge isn't at a capacity to take the wider cantilever. That is why we have had to retreat on the width but remain committed to the human safety changes. I'm not an engineer. Denise?

Ms McINTYRE - I'd be happy to add a little bit to that. It's not impossible, but it would be at very high cost. There would be work required to the piles to strengthen the piles and the piers to enable further cantilever of the existing cantilever construction.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have the project manager, Robyn Hawkins here. Robyn, thanks very much for joining us at the table. Apologies for my very simplistic explanation to answer the question by Ms Burnet. If you got anything further to add, please.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, you are correct. It is a combination of the wind load that would be generated from the full upgrade which we were proposing with the 3.5 metre paths on each side, and also the weight of those upgrades, the load that effectively puts on the bridge, and the need for strengthening of the structure. As Denise McIntyre mentioned, the cost of that is significantly more than the project budget. As part of the investigation work that we've undertaken, as the Premier mentioned, the bridge was opened in 1965 and was reconstructed or open again in 1977. At that time, it was widened from four to five lanes. Basically, in an extreme weather event, in an upgraded situation with three and a half metre paths on each side with full safety screens, the foundations of the bridge would be over capacity. That is the reason that the project has effectively been rescoped to focus on our primary objective, which is to improve safety on the pathways and provide higher safety screens on the water side and the road side.

CHAIR - I think we might have a short break for five minutes

The Committee suspended from 4.01 p.m. to 4.06 p.m.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I want to add to an answer. Mrs Beswick asked a question around the local government heavy vehicle matters. I talked about methodology and the like. Ms McIntyre would like to add to an answer if she can.

Ms McINTYRE - When I answered the question, I was talking about the Commonwealth contribution, which is a significant amount of funding that's distributed across local government. The state is responsible for $1.5 million per year distribution to local governments. It has used the same formula since 1996-97. I understand that's what councils are concerned about.

Mrs BESWICK - Premier, you've just told us that it's going to be another month before we have an answer to how we're going to upgrade the berth in Devonport. Obviously, we're not going to have an upgrade done by the time the first *Spirit* is ready. What is the plan for where we are going to put that? What are the A, B, and C plans going on there?

Mr ROCKLIFF - First, we'll consult with the Tourism ministry. I went through some of this today. We will ensure that we respond to demand. The two existing ships will keep operating. We will explore the options of double sailings, as we've always done. That will also ensure that we have further time to ensure that we've got the required statewide infrastructure to better develop for the event of the increase in capacity, most notably a 40 per cent increase in passengers.

Mr O'BYRNE - Premier, I understand you're back into the infrastructure seat only recently. I might direct this to the department. In terms of the south-east corridor and the south-east traffic solution, one of the bits in the middle which essentially concludes that piece of work is still delayed significantly. Could you confirm that it is now going back to the drawing board in terms of a new design after three or four years of work with the local community?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, we can work through that.

Ms McINTYRE - Are we talking about the section between the airport interchange and the first causeway?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes.

Ms McINTYRE - There has been some minor amendment to the design around the junction of Pittwater Road, to minimise environmental impact. So, it's not back to the drawing board; it's a minor amendment to the design.

Mr O'BYRNE - The design that's been out there in the public domain has significantly - well, in the property as you're heading towards Sorell on the right-hand side, it would significantly impact that property. When you say a minor amendment, what does that mean?

Ms McINTYRE - There's a minor amendment to move the junction about 10 metres, so around the Pittwater Road junction, to move that 10 metres further into the golf course.

Ms DOW - When Michael Ferguson resigned, you said you were personally taking control of the new *Spirit*s project. Can you name me one thing that you've done differently to him?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we're engaging in consultation. We always need to engage with the community and tourism sector. Of course, I wear the hat of Tourism minister as well. We spoke this morning about the importance of communication, the Premier's Visitor Advisory Council. We're meeting the tourism stakeholders on 1 November again. I've taken an active interest in this project, including intervening and putting Mr Moloney and Mr Gemell at the forefront of the project in providing me with advice. We'll be making key decisions in this area when we get the information presented to us.

Ms DOW - Is there a design for berth 3 at Devonport?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well -

Ms DOW - It's a pretty simple question. Yes, or no?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We need to get the information to see -

Ms DOW - Berth 3.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yeah. We need to get the information and move forward. I'm advised that there is a design, but we need to make key decisions around these matters and look forward to the -

Ms DOW - Something that's so important and so urgent -

CHAIR - Order, Ms Dow.

Ms DOW - You seem to be wasting a lot of time. Will you stake your credibility as Premier on berth 3 being delivered, as you have committed, by January 26?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, that's a strategic question, isn't it, but I stake my credibility on everything that I do. I don't get everything right. I give it a red-hot go and we will work enormously hard to deliver these ships and their associated infrastructure as soon as possible. We have intervened, we're taking control of this project and we'll get the job done.

Mr SHELTON - My question is along similar lines to Mr O'Byrne's, and you partly answered that. The South East Traffic Solution is an ambitious initiative of the Liberal government to make the highway between Sorell and Hobart a consistent four-lane link. It was devised for the growing community of Sorell and the southern beaches and while it is partly delivered, there are some key elements remaining, namely, the duplication of the two causeways and the expansion of the Tasman Highway between the Hobart Airport interchange and the Midway Point Causeway to four lanes. Can you update the committee on the progress of these projects, please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for your question. We have the Midway Point interchange and we're looking at the final-stage projects, the duplication of the Tasman Highway to four lanes past the Tasmanian Golf Club and then duplicating both causeways. That will make a big difference in terms of creating that consistent four-lane link between Sorell and Hobart.

To the previous question, it's frustrating to see some of these projects delayed due to requirements under federal environmental laws. Nearly $350 million of Tasmanian and Australian government investment is locked against these projects, so it's significant. That's an unprecedented investment for the communities of Sorell, the southern beaches. You'll be very familiar with these areas, member for Lyons, Tasman Peninsula and lower east coast.

The next project in the suite of works will be the duplication of the highway from the airport to the Midway Point causeway, and then duplicating both causeways including a second bridge on the Midway Point Causeway as well. We look forward to the fruition of these projects, some way to go, in terms of the south-east projects, some significant investment and

commitment. We look forward to those matters of which you have asked the question and I have answered it. Thank you for your interest.

Ms BURNET - Premier, the infrastructure spend, the budget has been underspent nine out of the ten past years and significantly, we were talking about $502 million in 2021 and $368 million in 2023.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's the underspend you speak of?

Ms BURNET - Yes, that's the underspend. I want to know, you say that you are going to deliver these projects and yet they are not delivered. Can you just talk us through that, please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, and I did refer to it before because we have significant investment moving forward, but as I say, getting the funding out the door and the money out the door and from allocation of budget to start completion of projects is important. We have done, in my humble opinion, really well in terms of the amount of funds we have been getting out the door in comparison to previous years et cetera and will always work hard to ensure that we get to as close as the budget as possible in terms of what we are committed to and what we get actually invested in. Anything further on that Ms McIntyre?

Ms McINTYRE - I think the other point too is that we are talking about investment in infrastructure that is being planned, developed and constructed over multiple years and so cash flows are adjusted as projects are developed and delivered. Cash flows are also adjusted a couple of times through the budget cycle in an annual year.

Ms BURNET - In relation to Ms Dow's question about the berth. I understand that the Treasurer is still the shareholder minister for TT-Line. He has stepped aside from the infrastructure portfolio. Shouldn't he be stripped of his shareholder ministry position?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, the Treasurer is doing a very good job of being Treasurer. We have a difficult budget in challenging times. We spoke this morning about this in terms of Michael's role as Treasurer and Infrastructure minister. In Michael's time as Infrastructure minister, we saw great progress on the Bridgewater bridge as an example of that, but the Treasurer is the shareholder minister when it comes to GBE's. We have a lot of confidence in the Treasurer to do a very good job, and he is, particularly putting together a budget in quite difficult times that has the infrastructure spend moving forward - but also, that sensible pathway to surplus. It is not a slash and burn budget, but a budget that keeps the momentum going in the economy, keeps employing Tasmanians - a very measured and responsible way forward when it comes to managing our debt and a sensible pathway to surplus.

Ms BURNET - I think we would have to disagree on that position.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, Chair. Back to my question on the Tasman Highway upgrade. That South East Corridor plan was first announced in 2018. Your predecessor announced that in 2020 that the project would commence. It was then due to be completed in 2022. It was then announced that it would be completed in 2023 and then late last year, your predecessor, minister Ferguson said it would be completed this year. In answer to my question, earlier this year, he acknowledged that due to a change in design that they would need to trigger a new *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC) referral, which

effectively meant that you're back at square one. It's a bit more than a minor amendment, isn't it, Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As Ms McIntyre said, it's not completely back at square one. I wouldn't necessarily characterise it as that, notwithstanding the frustrations I've mentioned in my answers as well in terms of federal environmental laws. There are many areas that the EPBC Act touches and challenging it is when it comes to progress within our state; renewable energy jobs in the West Coast, et cetera. Can you provide further information to Mr O'Byrne on that?

Ms McINTYRE - Just to reiterate that we've gone through a fairly exhaustive process in terms of endeavouring to mitigate the environmental impact of this project and we have undertaken an amendment to the design. It's not back to square one at all. It is an amendment to a short section of the design.

Mr O'BYRNE - Isn't it triggering a new referral under the EPBC Act?

Ms McINTYRE - Sorry, I missed the question.

Mr O'BYRNE - Isn't that triggering essentially a new process under the EPBC Act?

Ms McINTYRE - No, it's not triggering a new process. We made, probably two years ago initially, a submission under the EPBC Act. What we've done is we've modified that submission. The initial submission has been modified with some alternate mitigation measures.

Mr O'BYRNE - When do you start work?

Ms McINTYRE - We're aiming to start work at the end of next year.

Mr O'BYRNE - The end of 2025?

Ms McINTYRE - When we get our approval. The EPBC approval processes can be quite lengthy. We are aiming to go out to tender-

Mr O'BYRNE - Yep, if you'd done the job properly in the first place -

Mr SHELTON - The Mornington roundabout is one of the busiest intersections in the state, but it has also been criticised as being confusing for motorists. Thanks to a $100 million joint commitment by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments, this roundabout is now earmarked for a major upgrade. Can you please provide the committee with an update on this infrastructure project?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are aware of the shortcomings in relation to the Mornington roundabout and we're acting to also address those. There's no doubt that the road system in the vicinity of the roundabout is of concern to the travelling public, which is demonstrated by the feedback as part of our planning to upgrade the interchange. During the recent election, we committed $20 million towards the Mornington roundabout, including the provision of access to the eastbound lanes of the Tasman Highway from Rosny. I know the former minister worked cooperatively with the federal member for Franklin, Joy Collins and indeed senator Carol Brown on this project scope since the Australian Government committed some $30 million to the Mornington roundabout as part of their election campaign in 2022.

It should be noted that no detail was provided by the Albanese Government at the time on the nature of this project commitment or its expectations and since the election the government has reiterated that our $20 million commitment would assume a federal commitment of around $80 million under the well-established proportional 80:20 Commonwealth-State Funding model that is in place for projects such as the Bridgewater bridge and the Midland Highway. This was accepted by the federal minister, I am advised, with a total project budget of $100 million now committed. I am confident that a greatly improved interchange can be achieved.

The volume of the traffic using the South Arm Highway through the Mornington roundabout has increased by some 40% over the past 10 years. The department conducted a planning study for the Mornington roundabout to recommend future upgrades to improve safety and traffic flow under future growth scenarios and community feedback was also gathered. Our audit acknowledged that the roundabout being located close to the Tasman Highway interchange increases the complexity for users, and the traffic environment at the site is highly complex. You appreciate the substantial implications for the surrounding road network including the Tasman Highway. I want to be clear, though, any remodelling of the interchange for full traffic signalization, let alone great separation, would likely require a large number of property acquisitions involving businesses and residential homes, including public housing. Minimising the disruption of future construction works will also present a major challenge given the highly constrained area around the roundabout and nearby interchange. Ancillary network improvements are being considered as a new access to the Tasman Highway from Rosny at Gordons Hill Rd, which would relieve pressure on Cambridge Road and the South Arm Highway, particularly at peak traffic periods. But you know, I appreciate the reasons for your questions.

Ms DOW - Premier, will you commit to delivering berth 3 by January 2026? It's a very simple question that you've failed to answer. I'm concerned now that you're walking away from that time frame.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Are you? Well.

Ms DOW - Yes, I am, very concerned.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've been concerned for some time about this. I am taking advice. I will be very clear about the timeline.

Ms DOW - Yes, but you're not.

Mr ROCKLIFF - January 2026 is the contracted date for the completion of berth 3 by the bill appointed by TT-Line. The management of delay risks are the responsibility of the builder, but I will want to ensure that we get Berth 3 completed as soon as possible.

Ms DOW - Not by January 2026?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will inform the Tasmanian people very clearly.

Ms DOW - You already have, of January 2026.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, well, in terms of the way forward. So, there you go.

Ms DOW - I tell you what, it does nothing to instil confidence, Premier. Right to information documents reveal the price offered by the joint venture let by Hazell Bros was $374 million before the contract was torn up. Can you confirm Hazell's cancelled project ended up being a million dollars cheaper than the one you eventually entered into with a mainland contractor? Further, can you confirm the Hazell Bros' job was scheduled to be completed in August 2023, five months earlier than the best-case scenario you now have with the new contractor in January 2026?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm happy to take that on notice. It's a matter for TT-Line and GBE.

Ms DOW - I thought you were in control of this project.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I want to get things right, alright? I want to provide the right information to the Tasmanian people. Both on the information that I get from Peter Gemell and Ben Moloney, the information about moving forward, I want to get it right. Tasmanians would expect me to get it right -

Ms DOW - They do, absolutely.

Mr ROCKLIFF - And intervene in this project. I'm happy to provide the information for you, if that's possible.

Ms DOW - Yes, well, put that on notice. It appears now that you're walking away from January 2026 -

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, it doesn't appear that way

Ms DOW - Which I'm incredibly concerned about. If you don't make a decision on berth 1 until the middle of October, how on earth are you going to be able to deliver the interim solution by summer for the new vessel? Can you just be upfront for once and be honest about this? Please tell Tasmanians are you're going to shelve the berth 1 interim solution?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm seeking advice on these matters. You would expect me -

Ms DOW - It's a fair point, though, Premier, because time is lapsing.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know it is very, very important.

Ms DOW - It's incredibly important.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's why I intervened as Premier.

Ms DOW - Yes, but we're not further advanced, Premier.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Moloney and Mr Gemell said it themselves in this project. I will have the information, we will move forward, we will move forward with confidence, people will know where they stand, and we'll get this project done.

Ms BURNET - I'd like to get back on to the Southern Outlet, so to speak. In 6.4 in the Budget paper number one, we have the Greater Hobart Traffic Solution. That amounts to $217.8 million altogether, as an overall project. Could you explain how much has been spent so far on the Southern Outlet transit lane, including on reports and compulsory land acquisition?

Mr ROCKLIFF - If I can get that information for you, bear with me just a moment, Ms Burnet. We'll get the breakdown for you just to make sure we're right.

Ms BURNET - Do you want me to ask another question while you're -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes. You can ask another question.

Ms BURNET - Okay. I appreciate you organising a briefing for me, Premier, which was not forthcoming with the former Infrastructure minister. So, I thank you for that.

Just in regard to current works, road widening, the couplet upgrade and the Macquarie Street lane changes, what safety upgrades are occurring and is this a black spot with high crash history at that intersection, the Macquarie Street intersection with Huon Road?

Mr ROCKLIFF - If we're going to, just to get that information for you. In relation to safety aspects, is that the question you asked?

Ms BURNET - Yes, the safeness of that intersection because I'm thinking it's a dangerous intersection. How is this going to be improved?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Now, while we're getting that information, I do have information in terms of the potholes. We have the data from your earlier question and, of the 3488 potholes, 2842 have been filled. The question on notice data, potholes on specified state roads since 26 August 2024, as at today: the Murchison Highway, 279 potholes identified, 179 potholes completed; Illawarra Road, 149 total identified and 149 completed; Bass Highway, 844 identified, 752 completed; Midland Highway, 439 identified, 434 completed; Southern Outlet, 17 identified, 16 completed; Channel Highway, 84 identified and 64 completed.

Mr WINTER - Sorry, was that the Southern Outlet in the north or the south?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. I make the assumption it's the northern Southern Outlet, if that makes any sense to you, in Launceston, but I'll clarify that for you.

Huon Highway, 36 identified, 31 completed; Tasman Highway, 108 identified and 103 complete;. I think I mentioned the Channel Highway, 84 identified and 64 completed.

I think the importance of the blitz cannot be understated, recognising the safety aspects and the frustration. An enormous amount of work has been done, there has been increased funding into maintenance and I'm looking forward to getting greater information through briefings and consultation around road improvements.

Construction on Davey Street between Murray Street and the Southern Outlet to repair the pavement and facilitate the bus improvements work has been completed. Constructing a new northbound transit lane on the Southern Outlet requires changes to Macquarie Street to accommodate four lanes of traffic exiting the Southern Outlet. This project also included an extended peak-period clearway on Macquarie Street to improve traffic flow and to improve greater capacity for the left-hand turn onto Molle Street. The new peak-period clearway on Macquarie Street was implemented in April this year. The next stage of construction involved upgrades to the existing bus shelter and construction of a cycleway on Davey Street. This work was completed in August 2024. The second stage will see construction of the transit lane connector that extends the Southern Outlet with an additional traffic lane between Davey Street and Macquarie Street. The contract for construction of the transit lane connector was awarded and construction commenced on 12 August 2024. That is the advice I have before me.

Ms BURNET - It doesn't answer the question, which was about the associated costs, to date, on reports and compulsory land acquisitions.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, that was the first part of the question. I've just answered the second part of the question.

Ms BURNET - It's around black spots and crash history

Mr ROCKLIFF - We're getting that information for you. We're happy to take it on notice to ensure that we get the answer to you whether it's today, or when we finish we'll take it on notice, if that's okay?

Ms BURNET - Thank you.

Mr O'BYRNE - Has the Tasmanian Golf Club received any inconvenience payment regarding the Tasman Highway road upgrades between the Hobart Airport interchange and the Midway Point causeway over the last few years?

Mr ROCKLIFF - An inconvenience payment?

Mr O'BYRNE - Has the government paid them anything?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Denise?

Ms McINTYRE - Compensation?

Mr O'BYRNE - Well, not sure what they've been compensated for yet.

Ms McINTYRE - There is a claim in play. Both the department, the Valuer-General and the Office of Crown Solicitor have been working through what that might mean. We've had comprehensive work undertaken by the golf course's professional golf team and so we're working through what the compensation needs to be.

Mr O'BYRNE - That's not my question. I understand that if there's land that they access, you will need to go through that process. But, between the moment where you triggered a new design which would impact physically on the golf course, has there been a payment from the Tasmanian government to the golf course for inconvenience, or however you describe it?

Ms McINTYRE - We will work through a process with the Tasmanian golf course regarding -.

Mr O'BYRNE - That's not the question I'm asking. I understand you worked through a process for compensation on acquiring land for the new design. What I'm asking is what has happened up until this point? Have there been any payments to the Tasmanian Golf Club?

Ms McINTYRE - No, we are still working through what that means with the golf club.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, you've made no payments at all?

Ms McINTYRE - We have made payments to their consultants for some of their consultant work, yes, but we do not pay for inconvenience.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, there's been no payments from the state government to the Tasmanian Golf Club?

Ms McINTYRE - We are working through what that means. We are negotiating with the golf club.

Mr O'BYRNE - Have there been payments made to the Tasmanian Golf Club?

Ms McINTYRE - Again, we probably paid for consultants.

Mr O'BYRNE - Okay. Could you outline what you've paid?

Ms McINTYRE - We'll have to take that on notice.

Mr SHELTON - The Sideling section of the Tasman Highway near Scottsdale is well known as a winding route between Launceston and the north-east region. Can you inform the committee of the progress in upgrading the section of road, which is of great interest to the communities in that region?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, it is. The Sideling between Launceston and Scottsdale is well known for its challenging bends and spectacular topography to boot, I'd have to say. The Dorset Council has long regarded the Sideling as a barrier to economic prosperity in the north-east region. The Australian and Tasmanian governments have committed a total of $120 million for the upgrading of the Tasman Highway from just south of St Patricks River Bridge across the Sideling to Scottsdale. The funding commitment is for upgrading this section of the Tasman Highway to B-double standard, mostly involving straightening of the existing alignment, the addition of passing lanes and widening of the road. The first stage of works was contracted to construction company Fulton Hogan, which commenced in late July 2022. The first stage works were completed in April 2024. Design work is continuing for two sections of the siding from Whish-Wilson Road to Minstone Road and from the Sideling Lookout to Saint Patrick's

Bridge. The upgrade will make the highway suitable for B double heavy vehicles, including widening of the road ceiling shoulders and straightening of the existing alignment.

To maximise the benefits of delivering this project, a staged approach has been agreed to Stage 1, the Minstone Road to Scottsdale intersection to the Sideling Lookout, is complete. Stage 2, Sideling Lookout to Saint Patricks Bridge by the sidling or an alternative Corkerys Road option. A commitment of $50 million is allocated to Stage 1 works and $70 million to Stage 2. That is a total of $120 million.

The alignment for the Stage 2 section of works has not yet been selected and will be confirmed during the design phase. Consultants have commenced consideration of the Corkerys Road option as opposed to upgrades to the existing Tasman Highway with further concept design work to be progressed during 2024.

Some of the findings today are due to the vertical grades on Corkerys Road alignment between 15 and 20 per cent of the existing Corkerys Road alignment is not suitable for heavy vehicle traffic. There are also challenges on the Corkage Road alignment with horizontal geometry in the form of 90-degree bends. Further work has been undertaken to look at deviations of Corkerys Road to improve the vertical grade. The estimates for all upgrade options exceed the available remaining funding for Stage 1 and 2 combined and as such, they're not considered viable with existing available funding.

Work is continuing to refine options and upgrade opportunities to achieve the most cost-effective benefits for the community and all road users. Community update and consultation on the next stages of proposed improvements to the sideling is expected to commence late this year and I look forward to the completion of these design options and progress on the next stages of this important link to the fantastic north east of Tasmania. Thank you for the question.

Ms DOW - Thank you, Chair. Premier, your government promised local refuelling for the new *Spirit*s back at the 2021 election. Your deputy said that it would support local jobs. Last month you told the Parliament, When it comes to LNG, to be very clear, our expectation is that appropriate fuelling arrangements will be in place to support the new vessels when they commence into service'. All that's ever been needed to happen for this project to go ahead is for a space to be allocated at the port for the infrastructure, Premier, and the private sector will take care of the rest. So, Premier, why hasn't it happened? And when will the first supply of LNG be used and will it be trucked in?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am advised that TT Line are in the middle of current EOI processes for current and future fuels, that is what I am advised. As members will be aware, the sector is moving rapidly. As part of the EOI process, TT- Line is considering a range of issues including security of supply, commercial considerations and the possibility for earlier compliance with emissions reductions. To be very clear, our expectation is that the appropriate fuelling arrangements will be in place to support the new vessels when they commence in service.

Ms DOW - When will that be Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I have just said that, our expectation is the appropriate fuelling arrangements will be in place to support the new vessels when they commence in service.

Ms DOW - So, you still don't know when that is.

Mr WINTER - Isn't it true that it will take 18 months from the commencement of this project to actually delivering it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am advised that the first supply of LNG to be used from Tasmania will be delivered to the ships via road tanker and the required facility and method of transfers is well progressed. I understand this method is already utilised by SeaRoad at Devonport port and TT-Line continues to work with the Tasmanian Gas Pipeline to ensure continued LNG supply while the EOI process is underway.

Ms BURNET - Thank you, Chair. Premier, just in relation to the Southern Outlet, this is a significant piece of infrastructure, it is going to take years to extend that to Kingston but if it does, and there has been considerable concern by the community in relation to the validity of the project and whether it's the best project for the solution that we need on transport. So, was the idea of increasing bus patronage and reliability before building an expensive road upgrade considered?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Bus patronage?

Ms BURNET - Yes, bus patronage, bus services before actually building the road.

Mr ROCKLIFF - So, we've committed a $35 million to provide an additional transit lane on the Southern Outlet along with $16 million for bus priority measures at Macquarie and Davey streets, and we've gone through some of those matters. The Tasmanian Government committed a further $7.2 million for these projects under the targeting congestion package, and the Southern Outlet transit lane will operate between Olinda Grove and Macquarie Street as a T3 transit lane.

Can I also say, though, when it comes to supporting the increase of public transport, it's important to recognise that the cutting of the public transport fares in half, whether it be ferry or bus or support a modal shift, or at least encourage it, and the transit lane, as a T3 transit lane, it can be used by private vehicles carrying three or more people, buses, taxis, motorbikes and emergency service vehicles that will support a greater uptake of public transport and carpooling with improved travel times and reliability for transit lane users and the like.

But we do need to - when we announced our half-price bus fares, it was of course a cost-of-living measure - but also important to just encourage that use of public transport as well, which is important.

Ms BURNET - I suppose my question, Premier, was has a feasibility study or cost benefit analysis been carried out for this project. I mean, did you consider other measures before going to this most expensive option?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I can't recall back to the decision-making process at the time. Denise may well have been here. I'm sure we canvassed all matters.

Ms BURNET - I know the feeling.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not a reflection on your tenure, but yes,

Ms McINTYRE - I don't think a business case as such has been done, but the Southern Outlet is part of the Huon Highway, which serves the south of the state and it's the only transport route that serves - there is the Channel Highway, but it is the significant route.

So, there really is no alternative but to upgrade the Southern Outlet and the intention has been to have an end-to-end solution effectively from the south to the city and through the city and to maximise and motivate people to use public transport.

Ms BURNET - You can do that before you actually build a road.

Ms McINTYRE - As part of the process and as part of the development of the work that has been undertaken on the Southern Outlet, we also increased bus services to Blackmans Bay, Kingston and the Huon by about 67 services -

Ms BURNET - I'll bring that up with the Transport minister. But my second question is: you talked about circular economy and how important it is, and there's a group called the Circular Economy Huon, which you're probably familiar with, and they put in a submission in 2022 just in relation to the Southern Outlet Transit Plan, they thought it was a bad idea for various reasons and theirs is a very simple solution.

So, again, why wasn't the cheaper alternative - rather than building roads - actually having better public transport, reliable public transport, considered?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Look, thank you for the question and I'm not familiar exactly with Circular Economy Huon. I may well have missed some of their correspondence at some point in time. So don't accuse me of misleading but it doesn't spring to mind, a Circular Economy Huon, but Ms McIntyre has detailed a number of those matters in terms of the need for road infrastructure and accepting, we have Park and Ride, Kingborough Park and Ride as well.

Mr WINTER - A new bus stop that no one can use.

Ms DOW - Yeah, that's a good one, isn't it? It's unfortunate.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The first state-owned Park and Ride facilities opened at Huntingfield, at Firthside, in 2022.

Ms BURNET - I went to visit it the other day.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Did you?

Ms BURNET - I've been to Firthside, as well, yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - And use of the two Park and Rides have been steadily rising as awareness builds, with approximately 50 per cent of car parks used at Huntingfield each weekday and 85 per cent of spaces in regular use at Firthside. The department will continue to undertake monitoring at different times of patronage and parking capacity. To support the Park and Ride facility, 65 express bus services were added each weekday. Is that where the 67 came from, Denise?

Ms McINTYRE - There were a couple further south as well.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much. You're right across it. To improve travel times and provide mode choice for commuters, a small number of express services have been impacted by Metro's decision to suspend 177 trips each weekday since August 2023, but the express bus services will utilise the Southern Outlet transit lane once completed and Macquarie and Davey Street bus improvements infrastructure to improve public transport access from the southern suburbs into Tasmania. I do appreciate the question, Ms Burnet, and don't take this the wrong way, but there seems to be a propensity from the Greens to not like roads much.

Ms BURNET - Why would I not take that the wrong way, Premier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Was that right? You don't like roads?

Ms BURNET - I like -

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not being smug, I'm just saying -

Ms BURNET - I like good solutions and I think there's an appalling approach to - it's a sledgehammer to a nut basically.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I want to support more public transport services.

Ms BURNET - So do I.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe our half-price bus fares support that modal shift and I know we'll need to do more. The success and the key to public transport success is frequency and reliability.

Ms BURNET - Predictability as well, and being on time.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yeah, reliability -

Ms BURNET - It's different.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Right. Okay. That's the key and we've got to get there and I know minister Abetz is working hard on it to ensure that.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. Premier, the agreement of road funding between the Commonwealth and the state expired at the end of last financial year. There was criticism over the Australian Government's insistence that the funding be on a 50/50 basis rather than the long-accepted 80/20 ratio. Has there been an update of this agreement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Shelton, for the question. The current federation funding agreement for land transport projects expired on 30 June this year, and we're committed to ensuring that we receive our fair share of Australian Government funding for our state's vitally important roads and bridges projects under the new agreement.

Now, to your question, despite the Australian Government's desire to move to a 50/50 funding split, our government has fought hard to retain the long-accepted 80/20 funding split

and we will continue to do so. As I understand, every other state and territory of Australia should do and would do as well.

The 80/20 funding split has been supported by successive coalition governments in Canberra and is the funding model that enabled the Bridgewater Bridge, the Midland Highway 10-year action plan, the Tasman Highway works between Hobart and Sorell, and dozens of other important roads and bridges across the state. See how important it is?

It was a $600 million investment in the Midland Highway, $786 million for Bridgewater Bridge, 80/20 funding splits.

So, you could argue, I think pretty successfully, but if that was 50/50, the Midland Highway would still be a goat track, as named by former member for Denison, Graeme Sturges at some point in time. Is that right?

Ms DOW - I don't know, I wasn't here then. I was talking about the Bass Highway goat track.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I remember Sturgo. He was a good fellow.

Mr WINTER - He had some trouble on the *Spirit*, too.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've had some engagement there as well but I do like him very much as a person.

Ms DOW - Oh that's nice.

Mr ROCKLIFF - To Mr Shelton's point, I think I've made the point though, haven't I?

Ms DOW - I think so. Let's move on. Thank you. Premier, can you confirm that two independent reports from AW Maritime and GHD have identified critical safety risks at berth four at the Burnie port where Strait Link currently operates?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is a question more specifically for TasPorts. I will see if I can find -

Ms DOW - No, that question was to you, Premier. Can you confirm that please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will see if we can find the information for you. Recently, I engaged with the CEO of TasPorts at QuayLink in Devonport, incidentally, at a project that I understand has been built on time and on budget by TasPorts.

Ms DOW - We're talking about the crumbling Burnie Port.

Mr ROCKLIFF - At Burnie, TasPorts had planned delivery of its Burnie Gateway vision through staged incremental projects that were articulated to report infrastructure plan and informed by further customer engagement, commercial and financial assessments, reviews on site conditions and existing infrastructure. In May 2022, the Tasmanian Government committed $5 million to TasPorts to progress concept designs and develop a business case.

Ms DOW - Premier, my question was very specific. It related to two independent reports and whether or not you are aware of them and the critical safety risks that they have identified.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, we will come to that. The new Burnie mineral strip loader delivered by TasRail will have double the loading capacity compared to the existing asset. As part of TasPort's 2023 Wharf Condition Monitoring Programme, areas of scouring were identified beneath the quay wall at berth four at the port of Burnie, which is the current home of Straight Link. TasPorts has undertaken investigative works to understand the scope of the issue and place controls in place to manage the increased risks, including avoiding loading in and identified area and a dedicated projects team has commenced immediate remediation works to rectify this issue.

Ms DOW - Premier, you may not have had this information, but I understand that the risks include the potential collapse of the wharf, which could involve concrete falling into ships docked at the wharf and any people or equipment falling into the water along with large volumes of concrete. Are you aware of those risks?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, as I said, a dedicated project team has commenced immediate remediation works to rectify this issue, I'm advised and I'm very keen to engage further on this.

Ms DOW - I am concerned that you're not up to date on this.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not aware of the concerns. Thank you.

Ms DOW -Have those reports been made available to TasPorts engineers or have they been withheld, do you know?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll seek advice on who has the reports and the like.

Ms DOW - Whilst you are doing that, could you see if Strait Link has a copy of it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Everyone wants to get the berth for Burnie sorted. I accept that no one is not wanting the action to happen. A dedicated project team has commenced immediate remediation works to rectify the issue and it is a matter of TasPorts. It is an important strategic infrastructure and I accept that.

Ms BURNET - The Cradle Mountain cableway was originally costed at $60 million. It was later revealed when the business case for the cableway was released via RTI, that as of April 2023, the cost would be $190 million. You stated in the tourism committee that the state would contribute $30 million and you've requested an additional $30 million from the federal government. You also stated a new business case is being produced. Will this new business case be able to deliver a radically altered project, or will you be seeking private funding to cover the $130 million shortfall?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My advice is we're updating the business case rather than doing a new one. It was comprehensive, the business case at the time. The Coordinator-General will be joining us shortly and I've had quite some engagement with the Coordinator-General on this project.

We committed $30 million, the federal government previously committed $30 million, if my memory serves me correctly, and they've withdrawn that. We're trying, along with the tourism industry, particularly West by North West, which I sure appreciate, to get a further commitment of the $30 million back for the project. Notwithstanding that, we do need to find a reliable solution to the transport issue.

I do support a cableway, except the Greens probably don't. That being said, a cableway is, in my view, the most environmentally sensitive way forward. All-abilities access, an experience for visitors to Tasmania and Tasmanians alike. There are challenges with, if I recall correctly, widening roads for buses and to cater for increased numbers and those types of things. So, it is very challenging, I am still in favour of the cableway for the low impact that it provides.

The Coordinator-General may well be able to update you on where the updated business case is at when he arrives around 17.30 today.

Ms BURNET - So, essentially, you can't tell me where that $130 million shortfall might come from?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not at this stage.

Ms BURNET - Will you take it on notice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The business case will inform where the additional funds would come from. There may well be a rescoping. I don't want to lead with my chin on this, except to say we've got to find a solution. There's been considerable effort around the Cradle Mountain master plan.

Ms DOW - Taking a long time, the Cradle Mountain cableway.

Mr ROCKLIFF - What about the visitor centre? What about the Dove Lake viewing platform? That is huge achievements, which is fantastic. Everywhere around the state, we are getting the job done.

CHAIR - Mrs Pentland.

Ms BURNET - Sorry, I haven't finished my second question. It's just relating to -

Mrs PENTLAND - It is one of those questions.

Ms BURNET - On 17 September you clearly stated to Mrs Pentland that you would be open and transparent regarding the stadiums funding regardless of commercial-in-confidence concerns in any public-private partnership. On the same principle, will we see the full unredacted revised business case for the Cradle Mountain cableway released?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll take advice on that. There may be some commercial-in-confidence matters on that. I would generally always start with the principle of being open and transparent, and informing the Tasmanian community. Mrs Pentland asked me the question last week. I cannot remember if that was before the Project of State Significance submission.

Mrs PENTLAND - It was, yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You could not be more transparent about the stadium if you tried, I don't reckon. We've got 4000 pages out there that your team, the volunteers, no doubt, Ms Burnet and your hard-working team behind you have been trawling those 4000 pages and looking for every little thing you can get me on in terms of the stadium, I'm sure. Certainly, this has been scrutinised and scrutinised and scrutinised, and will be scrutinised right until the time the doors are opened. All the people criticising it will be marching through the doors -

A member - Applauding?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Absolutely convinced of that.

Mrs PENTLAND - After I raised a constituent concern about the exit ramp on the Midland Highway at the Kings Meadows Connector, I've noticed the speed of the highway in that section has been reduced to 90 km/h from 110 km/h and that road signs have been installed to alert motorists to slow moving traffic ahead. Although I appreciate some efforts have been implemented, I don't believe reduction in speed limit and the use of road signs is enough to significantly reduce the safety risks road users are experiencing there. Can you please commit to improving the road infrastructure in this area to ensure there are adequate and safe exit lanes?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Safety is paramount. I can seek advice on that constituent question which we've provided an answer to?

Mrs PENTLAND - You have, and you have reduced the speed limit and you have got some warning signs there, but I would like to see -

Mr ROCKLIFF - More infrastructure improvement rather than speed reductions?

Mrs PENTLAND - There was a commitment that you would put additional room for the exit lane so that it would lengthen. I just wanted to see where that was at and if you could commit to that project.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. That is a good question. Ms McIntyre?

Ms McINTYRE - I think I'm happy to. The department is undertaking some work on a design of extending the exit lane, but also is looking at, or will be modelling, the operation of the roundabout because it seems that the operation of the roundabout at Kings Meadows is actually causing the backup of traffic onto the highway. That will be considered as part of the investigation the department is undertaking.

Mrs PENTLAND - Is that Launceston City Council for the roundabout?

Ms McINTYRE - It's on the border. I think it's between the two. The development that's been, the subdivision that has increased has been approved by Launceston City Council, so the department will work with the City of Launceston in terms of what the best treatment is.

Mrs PENTLAND - But you will make amendments if needed?

Ms McINTYRE - Yes.

Mrs PENTLAND - The proposed Kings Meadows heavy vehicle rest area has raised significant concerns among the Mount Pleasant Estate residents, particularly regarding noise, light pollution and safety impacts on the community. Given that the project is in its current design and appears to lack adequate justification, an alternative location such as the nearby Youngtown industrial area may be better suited. Is this something that the government might reconsider as far as the current location and perhaps moving it to the Youngtown industrial area?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The heavy vehicle driver rest area strategy, as I'm sure you agree, recognises that the proactive management of heavy vehicle driver safety and wellbeing is a priority for Tasmanian road freight operators. Providing infrastructure to support drivers is a key contribution to the effective risk management programs of the industry. The strategy highlights opportunities to upgrade existing infrastructure and the establishment of new facilities to support heavy vehicle drivers to meet their needs for rest breaks, and load and vehicle checks, along the key freight routes in Tasmania. The Department of State Growth is commencing construction of three heavy vehicle driver rest areas in financial year 2024-25 in the following locations: Midland Highway at Kings Meadows, which is what you are referring to; Murchison Highway at Fossey River; and Bass Highway at Westbury, eastbound.

The department is also progressing design for a heavy vehicle driver rest area at Westbury westbound. I am aware there is some anxiety there in Westbury regarding some of those matters and landholders. The Kings Meadows one, what would you like to see happen?

Mrs PENTLAND - Well, the proposed design sits behind the Mount Pleasant Estate residents.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Are they worried about the noise?

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, the noise, the light pollution, their kids would play in the backyard, they might keep the ball over, they might get hit by a truck with them pulling into the bay. There's obviously a lot of concerns. The residents there would like to see the area for the trucks move to the Youngtown industrial area, which would probably be better suited for both residents and truck drivers.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Right. I will take that on notice..

Ms McINTYRE - I can answer that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You can answer that? Thank you.

Ms McINTYRE - The benefits of being around for a long time. A lot of work was done with the Tasmanian transport industry on the location of heavy vehicle rest areas and the Kings Meadows heavy vehicle rest area is basically formalising what is already an existing informal heavy vehicle driver rest area where they stop and check loads, et cetera. The department had been working on putting some form of noise mitigation in place and that's been a long-term negotiation with council. Many other locations were considered in consultation with the TTA but this was the best location.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, the Bass Highway is one of the most important state highways for freight and commuter vehicles alike. A number of commitments were made through the recent election campaign, some of which were contingent on federal funding. Can you please provide a summary of the government's commitment to the Bass Highway, particularly between Devonport and Launceston?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I agree with you and other members that it is a key freight link for our ports as well as the agriculture, mining and forestry industries. It's also the chief means of connection as well, Mr Shelton, for family and friends in the communities on the north-west coast, as you'd appreciate.

Our long-term strategy recognises this, improving safety, which is paramount, and increasing productivity, also extremely important, by providing a more efficient road corridor. In partnership with the former coalition government, we committed a total of $290 million for improvements on the Bass Highway all the way from Launceston to Marrawah. That comprises $240 million for the northern roads package stage 2 and $50 million for targeted upgrades between Deloraine and Devonport.

We went to this year's election with a plan to continue this investment in the Bass Highway, including $20 million towards a consistent four-lane link between Launceston and Deloraine, $40 million for the highway west of Wynyard and $10 million towards upgrades between Deloraine and Devonport.

In 2018 we made a commitment to upgrade the Bass Highway between Launceston and Devonport, including identifying safety upgrades for the section between Deloraine and Latrobe. In 2020 work commenced on the corridor strategy, identifying deficiencies on the corridor from Launceston to Devonport.

The Bass Highway Launceston to Devonport corridor strategy was released last year and as we said during the recent election campaign, that strategy identified 66 potential improvements for the 91-kilometre section between Hadspen east of Port Sorell Road, and we will prioritise the duplication of the highway between Hadspen and Deloraine to deliver that consistent four-lane link with this high-volume road which has been progressively realigned to bypass towns, thereby enabling this full duplication. We've committed $20 million to this investment and expect the Australian Government to co-invest.

In 2020 in the Australian and Tasmanian government budget process, a total of $50 million was committed on targeted upgrades between Deloraine and Devonport. Six priority upgrade projects were identified in the Bass Highway Launceston to Devonport corridor strategy and included in the 10-year Bass Highway Action Plan.

Concept design work is underway on the following two high-priority projects: north of Sassafras road widening and Christmas Hills Road junction upgrade and road widening. Preliminary consultation with affected stakeholders has commenced for the north of Sassafras project and broader community consultation for these two projects is planned to commence in November 2024.

Six priority upgrade projects were identified in the corridor strategy and will be included in the 10-year Bass Highway Action Plan as follows: Christmas Hills Road junction upgrade;

north of Sassafras upgrade; Parramatta Creek upgrade; north of Latrobe duplication; Hadspen to Hagley duplication; and Exton duplication.

In the interests of time, the Bass Highway Moriarty Road intersection has also been identified as a priority planning project. This is currently a major roundabout with the Mersey Community Hospital located in the north-west corner. Options assessment, including planning and design works to resolve the conflict at Latrobe between the Bass Highway through traffic and the local traffic will commence in November this year and the concept development for duplication between Latrobe and Devonport will also be progressed, as will the options assessment of the Moriarty Road roundabout.

Ms DOW - Premier, given what you and TasPorts know about the crumbling condition of the Strait Link berth at Burnie, are you concerned that you're in breach of your obligations under the work health and safety act and has a report been made to WorkSafe?

Mr ROCKLIFF - When it comes to matters on the port of Burnie, TasPorts is working with customer Strait Link regarding an identified scour issue at berth 4 at Burnie. The scour issue was identified through TasPorts wharf condition monitoring program in 2023. Since first identifying the matter, TasPorts has undertaken further significant investigative works to understand the scope and significance of the issue, as well as provide input into the project remediation and construction methodologies.

As part of the active management of the issue, TasPorts has implemented risk mitigation measures for berth 4, including avoiding loading on an identified area while remediation works are undertaken. As this work continues, TasPorts teams are continuing to develop planning for a long-term infrastructure solution for berth 4, and noting the importance of this project TasPorts has established a dedicated project team to undertake remediation works as well as develop a long-term infrastructure solution.

Ms DOW - Is TasPorts liable to compensate Strait Link if they have to shut down the wharf and is that why no action has been taken, despite the known safety risks?

Mr ROCKLIFF - TasPorts is and will continue to work with Strait Link and other customers within the port of Burnie to minimise operational disruptions and expedite solutions. It should be noted that Strait Link is continuing to utilise its berth for shipping operations.

Ms BURNET - Is TasPorts liable to compensate Strait Link if they have to shut down berth 4?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's a matter for TasPorts and Strait Link.

Ms BURNET - You must be concerned about that and the significant disruption to the community and the economy.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we don't want disruption, we want to fix it. We want solutions. That's what I'm about, solutions.

Ms BURNET - Good, so what action has been taken?

CHAIR - Order. Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - Thank you. Premier, I hope you can provide a solution for this issue about the Leith intersection. As you're aware, up on the Bass Highway the intersection has been problematic for quite some time and the community has raised concerns with me. I went up with Mayor Fuller and Mayor Jarman and also Minister Abetz. The community doesn't feel their requests for a safety solution have been answered. Why haven't their requests for safety upgrades been heeded?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There has been a fair amount of work done in terms of consultation at the very least. I can come to that at a moment, because I know this has been a very big challenge for the local community. There was a commitment, if my memory serves me correctly, of $10 million for an overpass, which didn't engender a great deal of enthusiasm amongst local residents. There have been very strong advocates for the overpass as well and that's been very difficult.

The upgrading works to the Bass Highway junctions at Short Street and Braddons Lookout Road were completed in August last year, apart from installation of street lights - this is the Leith junction. Temporary lights were installed on the site at the completion of works until permanent lighting could be installed. Permanent streetlights were installed in early May 2024. The junction upgrades were delivered for significantly less than the original $15 million commitment, with the balance of funds to be reallocated to further improvements to the Bass Highway.

The Department of State Growth will continue to monitor traffic conditions and safety performance to ensure the risk of crashes is mitigated. There has been a lot of discussion around this. I met with a number of residents in April 2021, from memory, and I know there's been a lot of discussion. I've had correspondence from a lot of people regarding this - people very passionate about an overpass, the residents not wanting an overpass, and it's a very challenging situation.

Any further to add to that, Denise?.

Ms McINTYRE - Just that the department will continue to monitor how the upgrades are operating.

Ms BURNET - What do you think the most cost-effective solution would be? We talked before about the speed limits changing. I can't understand why that's not a solution for that, particularly turning right from Braddons Lookout.

Mr ROCKLIFF - So, you come to that road past Harvest Moon on the left where the river is, then you turn right, you're crossing over northwest-bound traffic and into the southern base lane, which is-

Ms BURNET - 100km there.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We did reduce the speed limit there at some point?

Ms BURNET - No, it hasn't been.

Ms McINTYRE - During all of the works there was a reduced speed limit, then it was reinstated.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Look, there are lots of competing issues there including freight efficiency and all sorts of areas.

Ms BURNET - It is not a very long stretch.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Safety should be most paramount, of course, in my book. I know it's been challenging to find a solution that covers all those aspects and is supported by the community as well. We'll continue to monitor it, Ms Burnet. I am sure we will hear more from the community that are expressing their concerns.

Mrs PENTLAND – Premier, when will the upgrade of the UTAS Stadium commence and how long will it take to complete?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will try and find the answer for you. Mr Street will have a great interest in this, as Minister for Sport and Events. On 4 February this year, we formally announced $130 million project scope for the University of Tasmania Stadium redevelopment project.

Of course, the project will provide new and improved player, staff and spectator amenities, deliver increased seating options - general admission and premium - including additional accessible seating, importantly, and better spectator experiences with new seating close to the playing field. The redevelopment, once completed, will provide enhanced economic outcomes for Launceston in the region by enabling the attraction of more elite sporting and other events to Northern Tasmania and support the entry of the Tasmania Devils Football Club into the AFL.

Project designs have been developed to a detailed design stage, I'm advised, in consultation with stakeholders. Active engagement with key stakeholders is continuing, including discussions with the City of Launceston in respect to the stadium's proposed transfer. The first package of works, which is focused on match day facility upgrades, is expected to commence in late 2024 - this year - and be completed ahead of the 2025 AFL season.

The Department of State Growth, through Infrastructure Tasmania, is managing the delivery of the project in conjunction with the City of Launceston and Stadiums Tasmania as the future stadium owner and operator.

Ms PENTLAND - Given that we're spending $130 million on it, how many AFL games a year do you think should be played there going forward?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we want to attract good, strong games. At least four.

Ms PENTLAND - Does that warrant $130 million spent to attract four games of AFL?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There could be other uses for the ground as well, as I touched on in my previous answer. Player amenity and spectator accessible seating and all those types of arrangements are very worthy investments to make. We're investing $65 million of state money into that, and the federal government's investing $65 million to make up the $130 million, so

again, it's a good partnership. We've also got AFLW, VFL and VFLW that can also be supported by UTAS Stadium, or York Park, as it's traditionally known.

Mr SHELTON - Premier, the South Arm Highway services the growing communities of Rokeby, Oakdowns, Lauderdale and South Arm Peninsula. Can you provide a summary of the government's commitment to increase the safety and efficiency of the South Arm Highway, and when construction is expected to begin?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The highway upgrade at South Arm is co-funded by the Australian and state governments, with $44 million of Australian Government contribution and $11 million of state government contribution. As part of the South Arm Highway Corridor Study, it was identified that this section of the South Arm road needed to be upgraded to a dual carriageway to cater for future growth in the area, to provide travel time reliability and to improve safety.

As part of the concept design process, The Department of State Growth has met with the Clarence City Council, the Department of Education and Metro Tasmania officers several times to brief them on the project. Community consultation commenced in December last year and will continue through the concept design stage with our design consultant. Once the concept design has been fully developed, it will go back out to the community for further comment.

The key issue raised by the community in the consultation period was the need for a safe pedestrian access from Oakdowns Parade through to Lauderdale. This is being addressed in the concept design. There are three components of the project: there's Pass Road to Oakdowns Parade through Rokeby; there is the Acton Road and South Arm Highway intersection upgrade - you'd be very familiar with all of this; and Oakdowns Parade to Acton Road in Lauderdale.

The design for the dual carriageway extension from Pass Road to Oakdowns Parade and the Acton Road junction will be progressed in 2024-25, with construction expected to commence in the 2025-26 financial year, depending on receiving all statutory approvals, and the design will be refined to minimise the amount of property acquisition required to deliver the project. Thank you for the question on South Arm.

Ms DOW - The defects with the Burnie Port were bounded back in 2023. There's no money in the Budget for upgrades or to address these works that need to be done for the crumbling berth, Premier. I'll ask you again, when will action be taken to rectify it? Why wasn't there a report put to WorkSafe Tasmania, and when did you first know about it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've just outlined quite a comprehensive answer to this. I'm not sure that -

Ms DOW - You didn't answer whether there had been a report to WorkSafe.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm happy to take that on notice for you in the interests of openness and accountability. That was the question regarding WorkSafe.

Ms DOW - When can we expect it to be rectified and how will they go about fixing it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have detailed a comprehensive answer for you. TasPorts is working with customers of Strait Link regarding the identified scour issue at berth 4 at the port of Burnie. It was identified through TasPort's Wharf Condition Monitoring Program 2023. Since first identifying the matter TasPorts has undertaken further significant investigative works to understand the scope and significance of the issue, as well as provided input into the project remediation and construction methodologies, which we have been through before. As part of the active management of the issue, TasPorts has implemented risk mitigation measures for Berth 4, including, I am advised, avoiding loading on an identified area while remediation works are undertaken. As this work continues, TasPorts teams are continuing to develop planning for a long-term infrastructure solution at Berth 4 -

Ms DOW- How much will that long-term solution cost, Premier? Do you know?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Noting the importance of this project, TasPorts has established a dedicated project team to undertake remediation works as well as develop a long-term infrastructure solution to this. TasPorts is working and will continue to work with Strait Link and other customers within the port of Burnie to minimise operational disruptions and solutions, as I believe I have said before.

Ms DOW - When?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have just given you the answer in terms of the work that is being undertaken.

Ms DOW - You have not said when those final works will be completed to actually repair it, not just a patch-up job, Premier.

CHAIR - Do you have another question, Ms Dow?

Ms DOW - Yes, when will it be completed?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am happy to seek advice as to the work and investigations that have been undertaken and see if there can be a timeline for you and the committee, Ms Dow.

Ms DOW - I appreciate that, Premier.

Ms BURNET - Premier, we have a couple of questions about the condition of Dove Lake Road and the enormous concrete viewing shelter that has been constructed. Dove Lake Road has been pretty much closed off to traffic other than shuttle buses and after-hours visitors, but despite this, the road is in the worst condition in living memory. The bridge over Pencil Pine Creek is also apparently in urgent need of repair. Is this damage the result of hundreds of truck movements during the construction of the viewing shelter at Dove Lake?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not sure the reason for the condition of the road as you have presented it. I will seek some advice from the team here. Do you have an issue with the viewing shelter?

Ms BURNET - As I have said, it is quite a cavernous concrete viewing shelter, so -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Pretty impressive, don't you think?

Ms BURNET - My other question is around the fact that it says, 'Please walk lightly on palawa land', as we have done from creation, and yet there's many truck movements that haven't really moved lightly across the country for this construction. How many thousands of kilograms of concrete were needed to build it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll take that back to the design and the scope of the project in terms of kilograms of concrete. I recall the opening day there where tread lightly on palawa land was mentioned in terms of people experiencing The Cradle Mountain precinct. I will have to take on notice the kilograms of concrete question given the level of detail.

Mr WINTER - I want to go back to the fifth lane, Premier. Under RTI late last year, I believe we received information around the construction timeline and impacts on people through the fifth lane construction. It's acknowledged there will be significant disruption to traffic conditions in order to construct the high occupancy vehicle lane in the order of six to eight months during the construction, which will require mitigation. It goes on to say this will include the reduction to single lane only for a period of six to eight months. Do you really think this project is worth it when you are putting 10 per cent of Tasmanians on one of the busiest highways in Tasmania, reducing them to one lane of traffic during peak hour?

Mr ROCKLIFF - People might well have asked the same question about the Midland Highway upgrade and was it worth it when people were disrupted?

Mr WINTER - I'm sure you quite understand the level of disruption you are going to create through this.

Mr ROCKLIFF - People are travelling north or south, which is why I mentioned -

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Minister of Infrastructure has expired. The committee will commence examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Trade and Major Investment.

MINISTER for TRADE and MAJOR INVESTMENT

[5.40 p.m.]

CHAIR - The examination of Estimates of Minister for Trade and Major Investment will commence. Welcome Premier and Minister for Trade and Major Investment to the committee. Would you please introduce the persons at the table?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. To my right is Craig Limkin, Secretary for State Growth, to Craig's right is Jenna Cairney, Deputy Secretary for State Growth. To my left will be my Chief of Staff, Ned Whitehouse, and to Ned's left is John Perry, the Coordinator-General.

I have a very short opening remarks because I'm conscious we only have 30 minutes.

Trade continues to be one of our state's continuing success stories. While still being finalised, I'm pleased to advise the committee that this year we expect the value of Tasmanian exports to exceed $6 billion. This overtakes last year's $5.8 billion result to become our second most successful year on record behind the 2021-22 year which reached $6.15 billion and a significant boost on the 2020-21 at around $5 billion.

Despite the slowing of major economies on recent months, our annual goods export values have recorded a year on year increase coming to coming in at more than $4.4 billion. Our service exports have almost recovered to the pre-pandemic levels racking up around $1.1 billion in sales and across the year is estimated that more than $150 million in sales have been secured with the assistance of our Trade Action Plan initiatives.

I'm sure the committee be pleased to know that these results have not seen our exporters take the foot off the pedal at all. In recent months, we have hosted the Savour Tasmania Inward Trade Mission, a Tasmanian delegation to the Fine Food Australia Trade Exhibition in Melbourne, and supported attendance at Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong. The final touches are being put on our next major international trade and investment mission, which will head to Hong Kong and mainland China in November.

Looking at major investment, the Office of Coordinator-General (OCG) continues spearheading investment attraction and since its inception, has brought in around $5.5 billion, I'm advised. What's possibly more impressive is that the OCG is currently working on a pipeline of almost $16 billion of potential projects. These projects come in across the gamut of our economy, including mining, agribusiness, tourism, food production and processing, energy, the digital economy, housing and advanced manufacturing. The OCG is a regular participant on our international trade and investment missions.

Looking forward, we have delegations slated for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Thailand and Malaysia, Korea and Japan, Singapore and Indonesia, the USA and Canada, India, Europe and the United Kingdom. I look forward to updating the committee on these missions in future sessions.

Mr WINTER - Thank you, Premier. When I talk to industry, they tell me that nothing is getting done and it's getting harder and harder to build and develop in Tasmania. They've got $25 billion worth of renewable energy projects that want to get started in Tasmania and they're frustrated. I think you've probably heard some of those frustrations as well.

Despite not having mentioned the word 'Coordinator-General' in a single media release during the election campaign, despite no one I speak to within industry or business being aware of it, and despite it being hidden on page four of your investment policy and having a single line - I've got it here too, Premier - a single line referring to:

> These legislative updates will be developed utilising learnings from the Queensland model of the Coordinator-General and major project facilitation.

You've claimed that you have some kind of detailed plan for this. Can you take me through - and by the way, it's not in your first 100-day plan or your second 100-day plan - despite all of that, can you outline what you've done to date in terms of facilitating changes to the Coordinator-General model that will actually allow this state to get moving with the private investment that's stacked up at Bass Strait waiting to come in?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Okay. Part of our first 100-day plan was, of course, updating the act and there was a $10 million limit -

Mr WINTER - You didn't mention the Coordinator-General.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I'm talking about getting things done. A $10 million limit in the act constraining the Tasmanian Development Board's ability to invest in projects, keeping Tasmanian taxpayer funds to grow and develop. Through updating the act, the ability of the state to co-invest in strategic projects to benefit Tasmania will be lifted to $35 million. Done.

Mr WINTER - That's not the Coordinator-General but -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The $10 million limit was set in 1999. I've just outlined what the Coordinator-General has delivered in terms of $5.5 billion, $16 billion in the pipeline. There's a lot of work that goes into investment attraction. I've had some appreciation of this when it comes to the investment attraction initiative of the Sun Cable project, for example, and the enormous amount of work that's required in attracting such an opportunity to Tasmania, fighting off other key locations around the world - I think 30 around the world. Three key locations in Australia working with GBEs, in this case, TasPorts, TasRail and TasNetworks to add value to that investment proposition. A huge amount of work and we're still working through the Sun Cable project, of course, very mindful of the investments we are making on behalf of the Tasmanian taxpayers to support and facilitate those projects. There is a lot of work that's been done in terms of investment attraction and a lot of matters that have been delivered.

Mr WINTER - You haven't answered my question. So, it's about your policy - your so-called policy. It says:

> These legislative updates will be developed utilising learnings from the Queensland model of the Coordinator-General and major project facilitation.

What work has been done to date in order to actually enact any change?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I think you are rewriting history because that is our policy.

Mr WINTER - I'm reading from a document on your website. I'm asking you what you've done.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - With respect, Mr Winter, that has now become your policy which you lifted from our policy. We have a bipartisan approach to these matters which I know will be very welcomed by -

Mr WINTER - It's a very simple question. You're not going to distract me. What has actually happened?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We're reviewing the act in terms of the matters that I speak of, which I believe I outlined in my Second Reading contribution when we spoke about the threshold of the $10 million to the $35 million. I stand to be corrected. I will go back and check the *Hansard* but I thought I did refer to that.

Mr WINTER - So, you've talked about it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we're doing it. We've already done a part of this in the first 100 days and we will continue to find ways that we can support investment attraction -

Mr WINTER - Just to the specifics, what are you actually doing? Are you consulting with business or industry ?

CHAIR - Order. Mr Winter, ask your next question please.

Mr WINTER - That's it. That was the question - to the specifics of the question.

Mr LIMKIN - Mr Winter, we have been working with our colleagues in New South Wales and Queensland and also undertaking some policy work regarding this. Both are very different and unique, so let me use New South Wales as an example.

In New South Wales, the Coordinator-General is an infrastructure delivery person. It is not an investment attraction or planning approval process like Queensland. In New South Wales, the Coordinator-General can call in projects for Infrastructure NSW to deliver.

Currently, we do that through relationships and collaborations with agencies. As the Premier announced in his infrastructure hearing, we are already calling in projects without that power to be able to deliver it. What we are doing is we are undertaking a scan of how these models work in other jurisdictions. We're consulting and taking advice on legal matters to make sure that we provide the government options and advice on the best way to deliver it within the Tasmanian jurisdiction as our law. As I said, in the future the plan is to have conversations with the TDR Board and then take a discussion paper so that we can consult with industry and the community about the way forward before the government prepares legislation to introduce in department.

Mr WINTER - What additional powers, if any, are you looking to provide the Coordinator-General with?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will seek advice on that.

Mr WINTER - So, you actually don't have a policy at all then, do you?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we do. I've got a policy -

Mr WINTER - You can't even tell me what powers you want to add to the Coordinator-General.

CHAIR - Order, come on.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We're looking at all the options, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - You weren't looking at anything.

CHAIR - All right. Ms Rosol has the call.

Mr WINTER - You have a single line in your paper. You have one line.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know you are starting from way behind the eight ball on this because we caught you out lifting our policy the other day - a rookie error.

Mr WINTER - No one had ever heard of this line in the policy.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, you didn't clearly hear of it because you would have referenced it rather in breach of copyright.

Mr WINTER - Industry hasn't, business hasn't, nobody had heard of it. A single line, Page 4.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr WINTER - Can you just explain to me, Premier, as I re-ask the question?

Mr ROCKLIFF - If you'd known about it and read it.

Mr WINTER - Can you explain one additional power that you want to add to the Coordinator-General?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are looking at all options.

Mr WINTER - Do you support the ability for the Coordinator-General to rezone land?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I support getting the job done by doing it in the best possible way.

Mr WINTER - Honestly.

CHAIR - Ms Rosol has the call.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you, Premier. This year, 10 Tasmanian companies participated in the 2024 Land Forces exposition. Were any of those companies provided with financial or in-kind support by the Tasmanian Government in order to attend? If so, could you detail who received what?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we have our defence advocate that supports our advanced manufacturing and defence industries - industries that we should be very proud of in Tasmania. When I consider how far we've come in the last 10 years, Ms Rosol, when it comes to our advanced manufacturing capabilities and our capacity and particularly into that defence industry space now - I'm sure it's probably changed when I quoted these figures a few years ago, but there was $200 billion on the investment agenda from the Australian Government. I was quoting these figures pre-AUKUS, from memory. There is an enormous ability for us as a state to support that defence industry spend. The investment that we're making is in the defence advocate and we're supporting those companies that would have attended Land Forces. I met a company in Adelaide at Land Forces a few years ago and, as a result, was able to introduce some companies there.

Ms ROSOL - Can I clarify whether you funded them to attend this year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - To your question, being mindful of time, I understand that Pivot Maritime received support. Is that right?

Ms CAIRNEY - We are still calculating the costs of our stand at Land Forces. Approximately $250,000 was spent on the Tasmanian stand. However, we do recoup some of the support from the businesses that display at the stand and approximately $50,000 will be recouped from businesses who contribute to be on that stand. I'm trying to check the numbers of businesses that you have attending, because we had many more businesses, defence companies, representing Tasmania at that Land Forces event.

I also want to put on record that since 2019, more than $360 million in defence contracts have been awarded to Tasmanian companies.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I mentioned the company before and I'll clarify that.

Ms ROSOL - Could we take that on notice, please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We can provide the details of the $250,000 for the stand. It was a very impressive stand indeed, like our trade shows are across the world as well, they are very impressive. The information was presented by Ms Cairney of $250,000 for the stand, but there may well be further advice we can make at another time.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Currawong Engineering was one of the companies that attended the Land Forces expo under the Defence Tasmania banner, and we know that Currawong produces drone engines for a company called BlueBird Aero Systems, which is majority-owned by the Israeli government and produces drones used by the Israeli military. Given the outrageous devastation that Israel has wrought upon the people of Palestine, particularly in the last year, do you think it's appropriate for the state of Tasmania to be represented by a company that's engaging with the Israeli military in this way?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm very proud of the companies we have in Tasmania and the enormous strides they've made in being very innovative in the defence industry and advanced manufacturing space. I am well aware of the company, and there are many others. We're proud of our defence businesses and the success that they are achieving, thoroughly proud. The sale of defence export or dual-use items to anywhere in the world, including Israel, Russia or Ukraine, for example, is controlled by Australian Government regulation through the Defence Export Controls Branch. The Tasmanian government, I'm advised, is not aware of any products currently being supplied into Israel. Anyone with questions about Australia's exports into defence markets should seek information from the Australian Government.

CHAIR - Premier, would you happy to take the previous question on notice, to clarify it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will update the record or provide the information directly to Ms Rosol should it change, but my advice is that the accelerating trade grant, a total of $3300, was provided to Pivot Maritime to go to Land Forces.

Mrs PENTLAND - Premier, Tasmania's reputation for producing quality wine grows every year, consistently winning global awards. Currently, only 5 per cent of the wine produced is exported. Does the government have a strategy to support the industry so that it can grow?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We support Wine Tasmania through various measures. We have had a strategic industry partnership program since around 2015, which has supported a range of our agricultural and horticultural enterprises, of which I believe Wine Tasmania, from my memory going back to my primary industries minister days, has taken advantage of. Wine Tasmania will also benefit from some of our election commitments and that will be easily articulated by our Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Jane Howlett. We are including $1.5 million over the next three years for export market development for our wine industry, as I am advised.

When it comes to our wine industry, it is important that we remain in that very high premium end; that is our capability and that is our market. While we might be a small percentage of the exports of wine in Tasmania, when it comes to the percentage of exports of the premium wine brands, we're a lot higher in that sense. We have built an enviable position over many decades and focus on driving demand, most importantly, quality and value ahead of growth in production. As a result, the sector is in the top 10 of all sectors contributing to the state's economy, attracting some of the highest value in the country and a global reputation, which, given its scale, is tremendous.

The wine industry not only has value because of our exports, but also the visitor economy because of our very strong reputation we have from visitors as well. We must always be in that premium brand space when it comes to that. Sheralee Davies is the head of Wine Tasmania and has been for some time, a fantastic person to work with. She has great strategic foresight when it comes to the industry and, in my humble opinion, has done a tremendous job.

We have to always stay out of that big commodity space. With the impacts of the pandemic trade with China, that affected other states a lot more than Tasmania because other states were in that exporting - I will call it mid-range - product, whereas we exported less of that because of the premium end and the quality of our wine. The impacts of that were less in terms of the matters around trade with China; of course, for rock lobster it was very different, unfortunately.

Mrs PENTLAND - Your current trade strategy promises to deliver innovative Tasmanian events both domestically and internationally. Premier, what do we have planned and how are these event experiences chosen?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The trade missions are very important and I mentioned going to China in November. We have a trade mission into the United States commencing on 6 October for less than a week, but very important. One of the key areas that I became aware of when I was last overseas was the importance of exporters to be in market, but also the importance of inviting people to Tasmania. That's where the Cyber Tasmania experience of a couple of months ago was so invaluable, because, as you would probably appreciate, when you visit a place overseas you get a special connection with that place. You meet people and you experience their culture and their friendly nature and you have a connection. The great thing about Cyber Tasmania is that we've got the importers, effectively, coming to Tasmania to immerse themselves in a Tasmanian environment with the producers that they meet personally and again establish a stronger relationship with the state through that experience then perhaps meeting people and exporters in market.

Notwithstanding that, we have had great success with a trade mission to New Zealand in July 2022 in terms of the value of what was invested in that trade mission to the return on

investment. We have to be in the market, but we also have to have people in key markets, so we've got a United States trade advocate. We work with AusTrade when it comes to a trade advocate in China. We are working on getting another trade advocate in the Singapore region and we expect them to be there in April next year.

Mr PERRY - That is my understanding.

Mr WINTER - The advocate could work from the boat, I guess.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - To date, the 2024 mission plan has yielded a return of more than $26 million in commercial and trade outcomes, facilitated over $3.5 million of investment and 95 full-time equivalents and progressed Tasmanian projects involving approximately $2.45 billion of potential investment and 500 jobs. The new plan was informed by insights from the International Business Development Network of Tasmania, the trade advocates, international stakeholders, Tasmanian businesses and existing research.

Under the Trade and Investment Mission Plan 2024-27 we are remaining focused on staying resilient and agile when facing economic headwinds. Our priorities include reconnecting into top markets, promoting and supporting trade initiatives that seek market expansion and leveraging new and existing free trade agreements.

In these forums there is often a question about our reliance on the Chinese market, which is a very important market and establishing and strengthening those relationships are very important. It was not too long ago where our exports were some 43 per cent or over 40 per cent in terms of the Chinese market and there was quite rightly a discussion around these tables around diversifying those opportunities and spreading our risk, if you like. While the Chinese market is very important, it's now probably now just over 30 per cent of our exports. That diversification has changed and we have aggressively pursued other markets and opportunities to reduce that over-reliance on the Chinese market, which the rock lobster industry felt the full effects of in early 2020.

Mr WINTER - Premier, Hudson Civil were drawn to buy and build a TRANSLink precinct at Launceston Airport on the basis of information provided to them by the Coordinator-General. They were told there was adequate power available at the site yet they have been operating for more than a year after construction was completed and purchases made without adequate power and they have been unable to move into the site that's costing them, they say, tens of thousands of dollars per month. Last time we heard from the government about this was 13 months ago when Michael Ferguson said he was going to meet with them. What's the government's response to this and how's it going to rectify the situation for a great Tasmanian civil contractor like Hudson?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, I can ask Mr Perry to speak to that.

Mr PERRY - From my understanding of this particular project that our office did not meet with the proponent that you're referring to, but it was in relation to a prospectus that has been prepared for Translink, which talks about the need to engage around particular infrastructure requirements. I know that we have been providing a range of information to

TasNetworks around future demand and the need for upgrading the electricity supply into Translink. As for the direct discussions with the Deputy Premier, I can't comment on those.

Mr WINTER - It seems to be a a huge issue for the company, and it's putting it under enormous financial stress. Is the government looking to provide any compensation to them given the information contained within the prospectus? The prospectus said that electricity supplies would be available to all land titles in the precinct with a 22kV distribution line from Hadspen; it went on to describe the various factors around energy. Here they are unable to fully connect. What are you going do about this to resolve the situation for them?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We want to ensure that we work with all our potential investors in Tasmania. Our jobs and investment policy continues and focuses on updating legislation to contain mechanisms to plan, deliver and coordinate large-scale projects. The policy noted that these legislative updates will be developed utilising learnings from the Queensland model of the Coordinator-General and major project facilitation. The policy objective, contained on page 138 of the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, is to create a strong and certain investment environment. These updates will provide the private sector with confidence required to invest in Tasmania.

In terms of the specifics of your question and naming an organisation -

Mr WINTER - They've been in the media twice. Once in the *Mercury* 13 months ago; once last week, begging for help. You're the Minister for Infrastructure now. They're an important part of our civil contracting business environment in Tasmania. They're really struggling. Minister Ferguson met with them and obviously nothing happened. What are you going to do to facilitate a solution for them?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm very interested in facilitating solutions to investment, so I take great interest in -

Ms DOW - Do you meet with them?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I meet with many people. I will seek to gauge and see what can be -

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Minister for Trade and Investment has expired. We will suspend for 5 minutes and then proceed with the examination of Estimates for the Minister for Transport.

The Committee suspended from 6.10 p.m. to 6.15 p.m

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Eric Abetz MP

Monday 23 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Dean Winter MP
Mr David O'Byrne MP
Mr Mark Shelton MP
Ms Helen Burnet MP
Ms Meg Brown MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. ERIC ABETZ MP
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Minister for Transport and Leader of the House

Craig Limkin
Secretary, Department of State Growth

Martin Crane
General Manager Road User Services

Cynthia Heydon
Deputy Secretary Transport

The Committee met at 6.15 p.m.

CHAIR - The time being 6.15 p.m., the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Transport will commence. Welcome, minister, and could you please introduce the persons at the table for the benefit of Hansard?

Mr ABETZ - From the end of the table, Denise McIntyre, Craig Limkin, Cynthia Heydon, and in-between, Eric Abetz, Minister for Transport.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Transport is three hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question of the minister. The minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

I remind everyone that the microphones in here are sensitive, so be mindful of Hansard and be careful when shuffling papers, drink bottles and the like. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other. I remind members to only speak one at a time to assist Hansard with this.

Minister, would you care to make an opening statement?

Mr ABETZ - A brief one to say I am pleased to be here as Minister for Transport. It is my first Estimates, so please go easy on me. The transport sector is vitally important for our state and for the people of Tasmania wanting to get to and from school, to and from work, to and from appointments, et cetera, so the government has been looking at ensuring that we have a good public transport network that is more easily and seamlessly accessed. That, as one would expect, is a work in progress and will never be fully satisfied. As technology improves, as requirements improve and as new subdivisions develop, there will always be changes to the network.

I can indicate that we have now had 385,000 passengers travelling on the Derwent River ferry service since its launch, which has been quite popular for people who are pedestrians or who use scooters or bikes because they can get them onto the ferry. It is a very good service and we are excited about the prospects of increasing the number of ferry terminals. We are looking at, if I can get this right, Wilkinsons Point, Sandy Bay and Lindisfarne. Those improvements will continue and we look forward to them rolling out.

In relation to our half-price bus fees or public transport fees, that has gone well. We were hoping we might hit the two million passenger mark in October of this year and by 31 August, we had reached that number, which indicates a relatively good uptake, but there has been a variation in the figures in relation to that.

We have made extra amounts available to Metro and public transport. That is outlined in the Budget figures. The Premier may have shared earlier today about the car parks being used at Huntingfield and Firthside with a relatively high uptake there, and we look forward to more park and ride facilities being developed around the state.

Earlier today I announced the common ticketing contract, which is going to be an exciting further development where you can tap on and off our public transport with your phone, your watch, your credit card or whatever. You won't need a green card or a specific card for transport. You will be able to use whatever mechanism you have, and that will be very helpful for tourists as well, to get themselves around the city and around the precincts. They won't have to go in to buy a special green card and you won't have to top it up because you'll have your own bank account backing you in on that.

With those few comments, Chair, I thank you and look forward to some questions.

Ms BROWN - Minister, it's my first Estimates too, and don't worry, I will not go easy on you. When will both of the new *Spirit*s be in service?

Mr ABETZ - They're questions that I invite you to ask at the GBE of -

Ms BROWN - I am asking you now, though, minister.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - I know you are, but we have elements within these Estimates as to what is for the department and what is for the state-owned -

Ms BROWN - Are you telling me you do not know?

Mr ABETZ - corporation.

CHAIR - Order. Let the minister finish.

Mr ABETZ - We have a fair idea, but I think it is better if the CEO of TT-Line were to be able to provide you with his very best estimate of that.

Mr WINTER - He wasn't available for the committee the other week.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms BROWN - So, you won't be giving that advice today?

Mr ABETZ - No. Look, that comment from the Leader of the Opposition is -

Ms BROWN - Before you go off on a tangent, I'm just going to go on to my next question. Will you guarantee that they'll both be able to operate fully loaded with freight and passengers from January 2026?

Mr ABETZ - Look, we are currently - and as a government, I invite you to ask those questions at the GBE hearings -

Ms BROWN - Once again, I'm asking you now.

Mr ABETZ - I know you are, but we will be in a better position to advise once we have the report. This is publicly known, the report from Ben Moloney and Peter Gimmell who are

doing a deep dive into all this and giving us as good professional advice as I think we could possibly hope for in all the circumstances. I've said previously, I've seen how the former Labor leader, Kim Beazley, got himself into all sorts of trouble with the Collins class submarines by saying, it will come in on this date, on budget, et cetera. After a few years, it all blew out. So it is -

Ms BROWN - Well, we're five years deep with this, aren't we?

Mr ABETZ - The Collins-class, I think we were about 10 years, but we won't go there, not relevant for this discussion. I think it's important that we leave it to those who are in control of the TT-Line to give those answers.

Ms BROWN - Why won't you consider extra day sailings to increase tourism capacity over summer until the new ships are available to be fully utilised?

Mr ABETZ - Sorry, can you ask that question again?

Ms BROWN - Why won't you consider extra day sailings to increase tourism capacity over summer until the new ships are able to be fully utilised?

Mr ABETZ - Well, as I understand it, the TT-Line has already been running extra day sailings during peak periods. I mentioned all these figures because they were at front of mind when I was on Tasmania Talks. I think they were up to 900 and something of sailings. That is to deal with the demand as it arises. The department has a look - I've got a note here - thank you, secretary:

> To meet anticipated demand, TT-Line have currently scheduled day sailings every second day during the peak period, early December to late April, excluding every second weekend. TT-Line will schedule additional day sailings if there is sufficient demand. The Department has requested information from TT-Line regarding the cost of scheduling extra day sailings.

That is something that has happened in the past, will continue to happen and then when and how they are scheduled is, at the end of the day, up to the management of TT-Line. That is why it's a state-owned corporation, and we, as ministers, have to be careful that we don't start operating as ghost directors.

Ms BURNET - Thank you, minister. We hear from the community that limited reliability is a factor in people choosing not to use buses. We also know that the four ingredients of a good public transport service is regularity, reliability, predictability and being on time. We're not really getting that combination very frequently. It's about as frequent as the bus services at the moment. Where is the real-time information - what on average are delays to Metro bus services?

I recently heard of a story of somebody travelling from Huntingfield going to Firthside. The bus at Huntingfield was late by three minutes, the Firthside bus early, which makes it unreliable as well, just as an example. Where's the real-time information and what on average are the delays to Metro Tasmania bus services?

Mr ABETZ - I dare say nobody necessarily has that specific information, but I can make inquiries for you. I imagine that would take an exceptional amount of work because a three-minute delay would be a delay to yourself, which I think most people would live with a three-minute delay. If you want to add all them up in all the services, that's going to take some time.

But that said, your initial opening remarks are remarks that I think most people would need to agree with and that is reliability and certainty is something that is a key factor for people engaging with a public transport experience and so that is something that I have mentioned to Metro on a regular basis and once again with the Metro, they will be coming up at the GBEs and the CEO and others can be asked about how they are managing these matters.

Ms BURNET - I'll give another example of somebody who went to Twitter X, he was talking about a 45-minute wait between buses and then others have a staggered start time. So, somebody starting work at 10.00 is not getting the bus services that have been cancelled. How do you stop the congestion and how do you account for these disruptions to service, which is not helping the economy at all?

Mr ABETZ - Look, I've mentioned in the parliament on a number of occasions that Metro and Tasmania are not immune from the driver shortage, which is something Australia is experiencing. There's a 25 000-driver shortage around Australia.

Ms BURNET - That wasn't the question, minister.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, but when you have less drivers available then those that do the rosters of the morning, if somebody rings in sick, et cetera, and Metro will be a lot better at explaining all this at the GBE hearings. They'll be able to tell you that they then have to juggle and decide which services they can and can't operate on a particular morning when you have a shortage of drivers and then a couple of them call in sick. This happened in recent times with the Bridgewater incidents, people were off on stress leave.

You have to keep all that in mind and in all the circumstances, Metro are doing as good a job I think as they possibly can. That said, I am encouraging them to deal with these matters as possible. They are training more drivers, trying to get more drivers and until that situation is resolved, we will continue to have those unfortunate hiccups in the provision of service.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, I noticed today you reannounced the smart ticketing with the relationship with the Queensland company, or the company based out of Queensland in Cubic. This project was first announced in 2018 and it was budgeted to cost $7.5 million. Obviously, each year that's been upgraded and expanded. How much money have you spent on the common ticketing scheme so far and how much will it cost taxpayers?

Mr ABETZ - I'm not sure how much has been spent so far, but we did have a line item in the budget of $35.4 million which is in the budget overall and what has been spent to date. I have been told it is $3.441 million has been expended on project costs to date including external legal advice and state growth, internal resources.

Mr O'BYRNE - Your budgeting 35?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, 35.4.

Mr O'BYRNE - When will it be rolled out? What's the target date?

Mr ABETZ - We are hoping -

Mr ABETZ - Look, these things, these Estimates, and I used to be in this game as well in opposition or when not in government trying to nail a minister down to an exact date so, when it is one day late, you can say 'Gotcha', or and I ask -

Mr O'BYRNE - Just give me a six-month window would be good.

Mr ABETZ - We are anticipating that in mid-2025 there will be the on-road trial and a demonstration bus will be launched to showcase the new tap on, tap off ticketing equipment and provide information to help Tasmanians get ready to use the new ticketing system.

We are hoping that, if things go well, a staged installation program will start with Launceston and then through to Burnie. Is that right? Yes, Burnie and then Hobart. So, there will be a staged roll out. With all these new ventures, trying to put an exact date on it is going to be fraught with difficulty, but I would like to think middle 2026 or a bit later would be a rough estimate.

Mr O'BYRNE - To clarify, so it was announced in 2018, establishing standalone Tasmanian system was abandoned 2021-22, you announced a relationship with Cubic in 2023 - I think the previous minister announced it - and now you are saying - you have reannounced it today - that it will be mid 2025 before we see a single bus trial and then you roll it out. So, it is another two years. That is an eight-year process to establish a single ticketing system for Tasmania, is that right?

Mr ABETZ - You can do the maths and come to your conclusions as you like. We have made an announcement today and, if the indications are that it works as well as it does with the Queesland Labor government, then things would be working well for the benefit of Tasmanian motorists - no, not motorists but the opposite - the public-service commuters.

Mr O'BYRNE - More people on buses means roads are less congested.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, as someone that loves to jump on an old AG200 and ride over to the farm and enjoy motorcycling, I have heard that the motorcycle trainer, AJL Training, has left Tasmania. Can you please advise what the government has done to ensure that motorcycle learners can continue to receive the vital training that they need to gain their L plates and ultimately their motorcycle licence.

Mr ABETZ - In rural regional areas, motorbikes are a very important part of the economy and the way of life. Motorcyclists are overrepresented in the unfortunate road statistics that we confront on a regular basis and, so, as a government we are committed to trying to assist those that are learning and the department has successfully transitioned the new provider, the current provider, Stay Upright Pty Ltd, into motorcycle training and assessment at three regions across the state. They have had extensive experience in providing motorcycle training across Australia.

Ms BROWN - Minister, can you advise how much taxpayer money was used to send Mr Dwyer to Finland to oversee the transfer of the first *Spirit* vessel?

Mr ABETZ - Look, I cannot, but, once again, I invite you to ask that question at the GBE, because the money, as I understand it, does not come from departmental sources, but from the TT-Line sources, from their business.

Ms BROWN - Were you informed of Mr Dwyer's plan to travel there and not appear before PAC?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, I was, and I in fact raised what, on the face of it, was a concern and, when I was advised of Mr Dwyer's state of mind by the chair of the board, when he had a discussion with him, it was determined by the chair of his own volition, that it would be best for Mr Dwyer's wellbeing not to be at the PAC hearing, but that he would be made available any time when he was back in a better state - if I can use the terminology - and Mr Bugg used his discretion and his genuine concern for Mr Dwyer's wellbeing in making that decision. Mr Dwyer, for what it's worth, had all the technical expertise in relation to having the vessel signed over to TT-Line. He had been authorised by the board to sign for the vessel in Finland. That was determined to be an appropriate course of action by the chair of TT-Line, something which I support.

Ms BROWN - Do you know how many international trips the CEO has taken since his appointment and the total amount spent on that travel?

Mr ABETZ - No, I don't. He has been CEO for many years.

Ms BROWN - Over 10 years.

Mr ABETZ - One assumes there have been many overseas trips undertaken by Mr Dwyer in the course of business. I don't think we could provide any numbers.

Ms BROWN - I have not finished on that line of questioning, if I may.

Mr ABETZ - Can I invite you to ask those sorts of questions at the GBE hearings, because all this money comes out of the TT-Line pot, not out of the Department of State Growth pot, and we are here examining the Department of State Growth and not TT-Line.

Ms BROWN - Can I invite you to take on notice how many international trips he has taken?

CHAIR - Ms Brown, I've given the call to Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - Thank you, Chair.

Mr ABETZ - If I may. Apologies, the secretary has just indicated for the benefit of Ms Brown, if you have a look at the annual reports of TT-Line, it is included each year as to overseas travel. It's all there on the public record already.

Ms BURNET - My question is in relation to the prioritisation of learner driver programs in Tasmania. While millions of dollars have been granted over the forward Estimates to develop new driver safety programs, why has funding for established community programs like the

Learner Driver Mentor Program (LDMP), which already delivers significant outcomes, remained uncertain beyond December 2024?

Mr ABETZ - There is somebody who rejoices in a particular surname as well. That is the program that's run by Mr Garry O'Byrne, and I understand that he is a retiring.

Mr O'BYRNE - Cousin.

Mr ABETZ - There we go. That's why I thought you'd rejoice. The department is undertaking a review of that program. We are also engaged, as a result of our 2030 Strong Plan promise, with the RACT with quite a program. Do you want to comment on that, Mr Crane?

Mr CRANE - I am happy to talk to that. I am Martin Crane, general manager -

CHAIR - I am sorry. Minister, could you please introduce by name and position?

Mr ABETZ - He can do that better himself. All these titles are I know 'secretary' and that's about it.

Mr CRANE - My name's Martin Crane, I'm the General Manager Road User Services in the Transport group at the Department of State Growth.

In terms of the funding for the LDMP, that is part of our Road Safety Action Plan and we provided funding. We got a little bit delayed due to the election so we funded it through the support from the minister to December. We will be providing further advice shortly to the minister for the continuation of that program. It's an important program. The LDMP has delivered 17,500 hours last year. Roughly around 225 people each month access those services. It's in high demand.

As the minister pointed out, we are looking at the program to make sure it's as effective as possible. We understand that there are challenges with people accessing driver licencing. That program is a key part of it. That'll be part of the discussions we have with the RACT, how best to use that through the development of the new initiatives the government has funded for partnership with the Road Safety Council and RACT to look at really innovative ways and provide support to young people to get into driver licencing as, sadly, young people under 25 are still overrepresented in the crash stats.

Ms BURNET - My second question is about extension of that program, not only to rural people so that it's accessible and, therefore, equitable, but also for mature-age learners and learners from multicultural backgrounds. What are you doing in that space?

Mr CRANE - We do fund the multicultural community.

Ms BURNET - The Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)?

Mr CRANE - MRC, to provide driver learning programs as part of the LDMP. It is fair to say that in rural areas we do have challenges with getting volunteers. It is a volunteer-based program. We fund community-based groups such as Neighbourhood Houses and, as you said, the Migrant Resource Centre to coordinate the delivery of that. We provide funding for vehicles and a coordinator, but it is reliant on volunteers to provide those hours to do that. Post-COVID,

attracting and retaining volunteers in that particular area is becoming a challenge for us. We're looking at ways in which we may be able to better support those volunteers. They do a fantastic job, as I said 17,500 hours were provided through the program in the last financial year to a number of Tasmanians getting into the driver licencing system.

Ms BURNET - And the mature aged?

Mr CRANE - One of the things the minister mentioned, from the review point of view, that program is not age-limited, it's not just for young people. You can be an older person coming through the driver licencing system and access those programs. What we do know is that people over 25 have a very different risk profile in terms of their driving behaviours. Sadly, young males are particularly overrepresented in that age and by 25 they seem to have become more safe on the road. We will look at ways in which we can improve access to that program, including those people you've mentioned.

Mr O'BYRNE - Back to the smart ticketing. Could you talk us through why Cubic was picked as the provider for this technology? Was there a tender? What was the process the department undertook to establish Cubic as the provider?

Mr ABETZ - The solution offered the government exceptionally advantageous conditions that enabled it to leverage off a $371 million investment made by the Queensland Labor government in its ticketing system. These benefits include that this an existing solution that has already been tested and is operating in Queensland and other jurisdictions internationally. Cubic has provided a detailed project schedule that provides for the complete rollout of the ticketing solution in Tasmania, hopefully by the middle of next year. Pursuant to the proposed agreement with Cubic, liquidated damages are payable by Cubic, in the event that this time frame is not achieved. The solution will offer ticketing as a service. Critically, it will provide access to Queensland TMR merchant fees and grades, full accounting and financial services, back office and device support, and management - as in field technicians.

Mr O'BYRNE - With respect, that's not the answer to the question. He's not answered the question.

CHAIR - That's your interpretation.

Mr ABETZ - Repeat the question.

Mr O'BYRNE - Was it an unsolicited bid from Cubic? Did they approach you? Did you approach them? I want to know how the decision was made, not in terms of the merits. You've listed a number of things.

Mr ABETZ - I now understand your question. The previous minister allowed for a direct procurement, given the benefits that I've just outlined in my previous answer.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, can you provide an update on the installation of the safety screens for the metro buses?

Mr ABETZ - That's a good question. Once again, can we leave that to the GBE of Metro, which will be later on? This funding, as I understand it, comes from Metro's budget allocations.

Mrs BESWICK - The additional funding that has been put into this year's Budget is not covering it?

Mr ABETZ - It comes from the Department of State Growth to Metro, and then Metro administers it. The officials here are not, I'd assume, in a position to get into the detail. My apologies, we can't answer that at this stage.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, some businesses have told me that the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme has not kept up pace with the shipping costs. While I acknowledge this is an Australian Government scheme, what is the Tasmanian Government's position on the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme?

Mr ABETZ - As a government, we welcome the Senate inquiry that's been announced in recent times. We believe now that the BITR - is it? Somebody will correct me - where they seek to do the analysis between cost of transport in something by road as opposed to ship, in recent times the evidence is that that has gone in favour of road freight - in other words, the cost of shipping - has increased in comparison to road. As a result, I think an inquiry by the Senate will give us some insight into what the cost differentials are. As a result, I think a strong argument can be made for an enhanced freight equalisation scheme. I've sort of got that right.

Mr WINTER - You've referenced earlier that TT-Line has now taken ownership of *Spirit IV* through Mr Dwyer's visit to Finland. Can you outline to the committee when that ship will commence its journey to Tasmania, when it will arrive here, and what will occur once it does? Is it arriving in Hobart first up?

Mr ABETZ - Once again, they are questions that should be asked of TT-Line. They are the ones who have the management and control of these matters.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I know that you're relatively new here, but I'm very experienced.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr WINTER - The way that issues like this have been handled, even by the Premier earlier today, is to answer questions pertinent to your portfolio. We would appreciate you being forthcoming with information. This is a very important issue. We do have an opportunity to ask you questions today. Presumably, you're well aware of it.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - I'm just asking you to provide an outline as to how this will happen.

Mr ABETZ - My answer remains the same. It is for TT-Line to indicate whilst having -

Mr WINTER - You won't even tell the committee when the ships are going to start -

CHAIR - Order, Mr Winter. Second question.

Mr WINTER - Chair, this is really important. We've got a minister -

CHAIR - The minister has answered the question.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Chair, if you don't mind. We have a long tradition in this place of ministers being accountable within their portfolios. We have the Transport minister in front of this committee, and this committee has asked a number of questions that are pertinent to the portfolio. I know the minister is from a different parliament. They may have different proceedings and different procedures. In this place it is traditional for ministers to answer questions that are particularly important to Tasmania. In this case, whether the *Spirit*s are going to start coming to Tasmania any time soon is a very important question. I ask you to draw the minister back to the question and answer questions particularly relevant to his portfolio.

Mr ABETZ - If I may, on the point of order, the simple fact is that TT-Line has the direct management of these matters, and that is why -

Mr WINTER - Are you the minister responsible or not?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - I can answer. I didn't interrupt you. I would ask that you extend the same courtesy to myself. The TT-Line has the management of these matters. We have a separate occasion in the parliamentary calendar for the Government Business Enterprises, or state-owned corporations, as the TT-Line is, for full and detailed examination of all these matters. It's not a matter of not wanting to answer, but the question being asked at the right forum. This is not the right forum, because the GBE, or the SOC, is not performed at this committee.

CHAIR - Mr Winter, the minister responded to the question and answered in a way that he saw fit, as is the tradition of the House. I suggest you ask your second question.

Mr WINTER - Again, this is actually really -

CHAIR - No, no. Order.

Mr WINTER - What do you mean, 'no'?

CHAIR - Second question.

Mr WINTER - Excuse me, point of order, Chair.

CHAIR - The minister has answered the question as he saw fit.

Mr WINTER - I'm happy to take it to the Speaker if you want to go in that direction. I am asking questions. This is really important for the House, that we don't go down this path of having ministers refusing to answer basic questions. The Minister for Transport should know when the *Spirit of Tasmania IV* is going to start coming to Tasmania. I'm asking him that question, and I would ask you to draw the minister to the question. When will *Spirit IV* start heading towards Tasmania?

Mr ABETZ - When it leaves port.

Mr WINTER - Honestly. Chair, this cannot -

CHAIR - No, I'm passing the lead over to Ms Burnet.

Mr WINTER - On the rotation I have three questions, so perhaps you could at least give me that.

CHAIR - I suggest you ask another question. The minister has answered as he saw fit.

Mr WINTER - You've issued a ministerial direction to TasPorts and TT-Line for them to commence work at berth 1. That was done some months ago now. How is it that we are here at the end of September and we still don't have a cost or any information as to whether it's actually feasible to upgrade berth 1? What evidence did you rely upon before you made that direction? Did you have any engineering advice or any advice whatsoever before you issued that direction to TasPorts and TT-Line to do something they clearly didn't want to do?

Mr ABETZ - The direction was a direction provided on the basis of the best of information that was available to me and the other shareholder minister. That direction is there on the public record for people to see.

Mr WINTER - What advice was that?

Mr ABETZ - I'm not going to go into the advice that was provided, suffice to say, from a range of sources. We are now benefitting ourselves and people of Tasmania with a full and detailed report from Ben Moloney and Peter Gemell to see what the way forward should be. That's going to take some time. Until we receive that advice, I'm not going to try to make judgment calls or prejudge that; they are going to be advising us.

Mr WINTER - By the end of October, that'll only be 14 months before the actual long-term solution is due to be ready. How is it possible that we are going to be able to design and then deliver a berth 1 interim solution that will be in place for no more than a few months before the long-term solution is implemented?

Mr ABETZ - These are all questions that Ben Moloney and Peter Gemell will be looking at -

Mr WINTER - It's not going to happen, though, is it?

Mr ABETZ - and providing us with advice.

Ms BURNET - Minister, I want to focus back in July, when you did a press release with minister Ellis in relation to the bus rapid transit and the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor. Could you point me to the reference to the bus rapid transit in the budget papers? Is it there?

Mr ABETZ - We are busily looking. It is in budget paper 2, volume 1, on page 350 about two-thirds of the way down, before Minister for Sports and Events, under the line item titled Urban Congestion Fund.

Ms BURNET - That doesn't sound like a BRT to me. It's a footnote really, isn't it? It's about appropriation revenue.

Mr ABETZ - There are footnotes there that tell us to have a look at footnotes 1 and 12, which says -

> This project includes the state and Australian government's contributions of $52 million for Hobart public transport infrastructure planning …

and as I understand it, the City Deal, that $52 million, included that particular item to which you refer. I can understand why you asked the question because it's not that obvious.

Ms BURNET - It's buried. I suppose this is a pretty important project for transport in Hobart and the plans are all very well, but this week the POSS submission was made in relation to the stadium and in appendix N, page 14, 1.4.2, it talks about the stadium transport model and it relies very heavily on the bus rapid transit to be implemented. Also, there's this significant modal shift of how people travel; it's very ambitious, may I say. There's an expectation that 60 per cent of people will be using some sort of public transport or non-private transport. At the moment we have probably about 8 per cent of people, which is pretty generous, catching public transport in Greater Hobart, so how in the world do you think that sort of reliable transport model can be delivered in order to get the result of that modal shift?

Mr ABETZ - There's a lot in that question. I don't know how long we've got to answer it, but Hobart, by its nature, is in fact a transport hub where a whole lot of buses and ferries now come into the city. The infrastructure matters relating to the stadium are matters for another minister. In relation to matters that relate to transport or the provision of buses, that is something we will continue to work on, including ferry services, to get people to the stadium and if there is an event on at the stadium, be it a concert or a football game or whatever else, then people may well see that as, if you like, a day out and therefore catching a ferry across the river or down or up the river will be part and parcel of the total experience they will want to enjoy. Similarly, if they know that the city is going to be full, there'll be a lot of interest in catching buses, as I understand happens now with Blundstone Arena. There are a number of buses that leave from the Cenotaph area where people can park and go across. These things are doable, they work and we have every confidence that they will work.

Mr O'BYRNE - Back to the smart ticketing. It sounded like the previous minister has made a captain's call. Minister, the Treasurer's Instructions are quite clear about government procurement, saying:

> Government procurement must be undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the following principles:
>
> 1.2.1 value for money;
>
> 1.2.2 open, impartial and effective competition;
>
> 1.2.3 providing local suppliers that wish to do business with the government the opportunity to do so through the adoption of the Buy Local policy requirements.

It goes on. Based on your answer a little while ago, it seemed that there was no procurement process undertaken for this technology. I want to make sure that the previous minister has acted

in context of the Treasurer's Instructions. Could you provide me with advice, maybe through your department, to settle my concern?

Mr ABETZ - I suppose I can start by saying that given he was and continues to be Treasurer, he might be abiding by his own instructions.

Mr O'BYRNE - One would hope so, but on the face of it -

Mr ABETZ - I don't have the Treasurer's Instructions in front of me at the moment.

Mr CRANE - Through you, minister, the Treasurer's Instructions also allow that a direct procurement can occur if it is a unique opportunity that benefits Tasmania.

Mr O'BYRNE - I think it also goes on to say that as long as there's appropriate paperwork and justification to justify that decision,

Mr CRANE - Yes, that is correct.

Mr O'BYRNE - That is effectively what I am seeking.

Mr CRANE - The assessment was made that the combination of Cubic the services we provide through TMR was a unique opportunity that we could not get through a market approach and that is the basis for the decision regarding direct selection of that offer.

Mrs BESWICK - Over the last 12 months we have had a lot of issues with the drought on King Island and the shipping between Flinders and King is obviously not up to the standard we would like. I know we are looking at doing a strategic plan for the docks around King Island, but what other shipping issues options have been considered and how are we strategically planning to improve these services?

Mr ABETZ - Can you just remind me of the question so I can be as specific as possible?

Mrs BESWICK - Apart from the strategic plan for King Island, what are we looking at in terms of improving shipping for King and Flinders islands and therefore the costs and benefits, and all the things that make their lives a bit better?

Mr ABETZ - Where do we start there? Okay. The government committed $1.5 million in the Budget for additional sailings and, if achievable, fodder relief for the Bass Strait islands and the mainland of Tasmania. Bass Island Line has now reverted to one sailing a week in response to the seasonal drop in demand. Bass Island Line remains available to reinstate the second service should the situation require. There's a Port of Grassy study in your electorate. During the recent state election, we promised $150,000 to revisit and complete a study on the Grassy Harbour port. Planning is underway for the study, with this work to be prioritised for completion by early next year. The Department of State Growth is leading the work and the project will provide for input by the King Island community, recognising the importance of aligning infrastructure planning with future needs.

Mrs BESWICK - Apart from that, what other things - have we considered negotiating with different service providers? Are we doing any out-of-the-box thinking or are we just -

Mr ABETZ - We always do out-of-the-box thinking. We are always interested in getting the feedback from the island communities to ensure that we service them to the very best of our ability within financial constraints. That's the balancing act and what the various needs of the community are. During the drought, there was clearly a need for extra services to provide fodder and to get cattle off King Island.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, I've heard you mention it earlier on in an answer, but there is the national heavy vehicle driver shortage that I have heard you talk about in parliament previous to this as well. Can you please outline how this year's Budget is supporting the freight and logistic sector to fill this shortage?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, I can. We do have it and I'm just looking here. The government is committed to workforce and driver development and safety in the heavy vehicle industry sector and so registration of new drivers is very important.

In the Budget, we've provided $250,000 to the Tasmanian Transport Association to establish Tasmania's first industry-led heavy vehicle driver development program. This is to enable the heavy vehicle industry to have the drivers they need. Training of four new assessors employed by member organisations of the TTA is progressing well and is on track to be authorised by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. We are pursuing that so that we can get people trained up to deal with this driver shortage. It's not only with Metro, it's also in the trucking sector as well that we have this driver shortage.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels are absolutely critical to Tasmania's future transport needs. We need the uplift in passengers and freight to keep up with demand. Can you tell the committee when the new *Spirit of Tasmania IV* will commence its journey to Tasmania and when it will arrive?

Mr ABETZ - No, I can't, because there were so many matters that need to be determined. Work is still being undertaken in Finland as we speak, and until those works are completed you wouldn't want the ship to leave; then there has to be the working out of a route from Finland to Australia and the various ports that it might call into, and that is quite often to be determined day to day by assessments as to security, safety - like, we won't be taking it through the Suez Canal.

There are those matters where TT-Line will take advice from certain Australian agencies, I would imagine, to determine what is a safe port to refuel, to revictual, et cetera, before moving on to the next stage. So, for you to ask me what day it is going to leave port, I say it's going to leave port will be when the works that are still being done have been completed. Similarly, I can't give you a date of arrival because if there is advice that the ships should stay somewhere to avoid certain issues in the next port or something on the open sea, then these are matters that need to be determined by the management of TT-Line and that is why I invite you to ask those detailed questions of those who deal with it on a day-to-day basis, who can provide you with the information.

Mr WINTER - The ships are currently three years delayed; they were due in 2021.

Mr ABETZ - Look -

Mr WINTER -No, I haven't actually got to a question yet. How is it that these issues haven't been determined? Can you confirm that part of the consideration, or one of the things you're considering at the moment, is berthing the new ship in Singapore?

Mr ABETZ - I am not considering that and that is why it is important for you to ask these questions at the government business enterprise or state-owned corporations hearings because I cannot write to the CEO of TT-Line saying you will park the ship here or you will do whatever.

Mr WINTER - With respect, you've done that with berth 1. You wrote to them and directed them to do the work at berth 1.

Mr ABETZ - That was in relation to an infrastructure map, but in relation to the years delay of these vessels, I think we all know the circumstances of the delay, and to continually refer to the delays is quite frankly disingenuous and indicates -

Mr WINTER - It was a decision of your government to delay this; they tore up the deal with Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC).

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - Hold on, if I can continue, if you have so much information that you can provide all the answers, then do your press conferences, as you do on a regular basis, but if you are actually seeking information, then allow me to answer the questions. The delays in relation to the *Spirit*s are on the public record, people know why and people in the shipbuilding sector, people involved in these sorts of negotiations, know all the circumstances surrounding the delays. It is unfortunate but we are getting brand-new vessels and I would have thought you'd share the excitement of some new vessels, might I add, something that your party would have stopped.

Mr WINTER - What?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, your party did not want to proceed with the new the new vessels.

Mr WINTER - That's not true. Have marine pilots or the harbour master raised any concerns about the ability for the *Spirit of Tasmania IV* or *V* to operate in the Mersey?

Mr ABETZ - Once again, you would need to discuss that at the GBE hearing -

Mr WINTER - So, they have?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr WINTER - They haven't?

Mr ABETZ - No, neither of those, you're trying to put words into my mouth. I'm saying to you, discuss that at the GBE hearings because I don't pick up the phone to the harbour master and ask questions. That is for the TT-Line -

Mr WINTER - So, you're refusing to answer the question.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - It is not a refusal to answer a question, it is just that you are a little bit impatient and you want to ask questions today which are more properly asked at another forum where you will get complete transparency. Indeed, you have the Public Accounts Committee having a look into these matters as well as we speak.

Ms BURNET - Minister, just to go back to the bus rapid transit. The cost estimate is $445 million, so I am just curious as -

Mr ABETZ - Sorry, what is $445 million?

Ms BURNET - The bus rapid transit all up. Maybe you could confirm that, but I didn't really get much of an answer as to what -

Mr ABETZ - Can you assist me with that figure?

Ms BURNET - I think it was part of the WSP report. I am not sure; I'll have to get advice on that. Regardless, I have your mind focused on the bus rapid transit with that figure. Can you describe that first tranche of the bus rapid transit - where it is going from, the route and where it might land passengers who are coming into Hobart?

Mr ABETZ - There is a current strategic business case being developed. It is considering the staged implementation of a rapid bus network which could involve a two-lane busway on the transit corridor as well as transit lanes and stations on transport corridors to the south and east of Hobart. These are matters that are still under consideration.

Ms BURNET - It's about as elusive as that ticketing system, I think. It might take quite a long time to actually arrive. Is the point of the bus rapid transit system to move people into Hobart? Tell me what the thinking is behind it.

Mr ABETZ - What people want, and I think you indicated that earlier, is the certainty of transport and timeliness of it. That is why you have these transit lanes. In Adelaide, they have the O-Bahn which seems to work quite effectively. If we can have an efficient bus system for service, then that will encourage greater usage. What is the purpose of it? It is to get people as efficiently as possible from wherever they are to the point of destination, which one would think would be mainly in the city of Hobart, and then conversely, at the end of the day, mainly getting them back out of the city of Hobart back to where they came from. That is the purpose of these.

Ms BURNET - But we do not have any sort of delivery time as to when it might be completed?

Mr ABETZ - No, we don't, because what we need to do is get together a good strategic plan, work these things out and then partner with the federal government and deliver.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, in relation to Cubic and the common ticketing system, are you aware of the significant delay and technical difficulties in them delivering that kind of system in Queensland and New Zealand?

Mr ABETZ - I am aware of situations in Queensland and New Zealand. Mr Crane might be able to assist in that regard, but that is one of the good things when you are further down the line - those sorts of hiccups have been worked through by the time we get it -

Mr O'BYRNE - I beg to differ. They are yet to be worked through and they're two years down the track.

Mr CRANE - We are aware of some of the delays. I've had discussions with Cubic around New Zealand. At this stage, they anticipate between three to six months, but they're hoping to catch some of that up in terms of their delivery - around the TMR delays. I would point out that, as part of our contractual arrangements with Cubic, we have put in place liquidated damages for delay. They are incentivised to deliver within the agreed schedule within the contract we have with Cubic.

We are pushing pretty hard. We understand this is an important transformational piece for how people move around the state. We have some of those aspects covered off as best we can, but obviously, delays occur. I think to the minister's point, one of the major attractions of this is that there have been many examples of ticketing systems that have not been introduced well and have had problems. One of the reasons we are looking -

Mr O'BYRNE - The ticketing system in Queensland, yes.

Mr CRANE - at the Cubic system is that it is progressing. It has just been rolled out in the Sunshine Coast. As the minister pointed out, our system will be fully tested through Queensland. It is operating on their ferries; it's operating on other services. We will get the benefit of that testing et cetera, and it's about risk mitigation for the state.

Mrs BESWICK - Currently, we're looking at another month before we have a plan of action with the ports in Devonport for the *Spirit IV* and *Spirit V*. We have *Spirit IV* imminently arriving. As Mr Winter has pointed out, the likelihood of getting anything up and running in the next few months is very low. Are we considering what we are going to do with this ship that is obviously not going to have anywhere to dock? How could we perhaps make use of that time in some way?

Mr ABETZ - Believe it or not, these are questions that have exercised a lot of people's minds, and we are seeking the best of advice. It's a bit like AFL finals; everybody becomes a football coach this time of year. Everybody knows how the game will be played. Similarly, nowadays, it seems that everybody knows how to build a port, and how to do this and how to do that.

Mr WINTER - You don't.

Mr ABETZ - I think it's worthwhile to rely on some of those people who actually have genuine expertise in these matters, and that is what the government and I are now relying on to get the best of advice as to what we can do. As the Premier has previously said, and I'm more than happy to repeat it, that which has occurred is unacceptable and has let Tasmania down. What we can do is look backwards, or we can look forward and say, 'What are we going to do to fix these issues and get the best possible outcome for Tasmanians?' That is what the Premier and his government are committed to doing.

Ms BESWICK - Can you confirm that if the worst of the worst comes out in this report, to say it's going to be forever until the berth is ready, that we will have a plan B very quickly?

Mr ABETZ - All these things are being looked at. There are a variety of possibilities, and, of course, the ship will have to come into Hobart as well to be decked out for the local content, and there are a number of businesses here that will be benefiting from that. There are a number of matters that are going to be considered, and I am looking forward to the very best advice that we can get.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, I want to go to the state-of-the-art Cubic transport ticketing system, which Mr O'Byrne has asked some questions about. History says that whenever we deal with any of these electronic issues, there's some groundwork to overcome before they are a benefit. I don't want to answer this question for you, but recently I was in Queensland and to be able to tap-on, tap-off with the credit card is a substantial benefit. It was actually only over the weekend my wife came out with five Opal cards when we were last in Sydney. You have to find somewhere to buy a card, then have enough money on it and, at the end of the day, because you paid a deposit, you have to find somebody, somewhere if you want to recoup your deposit. I don't want to answer the question for you, but there are significant advantages in being able to tap-on, tap-off with a credit card. I'm just wondering if you could go through those benefits to all Tasmanians and visitors alike.

Mr ABETZ - On the last point first - 'visitors alike'. If you're a tourist in Tasmania, when this system is in place, you'll be able to catch the Derwent ferry and just tap on with your credit card, your phone, your watch, whatever your device or mechanism may be. You won't need a GreenCard which you have to procure and then put money into it and then try and cash it out if there's still money in it before you leave. All those sorts of inconveniences are removed. Also, for the Tasmanian commuters, you have your GreenCard. How much money's on it? When you tap it tomorrow morning, will there still be money on it? You won't have to -

Ms Burnet - Just make it free.

Mr ABETZ - Well, interesting, and I'll take that interjection because that is something I have thought about. Interestingly enough, the issues for public transport are certainty and reliability and not so much the cost, which is an interesting factor when you look at all these things. Look, the Cubic, or the common ticketing system, is something that's been in the pipeline for a long time, and it's good to be able to announce it and look forward to it operating for the convenience of our fellow Tasmanians and also for any visitor or tourist to Tasmania that seeks to avail themselves of public transport.

Ms BROWN - Minister, how many hydrogen buses were purchased and what was the cost?

Mr ABETZ - There's a good question. I believe there were four electric, if I recall correctly.

Ms BROWN - I was asking about hydrogen.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, you were asking about hydrogen. I saw one of them out of the depot the other day. Three. There are three hydrogen buses.

Ms BROWN - And cost?

Mr ABETZ - That I don't know.

Ms BROWN - Will you take it on notice?

Mr ABETZ - Once again, these are matters for Metro at the GBE hearings and they can answer those sorts of questions. They were given, I've been told - as I wasn't around at the time - that they were given specific funding, a special grant, for electric and hydrogen buses and they then have to acquit against that so the detail of that is with Metro rather than with DSG.

I can pass the buck. It was Mr Duigan, the minister for environment, who bought these buses, so you will need to ask there. It was not DSG. It was NRE was it?

Mr LIMKIN - No, it was DSG's climate change portfolio.

Mr ABETZ - Oh, DSG's climate change portfolio, there you go.

Ms BROWN - Has an electrolyser been purchased? What was the cost and who paid for it?

Mr ABETZ - That I can't answer and, once again, I invite you to ask that at the GBE hearings where people from Metro, the CEO and others will be able to provide that sort of information. Now that you've asked it, I am sure they'll be reading *Hansard* so when the GBE hearings come up, they will be well-briefed to be able to answer that question.

Ms BURNET - Minister, in relation to that $445 million figure, that was a pre-COVID figure and it was in the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report from 2020, for the record.

Mr ABETZ - To whom was that?

Ms BURNET – I think it was to the department from PwC. From the Hobart City deal.

Now my question, again, relates to modal shift. When we're looking at the stadium calculations, the shift is 40 per cent private vehicle, 60 per cent public, so not cars. The concern that I have is that, you mentioned before that at Blundstone Arena there's acres of buses and so forth, but really that that modelling is quite flawed. The 31 per cent share on bus is a minimum but will be very expensive to achieve, and the lack of developed public transport culture and services means local buses will be under extreme pressure. On AFL match Saturdays, the Metro networks normally fail, with extreme delays, because there's just not enough services. How do you expect to deliver that significant modal shift, given that the education campaign to do that isn't even costed?

Mr ABETZ - As I'm advised, according to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation's multi-purpose stadium transport study, rapid buses are only projected to provide around 3 per cent of the transport requirements for AFL games, whereas event buses are projected to provide around 25 per cent of the passenger transport, with regular bus services and ferries combined to provide a further 5 per cent of the transport requirements. That is the result of their study. With these things, there are always these very interesting studies. What

human behaviour does at the end of the day will be what we can all talk about, and see whether these studies were right or not.

Ms BURNET - There are other predictions or calculations that there'll be a 10 per cent taxi share, which seems excessive given the lack of taxis. Perhaps you can provide the committee advice on how many taxis are available, including access cabs, in the Hobart area?

Mr ABETZ - We're now moving on to taxis and the-

Ms BURNET – It is part of your remit.

Mr ABETZ - It is indeed, but it is in a different area.

Right. Currently, wheelchair accessible taxi licences: 57; current standard taxi licences: 535; and driver licence holders: 1209.

Ms BURNET - Across the state?

Mr ABETZ - And that is across the state, yes.

Ms BURNET - And wheelchair-accessible, I'd be surprised if we'd have half that number operating in Hobart. Do we have any idea of how many are actually operating?

Mr CRANE - That 57 is a statewide number. I'd have to double-check on the southern number.

Ms BURNET - But operating, actually operating.

Mr CRANE -Yes, it used to be around 70. We've tidied that up and we've noticed that there has been a little drop in numbers across the state in wheelchair-accessible taxis. But I would point out also, if I may, minister, the government introduced some changes to the wheelchair-accessible taxis to improve accessibility, which means that the lift fee for taxi operators is now a flat $20. We've also put in place some requirements of drivers to take wheelchair-accessible trips. We have seen some lift in the number of people being able to access wheelchair-accessible services due to those changes.

I believe that 10 per cent also includes access to Uber ride-sharing services, where there's a number of people providing that. That ride-sharing model is about people coming on board for events such as that to provide those services. So it is a combination of both.

Ms BURNET - But I understand -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - If I may quickly, before you ask your next question. I'm advised there are 34 in Hobart as of 30 June.

Ms BURNET - It would be good to have those figures, if I might request those for the committee.

Mr ABETZ - Sorry, which figures?

Ms BURNET - The figures as to how many are actually operating. It's something that comes up quite often with constituents in relation to access to access cabs. It's sometimes very difficult. There's only a small amount, when you're going to Bellerive, that use taxi and ride-share. So it'd be interesting to see how that figure of 10 per cent is arrived at.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, I think there is an extra payment.

Mr CRANE - We pay a $20 lift fee.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, $20.

Mr CRANE - Which has significantly increased from previous numbers to incentivise taxi drivers to undertake wheelchair-accessible trips. That, as I said, has seen a lift in the number of services provided across the state and in the regions.

Ms BURNET - Have you got that information available?

Mr CRANE - I think I have got some information on this, percentage increases in trips available. I will find that for you and pass it to the minister.

Mr O'BYRNE - It's good to see we finally got a couple of announcements around the Derwent ferries off the back of the federal government's 2021 infrastructure commitment. There has been some feedback about the location of at least one of the ferry terminals. These ferry terminals arguably need to work in concert with other modes of transport, like a hub and spoke model. The location that's been identified in Sandy Bay is very difficult for, there's no ability for buses to turn around to pick up and drop off. It is, essentially, by Sandy Bay Road. Also, whilst I think there was a discussion around Lindisfarne and Natone Street Pier, there were many questions asked why Rose Bay was not considered, given the other indicator - not just the hub and spoke, but you need to be where people live, so the population catchment. Could you talk through why those two places were chosen, what process was undertaken and do you believe they're the right spots?

Mr ABETZ - I will get the Secretary to deal with that.

Mr LIMKIN - State Growth continues to engage with each council, including Clarence Council, in relation to potential ferry terminal developments. You talked about Lindisfarne. This engagement is being undertaken by the River Derwent Ferry Expansion steering committee and, in some cases, in the Lindisfarne case, direct with the council. State Growth and the greater Hobart councils have steering committee meetings scheduled on a monthly basis, with meetings to work through. As the body for commissioning ferry services, State Growth has developed its decision-making guidelines in relation to the provision of extended service. This framework will be, and can be applied on all ferry terminals. My understanding is there were no issues identified through the draft master planning analysis, but the department will continue to work with our council partners as we firm up the locations through the period of time.

Mr O'BYRNE - Just clarifying that. So, there's a federal government grant to the state government, the state government has auspiced that money through the southern council

committee you have established and a decision has been made, particularly on the Sandy Bay and the Lindisfarne sites. My question was not about what process you went to necessarily. It's the feedback that they're the wrong spots.

Mr LIMKIN - As I've outlined, the department has worked through this with the councils in collaboration, using a decision-making guideline which looks at areas such as physical access, service area, demographics, suitable service types, ease of [inaudible], building criteria. We have also had criteria regarding marine sustainability, environmental capability [inaudible], accessibility and connectivity, congestion, network planning and land use services before a final decision has been made.

The advice I have is that the work has been quite substantial to make sure we are providing the best advice and best decisions both for the state government and councils. Ultimately, it is a joint decision-making framework and we've done that through that those mechanisms.

CHAIR - I think what we might do is have a break for five minutes.

Mr ABETZ - If I may, Chair, quickly in response to Ms Burnet, I have some extra information for wheelchair-accessible taxis. New regulations were introduced and the requirement for the wheelchair-accessible taxis to give priority to jobs for wheelchair-reliant passengers and to perform a minimum number of those trips per month. That minimum number is 30. Since the regulations, I'm advised that - these April, May, June figures, 2023, pre-reform, and then 2024 post-reform in April: there was a 21 per cent increase, so April 2023 on April 2024, that was a 21 per cent increase. May, similarly, it was an 11 per cent increase and June, a 12 per cent increase. So, these new regulations and incentives seem to work. When I give you the percentage figures, I can let you know that the number of trips we are talking about for April was from 2621 to 3180. So, we're talking about, if I might say, quite a few trips.

Ms BURNET - Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 7.45 p.m. to 7.50 p.m.

CHAIR - We shall commence.

Ms BROWN - Minister, surely you know if the electrolyser has been purchased?

Mr ABETZ - No, I don't.

Ms BROWN - Will you take it on notice then?

Mr ABETZ - No. I would invite you to ask that at Metro.

Ms BROWN - You're the Transport minister. You should know these things.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms BROWN - Can you give an update on the trial?

Mr ABETZ - Once again, that was given to Metro.

Ms BROWN - Do you know where the buses currently are?

Mr WILLIE - It's a line item for passenger service order.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - I am assuming the buses are at the depot. I don't have oversight of where each bus is in relation to the fleet of, I would imagine, hundreds of buses.

Ms BROWN - I'm specifically talking about the hydrogen buses.

Mr ABETZ - Yes.

Ms BROWN - There are not hundreds of them.

Mr ABETZ - I don't have oversight where each individual bus is. I'm sure you're asking about three of them, but I have no idea where they might be housed to this evening. If you go to Metro GBE scrutiny hearings, they'll be able to tell you where they were, on the night of the 23 September 2024 as you are so anxious to know where they are tonight.

Mr WILLIE - It is a passenger transport line item that helps fund Metro.

Ms BROWN - You seem to have a note.

Mr ABETZ - That was an answer to another question which I will mention after your next question.

Ms BROWN - Have any of these buses taken public transport passengers?

Mr ABETZ - Last time I checked, no, they haven't. Once again, that is something that you should check with Metro. At the time I was out at the Metro depot and had a look at one of these buses it had not been in service. If I may, just before you ask, I gave an answer before in relation to common ticketing to Mr O'Byrne and I've been told it was the then Secretary of the Department of State Growth who signed the actual direct procurement authorisation, not the minister.

Mr O'BYRNE - The minister would have been made aware.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, it was on the recommendation of the secretary.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thirty-five million is a bit beyond the delegation I would say.

Ms BURNET - Minister, the last household travel survey was published in 2019 and we are waiting for the 2023 survey to be released. Do we know when that is likely to be?

Mr ABETZ - Well, I did not really know there was such a survey. So, thank you very much, Ms Burnet, for advising all these wonderful things I am finding out.

Ms BURNET - Well, it is pretty important just to see where everybody comes from and how they get there. Points out how poor our public transport system is faring.

Mr ABETZ - It's being finalised but no date as yet for when it will be released.

Ms BURNET - Just in relation to active transport, we heard today from the Premier that the Tasman Bridge upgrades aren't favourable for pedestrians nor for cyclists. It's very likely that's going to be very limited and not conducive or any better for pedestrians or cyclists.

What are the priorities of the Better Active Transport Program which is funded in the current Budget at $1 million per year, this year and next? Because councils are very concerned about the funding running out before projects are complete. Just so that you know that the budget dedicated to cycling infrastructure reduces to just $500 000 per annum in forward Estimates.

Mr ABETZ - These are infrastructure matters and that's why the Premier was answering earlier this morning. I'll hand over to the Secretary who has oversight on all these things.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, Minister, and through you, increasing infrastructure for and the awareness of people walking, wheelchair and riding and active transport is pivotal to improving our transport made a choice in Tasmania.

Since 2015, the Tasmanian Government has made significant direct investment totalling $15.5 million into active transport infrastructure programs in relation to the Better Active Transport Grant Program. It was launched in 2023. Round one and two saw a total of $9.15 million approved to councils, with a total value of projects being $14.47 million.

The Greater Hobart Cycling Plan was endorsed by the then minister for Infrastructure and Transport in January 2023 and the Tasmanian Cycling Infrastructure Design guidelines we've undertaken targeted stakeholder engagement between November 2023 and August 2024. I understand they're approved and published in September.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is sort of one question on the TT-Line and it's not on the TT-Line's books. Did the state government in terms of the $80 million payment to the finished shipbuilder, at any stage, seek defect advice as to the appropriateness of that payment?

Mr ABETZ - Not that I'm aware of. As I understand it, the TT-Line board made that determination for the extra payment without - so, TT-Line did that during caretaker and yes, I will find out whether it be [inaudible] advice.

Mr O'BYRNE - Do I need to put that on notice or are you right to just report that back to the committee? At 8:55, I'll write it down if I haven't got it.

Mr ABETZ - Done.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you please outline how the government is supporting the heritage and tourism rail sector, please?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, the heritage and tourism rail sector is something which I found out was under my portfolio as well. I've had a chat with people on the west coast, and with the

West Coast Wilderness Railway and Don River Railway. I understand the president of the Legislative Council has a passing interest as well. I've been to the transport museum, et cetera. It is part and parcel of tourism and a lot of community interest.

One of the issues unfortunately has been public liability insurance. Following the review of the insurance requirements for operating heritage and tourism rail services on corridors leased from the Crown, the government has determined it can accept a lower level of public liability insurance for heritage rail operators while maintaining appropriate protection for the Crown. That has been of some real assistance to those operators.

Those tourists and heritage rail organisations have maintained a strong interest in opportunities to access the rail lines on the Tasmanian rail network. We are working with them to try to encourage that as much as possible, keeping in mind that they are pretty heavy on money, but they are also very popular.

Ms BROWN - Transit officers were announced by Minister Ferguson 18 months ago and he said that they would be on the ground in six months. There are still no transit officers on buses. When will they be implemented? Will you guarantee that they will be on buses by the end of 2024? Not security officers, transit officers.

Mr ABETZ - You're talking about transit officers?

Ms BROWN - Transit, yet.

Mr ABETZ - The pilot deployment of transit officers in southern Tasmania has been running since 3 April 2023 with the aim to make our bus network a safe and attractive choice for customers, and, might I add also, for the workers and the drivers - or operators as they're now called.

Ms BROWN - Will you guarantee that they will be rolled out across all buses by the end of 2024?

Mr ABETZ - They aren't rolled out on all buses. It's like you don't have a policeman at every street corner. They are placed on certain buses randomly, as I understand it.

The supplementary appropriation bill of $8.1 million was passed before your time and my time in this place. That's $2 million to extend deployment of transit offices statewide, $2.1 million to Metro to fund introduction of security screens, $2 million to Metro Tasmania to fund a wage rise to improve the attraction and retention of drivers, and $2 million for an IT system. Coming back, it was $2 million for transit officers.

As I understand it, transit officers have successfully de-escalated disruptive behaviours, including instances of yelling, arguments and vaping. During the pilot officers have been deployed to areas identified from incident data provided by general access bus operators. Examples of focus areas have included Rokeby, Glenorchy, Kingston, Huonville, Sorell and Bridgewater.

Ms BROWN - How many transit officers are actually on buses?

Unknown - They are security guards.

Mr WILLIE - He's calling security guards transit officers when they don't have the same powers.

Ms BROWN - They're not the same thing.

Mr ABETZ - There's a team of 10.

Ms BROWN - Ten transit officers? Will you be increasing those numbers?

Mr ABETZ - I'll be getting the advice from Metro. Once again, I would invite you to ask these questions -

Ms BROWN - This would come from you, though, wouldn't it, minister?

Mr ABETZ - at Metro, because they will be able to give you advice as to how the situations are developing. I would like to see a situation where transit officers are no longer needed. They weren't needed in the past. We have, unfortunately, had antisocial behaviours which has required them. I would like to hope that we can get back to where we were without the need for them. I've been advised that it's noted that despite occasions of antisocial behaviour, the southern Tasmania bus network operates largely without incident.

Ms BURNET - I don't know if your question was answered at all there.

Minister, given that about 3 to 6 per cent of Tasmanians are using public transport and a 49 per cent increase is needed for emissions reductions, will you extend the half-price fares program indefinitely to encourage Tasmanians to make the switch? Are you intending for that to be permanently in place?

Mr ABETZ - What we have said is that it was a cost-of-living measure, and we will have a look at all the information that is to be gleaned from that period of 12 to 13 months and see what the uptake has been, and we will inform ourselves as to if there's anything to be learned from that and how we can tweak or make adjustments to our public transport system from that. But we aren't going to make any announcements prior to us knowing what the information is.

Ms BURNET - Just in relation to the electric bus trial, electrification of buses has been around and used in other jurisdictions for quite some time. Can you just explain to me why there needs to be a trial of this form of vehicle as opposed to just introducing them across the fleet?

Mr ABETZ - If I recall correctly, and somebody at the table may well correct me, but I understand that the initial buses needed to be retrofitted because they did not comply with disability standards. So, that is why with these things - it is often good to ensure that you don't buy a job lot in the hope that everything's going to be okay, but you test and see, and I understand those adjustments have now been made. But, once again, if you want details of that, I would encourage you to go to the GBE hearings, scrutiny hearings, of Metro.

Ms BURNET - In relation to the ferries, is there any way that you can electrify those from the start?

Mr ABETZ - Talk to Bob Clifford, I'm sure he's got -

Ms BURNET - You're the minister.

Mr ABETZ - something in mind that. Look, that is not something that I have personally looked at, but more than willing to take advice on whether there are other modes of powering our ferries.

Ms BURNET - For short distances?

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, Chair. Minister, my question is around the issue of seatbelts in buses. In a letter - and I'll paraphrase, I'll try and be quick - to the Tasmanian Bus Association, you basically said there's not a lot of difference between not wearing a seat belt and standing up than actually having a seat belt. Are you still of that view, and what is the Road Safety Advisory Council's position on the matter?

Mr ABETZ - It is a good question. As I understand it, a bus that has 25 seats is required to have seatbelts and, if seatbelts are fitted in a vehicle, then by law it is required that you wear them. For buses that are over a 25-seat capacity, the advice is that a lot of the buses of that size have seats and structures that make the wearing of seatbelts not as important as it otherwise might be.

I'm told there's no legislative requirement for buses, including student only or general access buses, to have seatbelts fitted. Research shows that travelling on buses without seatbelts is safe due to the size and construction of larger buses' effectiveness in protecting passengers. Small buses used on school bus services need to be fitted with seatbelts. Small buses are buses with 25 seats or fewer.

Mr O'BYRNE - A lot of the regional services travel on non-A-grade roads at higher speeds. Could you explain the rationale behind the Australian Design Rules, which mandated seatbelts for non-route buses from 2010? If seatbelts were deemed unnecessary for safety, why would they have done that?

Mr ABETZ - You would have to ask them. Whether these buses travel at high speed as you assert-

Mr O'BYRNE - Higher speeds.

Mr ABETZ - I would like to think that the drivers engaged in driving our fellow citizens and students around would drive to the conditions.

Mr O'BYRNE - Could you clarify the inconsistency in seatbelt requirements where many chartered buses for school services managed by DECYP must have seatbelts but DSG managed buses do not?

Mr ABETZ - That's a very good question and I don't know what the differential is. Somebody who runs a school bus service might be able to answer that, I don't know.

Mr O'BYRNE - You're the minister, you run them all.

Ms BROWN - Federal compliance.

Mr ABETZ - I will hand over to Denise McIntyre.

Mr LIMKIN - I am happy to carry that one.

Mr ABETZ - I will hand over to the secretary.

Mr LIMKIN - I'm advised that DECYP does charter certain school buses. Those are directly chartered by DECYP with their individual contractors, but the services DSG provides, which are all school buses and the school bus services, do not have seatbelts. As the minister said, there is no legislative requirement. As the purchaser of services for seatbelts, DSG makes sure we comply with the law. At this stage we comply with the law, which there is no regulation.

Mr O'BYRNE - That's just stunning, isn't it?

Mr WILLIE - You comply with the law but you made the laws.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, I understand that in your electorate of Franklin - marvellous electorate, of course - there was funding for the Gordon jetty in the Budget. Can you please outline how this will benefit the members of Franklin in their area?

Mr ABETZ - In 2018, if I recall correctly, the jetty was burnt and was no longer operational, as a result of which representations have been made and we've made money available in the Budget to enable the rebuild of the Gordon jetty.

Those of us who know that area. I think there are three representatives of Franklin around the table, the Gordon Jetty is used by the substantial cohort of people who live south of Margate. There's a good jetty and boat ramp at Margate, but then also people coming in from the Huon side. It's an important camping site as well. There is a lot of recreational use of that jetty. That's an important community amenity and I'm delighted we've got some money to be able to rebuild that community facility.

Ms BROWN - Minister, 10 transit officers was not the commitment that was made by your government. Are you planning to replace the current security guards on buses with transit officers?

Mr CRANE - Is the question are we going to employ our own transit officers, just to clarify? We have no plans to do that at this stage. We'll be looking at the powers of our transit officers, who are employed by Wilson - that is a fact - in terms of what additional powers they can be provided in terms of directions, et cetera, for leaving buses when there's a circumstance.

Our focus at the moment is to ensure they are properly trained and they satisfy the Transport Commission that they've got the appropriate skills to undertake those additional powers which relate to asking people for their name, direction, and under the legislation we've also increased the banning capacity. We can increase bans up to six months for poor behaviour on buses. Our goal is to ensure that our transit officers are trained under the requirements to

have those additional powers. They are strategically placed across the southern network; that is the amount for the southern network.

Ms BROWN - I understand that, but that's not the commitment that was made at the election and, with all due respect, the security on the buses do not have the same powers as security guards when it comes to curbing antisocial behaviours.

Mr LIMKIN - Not at this stage, but we're planning to provide those security guards, transit officers, the additional training to enable them to take on additional powers.

Ms BROWN - Okay. Just one more question. Are their pay rates the same, because if not, they should be.

Mr LIMKIN - It's a contracted service from Wilson, so I'm not sure what their pay rates are. I'm not quite sure what that question is relating to. We contract the service to provide transit officers on buses for a number of hours per week. We target those hours and those services based on feedback from our employees Where there are incidences, we work very closely with Tasmania Police on matters relating that are highly escalated, so if an issue becomes seriously escalated we refer those matters to Tasmania Police. A lot of the incidents we've identified are in bus malls and that is a space where Tasmania Police operate.

Ms BURNET - Minister, you talked a bit about DDA compliance with electric buses and that's why you might undertake a trial before purchasing; I understand that. The bus stops and DDA compliance is woeful across most of Tasmania, so I'm just wondering what you're doing to rectify the situation and making bus stops up to standard, up to DDA compliance.

Mr ABETZ - We do have a program and somebody will soon tell me where to find the detail of that.

Ms BURNET - I see there's $2.5 million, about $10 million over four years for that.

Mr ABETZ - We made a 2021 election commitment of up to $10 million to provide all-access all-weather bus stops at priority locations. That represents the largest single injection of funding for bus stops and is delivering improvements to infrastructure across the board.

I understand that smaller councils, in particular, have received grants to date, although Launceston City Council has been a keen participant and has received grants for a total of 68 stops across the two rounds and has completed 27 to date. Some larger southern councils have refuted having any responsibility for bus stop provision and maintenance, and either have not made application or sought bespoke arrangements for participation which have not been accepted.

We have a fund and round three of the program opened in August of this year. State Growth has reached out to those councils that have not previously participated in the grant program to encourage them to apply for round three. High priority bus stop upgrades along key state road corridors are also being addressed with this election commitment funding. Is there a lot of work to do due to neglect over decades? Yes there is, but we have made the largest amount of money ever available for that and we're trying to rectify the situation. However, we won't be able to do it overnight.

Ms BURNET - As a follow-up question -

Mr LIMKIN - Sorry, Ms Burnet, I just want to add that the Department of State Growth takes disability inclusion really seriously. We have spent the last two years working across the department to ensure we had tangible actions for disability inclusion. Some of those include, as the minister said, improving infrastructure at bus stops and engaging with the minister and Premier's Disability Advisory Council to help us design these programs. We are committed to creating accessibility across all of our portfolios because it is really important that our community has that access.

Ms BURNET - I'm very pleased to hear that.

Mr ABETZ - I can also add, if I may, 162 bus stops across the state will have been upgraded to full compliance with disability standards over the first two rounds of the grant program. I think Mr O'Byrne asked me a question first of all to do with Oakdale, but then generally the disability sector. Minister Jo Palmer and I held a roundtable dealing, amongst other things, with disability access to transport and public transport.

Ms BURNET - So 162 bus stops, that's fantastic. How many bus stops would there be in total across Tasmania?

Mr ABETZ - I would anticipate - who does the bus stop counting?

Ms HEYDON - We'll come back and confirm.

Mr CRANE - The majority of bus stops are on local roads.

Ms BURNET - What does that mean?

Mr CRANE - That is one of our challenges with councils, and as the minister alluded to, I would like all councils to participate in the program.

Ms BURNET - Well, there's a lot of transport property in your electorate, minister, as there is in the northern suburbs of Hobart.

Mr O'BYRNE - Just before I ask the question, I want to confirm that I've been provided with advice from the secretary that my question for the TT-Line and DFAT advice needs to be taken on notice, and I've done that.

My question is a follow-up to member for Franklin Meg Brown's question on the transit officers. My question has always been why has the department engaged the service and not Metro? Metro is the organisation responsible for running the buses and providing safe, secure environments, et cetera. Why did they not have full responsibility to direct and instruct where to go? Why has the department engaged all the contracted services? It seems a bit confusing to me.

Mr CRANE - We engage those services because although Metro is the largest provider of services, we have a number of other service providers, such as Tassielink and others. We're looking to provide a service more broadly across the whole GA network. That is one of the

major reasons why we've taken that on board. We work very closely with operators including Metro around where we need to deploy those operators.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, the current security officers who are trialling the transit officer role are now taking trips on private buses as well, on Kinetic and others, or are they, as my understanding is, just taking on Metro?

Mr CRANE - There may be some confusion but Kinetic and Tassielink provide similar services to Metro and they are contracted to provide general access services, the same as Metro. They are operating and when we can, we put them on Tassielink and Kinetic services.

Mr O'BYRNE - So those transit officers are going on Tassielink and others already?

Mr CRANE - Yes, and we have quite a responsive approach when, unfortunately, an incident occurs. We look to put those officers on those buses in response to that and we work closely with our operators.

Mr O'BYRNE - When you move from the trial to the more permanent status, is it by virtue of the practice that it will now be run by the department and not run by any of the services? Will there be a user pays principle in terms of the cost incurred with that?

Mr CRANE - The government has fully funded the trial and there's no cost to operators. If that were to change we'd work through that with operators and the government, but at this stage it has been fully funded by government.

Mr O'BYRNE - When does the trial end?

Mr CRANE - The trial will be ending fairly shortly and we'll be looking toward the government around the expansion of that service.

Mr ABETZ - I may, quickly, in answer to Ms Burnet's question, my punt that there were thousands of bus stops was proven to be correct another few times, but my guess is a correct 3500 general-access bus stops in Tasmania.

Ms BURNET - Thank you. So, it's only really a drop in the ocean.

Mr ABETZ - Oh, it is, and we are mindful of the task that's ahead of us and the need for co-operation from local governments as well.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, my question is around the old two-stroke driven petrol-powered cycles. What's the government doing to regulate those noisy and unsafe petrol-powered bikes? You can't call them push bikes anymore because they've got a motor attached to them.

Mr ABETZ - They are a genuine concern to the community; one, the noise they make and two, the safety issue for the rider as well as the community at large, because they attach these sort of lawnmower motors or whatever to these push bikes, but the braking system is not fit for purpose when it's powered with an engine of that nature. We as the government have promulgated regulations which will give some grace period that will ensure that if they are classified as motor vehicles, they can get them classified, but then they'll have to have them

registered, et cetera, and they'll have to be checked to be of a particular safety standard. Chances are a lot of them would not pass that fundamental test. I'm just trying to find the date; I think it's the beginning of next year that they will be banned. What we're trying to do is protect mainly the young users, the public and the amenity of the community to ensure that they don't have to put up with that noise. We are doing what we can as a result of representations from the public as to the nuisance that they cause, but we are giving some leeway so people can get them either registered or upgraded properly to overcome the difficulties of which I spoke.

Mr SHELTON - Obviously they'd never complied with the ADR regulations, the Australian Design Rules, it's obvious.

Ms BROWN - Minister, the Liberal government has committed over $3 million each year for the More Buses initiative. Is all of that money going to Metro Tasmania or will some be going to the private sector?

Mr ABETZ - That money goes to all general access service providers. We contract with Metro, Tassielink, Kinetic, Calow's, Manions', and whoever else.

Ms BROWN - How much of that money will be going to Metro Tasmania?

Mr CRANE - We're in the process of doing a review of the southern network, particularly in the south. We've started that work and, in that review, we're looking to try to make sure that services get the maximum benefit. That review will enable us to determine where those additional funds will go. We're not yet sure exactly where they'll go, but it'll be greatly appreciated and will inform the outcomes of the review of the southern network.

Ms BROWN - Okay. Will that be a public document once it's - ?

Mr CRANE - Yes.

Ms BROWN - Great. Also, your government has committed $5 million to Metro Tasmania for the bus replacement program. What type of buses will be purchased?

Mr CRANE - That is probably a matter for Metro, but I would assume, at this stage, while we're in the middle of trials for electric buses, it'll still probably be Euro VI standard buses.

Ms BROWN - And so how much - just one more question.

CHAIR - I've been pretty lenient and the number in the room's dwindling, so I think we'll be back to you very quickly.

Mr ABETZ - In fact, I've just been advised that that's a reimbursement for buses already purchased.

Mr CRANE - Yes, my apologies. That's correct, minister.

Mr ABETZ - Is it? Right. Yes. Handy things, these screens. They just throw up answers. I don't know where they come from.

Ms BURNET - Minister, traffic congestion and air pollution are two major factors that affect transport and our health generally. I'm just interested to know what sort of incentives you might be considering in relation to active transport, such as e-bikes or personal mobility devices. Are there any sort of incentives and subsidies in that area?

Mr ABETZ - I've just been advised that those incentives are with the minister who's got responsibility, and that is Mr Duigan.

Ms BURNET - Right, okay. I suppose, to that broader question, what are you doing to tackle traffic congestion and air pollution in relation to active transport and encouraging that?

Mr ABETZ - In relation to air pollution, the quicker cars can be on and off the roads, the better. As a result, the road works that we're undertaking are part and parcel of that. In relation to active transport, where it is appropriate, we seek to encourage walking paths, et cetera.

We've just had some that I think were announced in Snug and Kingston. I'm just trying to think where else. We've got the one along with the north-west coast at Cooee - is it Cooee way, a cycle and walking path there? We do have a program of seeking to make that -

Ms BURNET - And how do you measure that? How do you measure the effectiveness of the uptake of active transport?

Mr ABETZ - I suppose that's one of those questions, like how do you measure the uptake of a road widening or a brand-new road or a bypass road. It's very hard to determine. I don't know if there's some metric that is used by somebody.

So, we are developing a strategy, Secretary? The Tasmanian Walk, Wheel, Ride strategy, with a public consultation proposed from late October for four weeks.

CHAIR - Mr O'Byrne.

Mr ABETZ - We bounce to Mr O'Byrne a bit too often, I think, Chair.

Ms O'BYRNE - When the Chair calls, I have to answer. When bus services are contracted in certain areas to deliver services there are penalties if they fail to deliver those services. What are they?

Mr ABETZ - That would be the contractual terms determined by the Department of State Growth and the provider. Mr Crane or deputy secretary, do you have the detail?

Mr O'BYRNE - Is there a framework?

Mr ABETZ - I understand there is. Ms Heydon?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, it will depend on each of the contracts, but in relation to Metro Tasmania, we have had funds of $2.525 million withheld since January 2023 in relation to their performance.

Mr ABETZ - I believe the question is the metric that's used. Is that in the contract?

Ms HEYDON - It's in the contract, yes, it's specific to each of the contracts.

Mr O'BYRNE - Just let me be clear. You have Metro that's struggling to deliver the services and there are budgetary challenges, and you've withheld over $2 million in penalties? Is that right? I understood that they were being waived.

Ms HEYDON - No, we've withheld funds since January 2023.

Mr CRANE - They're not penalties. They're the costs they have avoided by not, unfortunately, being able to deliver services. We're not paying for a service that isn't provided. Only parts of those costs, so they're not a penalty as such.

Mr O'BYRNE - Okay. What's the total withheld payments to other providers?

Mr CRANE - Zero. Other operators have been close to the wind a couple of times but they still continue to deliver their services.

Mr O'BYRNE - How was that accounted for in the budget papers then, because I've not seen that line item - withheld payments?

Mr ABETZ - Withheld payments, you don't budget for those things. It's under a contractual arrangement.

Mr CRANE - It's seen as an expense item. We pay less as part of our contract, so it's part of the overall expenditure we use for general access services.

Mr SHELTON - How is the government supporting local government - local government's dear to my heart - to improve outcomes for vulnerable road users?

Mr ABETZ - To the former distinguished mayor of the Meander Valley Council and member for Lyons, the government has a program to improve road safety and we are working on 40 projects around Tasmania to improve safety on local and rural roads. The funding comes from the latest rounds of our Vulnerable Road User Program and the Safer Rural Roads Program, both part of our Towards Zero Action Plan 2020-24. Whilst you have to have the ambition of having zero, the campaign is called Towards Zero, I think we all look forward to the day when there might not be a road fatality. We know that driver behaviour is an important factor, but also the standard of our roads is an important factor. That is where we are seeking to partner with local government to assist in dealing with some of those unsafe aspects of the local road network.

Ms BROWN - Minister, your government has committed $1.4 million for the electric bus trial. How much of that money will be committed to educating mechanics to fix the buses when they break down?

Mr ABETZ - That is such a detailed management question. I invite you to ask that of Metro.

Ms BROWN - Okay. Currently, how many mechanics are educated to fix buses like the electric buses?

Mr ABETZ - Once again, you would have to ask Metro that question. The detail of the qualifications of each of the mechanics is not something I am briefed on a daily basis. Keep that for the government business enterprise scrutiny.

Ms BROWN - Let's try another one. There was $14 million allocated to Metro Tasmania to help with the attracting and retention of drivers. Whilst I'm pleased to see this money and some sort of strategy for retaining drivers, was there any thought into giving our private operators any funding, if $14 million is going to Metro Tasmania?

Ms HEYDON - We work with all the operators to understand what their needs are in relation to bus drivers. I can say that the issue is predominantly in Metro. That doesn't mean that we're not actively engaged with other operators if they feel they've got a need as well, but our focus is on working with Metro.

Mr ABETZ - And would it be fair to say its Metro Southern mainly?

Ms HEYDON - Yes.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, so Metro Launceston and Burnie don't seem to have the issue of driver attention and drivers. I'm not a social scientist, but I think in smaller regional communities and with Tassielink, the other providers, they seem to have a more stable workforce than the one provider that does the city and suburbs services.

Ms BURNET - Minister, I think we're on the home straight.

Mr ABETZ - We can finish right now.

Ms BURNET - No, no, we are still bringing you right to the end. Bus services in southern Tasmania are fairly poorly connected and there's a lot of frustration, particularly in regional areas, in relation to reliability of services and the function of the bus network. Often you have, from the far reaches of Franklin or the Tasman Peninsula, you might have a bus trundling up with some passengers up to Huonville and that bus may go all the way to Hobart, whereas there may be a hub-and-spoke approach to bus services. I am wondering about the thinking and logic behind, perhaps, altering that. This is even to the point where ferries and Metro services aren't even joined up on the eastern shore, so you can't go to Rosny. What's your plan to fix some of those things? It's not a Dorothy Dixer but it sounds like one.

Mr ABETZ - The issue of Metro linking up with the ferries on the eastern shore, in particular, is something that I have raised with Metro as to what can be done to achieve a linkage there. In general terms, there's a Greater Hobart network review and State Growth is fast-tracking planning for a review of the Greater Hobart bus network in response to the current driver shortage and service reliability issues. In the first stage, the department will focus on evaluating and adjusting current service offerings to maximise service reliability and make better use of existing resources.

We have that review ending I can let you know that I bounced an idea with Metro as to school bus services, but I've been told that that is very, very difficult. But if there's a school bus, let's say coming up from Dover to Huonville, whether general passengers could potentially use that bus -

Ms BURNET - Like they do in Victoria.

Mr ABETZ - I've been told that there are certain issues with that, but I would like to think that that's the sort of thinking that I think you and I would agree on -

Ms BURNET - Absolutely.

Mr ABETZ - would be helpful. Running a bus costs a lot of money and if we can make the services that are provided more efficient - and look, you do then have to protect school children, et cetera, so there are those issues as well which were of concern as expressed to me but I would like to think that we could make it work. Any ideas are gratefully received and looked upon by myself because I agree with you, we have to get the best possible use.

Another thing that I floated, just for what it's worth, which also got bounced, was our rural services. I'll pick on Tassielink, I think they come in from Bicheno or Swansea in the morning and then the bus sits there at the Tassielink depot until the afternoon when it returns. Could it possibly be used on a few suburban runs during the course of the day rather than sitting idle in a bus depot? That's the sort of thinking that I'm trying to encourage. I'm sure there are a whole lot of ideas in my head that, in practical terms, mightn't be as easy to implement as I might think, but I think they're worth exploring.

Ms BURNET - There's certainly a lot of social isolation associated with those bus services that aren't available from places like Dodges Ferry. I've spoken to the mayor of Sorell in relation those services and coming into that regional centre rather than the service up to Hobart is more important in some ways.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, Chair. My question, minister, is an extension of the previous line of questioning. I've written to you about this issue. The concept of, and the underlying principle of providing school bus services, is to enable children to get to school and get an education. Down at Dover, there's a circumstance where the contracting decision for the size of a bus has made it difficult for a number of families to have a bus pass by their door or within their community, meaning tens of families and a lot of kids are not accessing or not able to access a public bus service along Kent Beach Road there. That, to me - I mean, these issues were raised with the department back in 2018-19; there was a change, and that was accommodated. The issues with the recontracting have occurred again. The issues have been raised with you and your department but no change has been made. Many families are either opting out of the public school or they're finding it very difficult to get their children to school because of a lack of a safe bus service.

Mr ABETZ - I've been made aware of that situation, not only through your correspondence, but also by representations, and I have passed them on. The Department of State Growth contracts a school bus service between Geeveston and Dover District School via Esperance Coast Road using a 39-seater bus with no standing capacity. In 2022, an additional bus service between Geeveston and the school commenced. Operating by the Huon Highway is a temporary service to address capacity issues on the Esperance Coast Road service. This used a larger 58-seater bus. The additional service was introduced to allow time for the department to assess the demand for the service and to consider the suitability of having a larger bus travel along the Esperance Coast Road. An independent assessment report was finalised in early 2023 and confirmed that Esperance Coast Road is generally considered suitable for a

58-seater bus. The Huon Valley Council has also confirmed that the road is not subject to a load limit. The department considered increasing the size of the bus travelling, but based on passenger counts conducted in terms 1 and 2, made the decision to remove the additional bus service at the start of term 3. This was on the basis that passenger count showed the 39-seat bus travelling along Esperance Coast Road would be able to cater to expected demand. However, capacity issues emerged again early in term 3, and on the basis of feedback received from the school community, a decision has been made to reinstate the additional Huon Highway bus service in the afternoons only until the end of this school year. This allows further time for state growth to work with DECYP on options.

Mr O'BYRNE - On that, the issue is the families that reside along Kent Beach Road. They have no service and some of the decisions are made that the bus travels past them and then is offering to come back, but then the kids will be late for school. The overwhelming number of parents in that community are upset about the lack of consultation and the lack of acknowledgement of their issues.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you for that, that will be noted.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, with another person sadly being added to our road fatality numbers today, can you please provide an update on the government's automated traffic enforcement program?

Mr ABETZ - We have the sobering statistic that on average 35 people killed and another 276 people seriously injured on our roads each year. Whilst they are numbers, they impact individuals, families, communities. We try to modify and moderate driver behaviour; we had the automated traffic enforcement program introduced in late 2022 and it has shown positive signs of reducing both general vehicle speeds and illegal speeding on our roads. Over the course of the program, the amount of speed enforcement has been increased and new technology to detect illegal mobile phone use, seat belt non-compliance and driving in an unregistered vehicle has also been introduced. Between October 2022 and 30 June 2024, the program has issued approximately 79,000 speeding, 3200 seat belt, 1500 mobile phone and 1400 registration traffic infringement notices.

The government initially funded the program as a trial for two years and the trial was extended for a third year through a combination of road safety levy and state budget funding commitments. During the trial, there have been many learnings - terrible term - and challenges. While most people chose to do the right thing, some people have chosen to maliciously vandalise the camera systems and abuse and threaten camera operators, which is a matter of regret. It is a program that I think has worked overall to help modify their behaviours.

Ms BROWN - Thank you, Chair. Minister, you yourself have said incidences on the buses are on the rise. When a driver has experienced a traumatic event due to an incident when they're on the job, do you believe they should be allowed a couple of days to get themselves right before they're expected back on the job?

Mr ABETZ - As a matter of principle, yes. It always has to be tested on the basis of the extent of the incident, but there was somebody who drove a bus who had a rock go through the front passenger side. It was one of those bizarre things. I was about to say thank goodness, you don't want rocks at all, but if it had been a metre the other way, that driver would have been seriously injured. I think that driver had at least a week off and the employer had no difficulty

with that. I sat down and spoke with him over the phone for quite some time whilst he was on leave and then caught up with him later for a cup of coffee and to hear his story firsthand.

Our bus drivers, operators, do a great job. They provide a very important community service and they deserve to be respected by patrons, other road users and people in the community. Hopefully, there will be less of the sort of behaviour they been subjected to. Services out of Bridgewater and Gagebrook have been resumed and we hope there won't be any more of those rock-throwing incidents. I would have thought in general terms that if an employee has been subjected to a substantial situation, some time off to recover would be appropriate.

Ms BROWN - Just to clarify, you support critical incident leave when it comes to our drivers.

Mr ABETZ - If that is the terminology and if that is, for want of a better term, a mental workplace injury, then you have sick leave and other leave available to you and hopefully the employer would cooperate with a worker to ensure they can recover appropriately to take on the tasks they are given with appropriate confidence and satisfaction.

Ms BROWN - Tasrail has said in the past financial year that the number of reported near-misses at level crossings between trains and vehicles or pedestrians has increased from 39 to 68. What are you doing to support these drivers after these incidents?

Mr ABETZ - I will say once again that questions about Tasrail should be going to the GBEs. I don't have any oversight of Tasrail.

Ms BURNET - Minister, in relation to our most vulnerable road users, children, there's the chance to make our roads safer around schools. We've had a number of incidents and one fatality earlier this year in my electorate. I'm wondering what sort of approach the government would consider in relation to improving safety around schools. I did write to you earlier, so I'm just wondering what you might do.

Mr ABETZ - I would take advice from those that are expert in the area. I think each school and its location and roads, et cetera, make it a separate situation. We have the 40 kilometre per hour speed limit during, beginning and after school. We encourage people to be mindful of pedestrians generally, but especially around schools. We have the lollipop people at school crossings to assist our children to cross the road safely and we have a number of mechanisms in place.

Mr LIMKIN - The department takes this very seriously, both for the children but also for the school crossing guards who are our employees. I have recently written to the acting secretary of DECYP to ask her to communicate with all schools to make sure parents are informed about the importance, not just for our school crossing guards, but also the importance for their children in that area. The department is also currently developing a media campaign to go out in the future. I think 'Love 40' is the wording we're using and it's really focused on supporting our staff, but also supporting children's safety from motorists. It is a key focus that we have as a collective Department of State Growth executive and I know my colleagues in DECYP also have it.

Ms BURNET - I suppose the concern I have is that there are school zones or zones in front of schools which are 80 kilometres per hour. If you look at Montrose Bay, it doesn't drop to 80 kilometres and whilst parents and carers may be advised not to pick up from the Brooker Highway, it still occurs so it doesn't always work. Are you familiar with the 8 to 80 campaign and what UK schools do and have a walking zone around some schools and would you be interested in trialling such a safety campaign?

Mr ABETZ - I don't know about it so I can't say that I would be willing to trial it, but I will seek to get a briefing from somebody in the department, or from yourself, as to what that looks like and see whether it's got potential application.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, the provision of public transport is fundamentally important when you look at urban design and how our communities grow. For example, when you get further out on the network and subdivisions pop up, it's really important that public transport is provided to them. One infill suburb that is being sort of left alone is in our electorate of Olive Grove on the way to Risdon Vale. That is a 15-minute downhill walk to the closest bus stop. That community now has hundreds of houses, many families and people who don't have their own car or rely heavily on other modes of transport. If we continually build these suburbs and all the government mantras will provide the services but then the services aren't provided, aren't people feeling a little bit betrayed by the government sort of mantra?

Mr ABETZ - I won't take the bait or agree to your classification but I think you make a valid point that new subdivisions will look for the benefit of public transport, and Olive Grove is one, Spring Farm is another down my neck of the woods in Franklin and people are asking. I met with two local councillors to discuss that and with the Greater Hobart bus network review that will all be taken into account to see how we can service some of those areas. I am told that some of those areas don't necessarily have much uptake in relation to public transport, albeit a fair bit of uptake in relation to school buses because of the need for kids to get to and from school. But for general public access, not so much.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is hard to catch a bus when it doesn't go past your place.

Mr ABETZ - What the department and those that make the decisions have to try to judge is whether there is sufficient demand and a requirement for a bus service. As I think you would know from your former roles as the minister, you can provide a service and if it's not taken up, good luck trying to remove it. Genuine consideration, robust consideration, needs to be had. That said, the more we can expand the network, the better.

Mr O'BYRNE - That community did have quite a large petition about three or so years ago calling for a bus service, and whilst I understand you're going through a review, it's three years after they first raised it. Nothing's happened. You can understand they're quite frustrated.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you for drawing that to my attention. I wasn't aware of the petition. Like my colleague, Ms Brown, I wasn't aware.

Ms BROWN – Oh, I was aware.

Mr ABETZ - I'm a newbie here, so I wasn't aware of that, but Ms Brown just corrects the record and she says she knew about it. You got one up on me.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, you mentioned at the start in your opening statement about the take-up of park and ride facilities. Can you please provide an update to the committee on the next tranche of facilities?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, that I can. I think the Premier talked about park and ride at Huntingfield and Firthside, down Kingston way, and how that seems to have been taken up well. I availed myself of that service one morning and it's a great service. Everybody just piles onto the bus at the one place, then it's straight into town. It's a good service. Because of the importance, or the benefit, of that service, we are expanding. We're looking at Claremont, Midway Point and Rokeby for other sites. We were also talking with the West Tamar Council for Legana.

In relation to the ones I've just mentioned, the detailed designs are now well advanced, with the designs being informed by the comments received during public consultation. That's the Claremont, Midway Point and Eastern Shore-Rokeby ones. The tender for construction of the Midway Point and Claremont facilities will be advertised later this year, with works anticipated to start in early 2025, and construction of the Rokeby facility is expected by mid-2025. The department will evaluate the success of these park and rides to inform decisions around future park and ride locations and facilities. From what I can see at Kingston, where the car park is about 50 per cent full, Firthside 85 per cent full, that indicates that there is a growing demand within the community for such a service. Where we've trialled it, we think it's worthwhile expanding the network, and that's what we're doing.

Ms BROWN - I just want to quickly circle back to some questioning earlier around the security screens. Can you confirm that the current screen has a glare issue and what other screens that you're looking at?

Mr ABETZ - Once again, these questions ought to be asked at the Metro GBE. I'm not briefed as to all the details, although I understand that there were various screens trialled by Metro to get driver feedback on them, but where Metro has landed on that, I don't know. I'm sure Metro will be able to give you all the details.

Ms BROWN - To the best of your knowledge, though, the current model isn't working. Is that fair to say?

Mr ABETZ - That I can't confirm, and I'm not sure that there is a 'current' model. I think they trialled something. I'm not sure if they trialled a number of them. Mr Crane, are you able to assist?

Mr CRANE – Through you, minister, I'm not fully across it, but I do believe they trialled a number of different screens due to some challenges, and they're working through consultation with their drivers to make sure they meet all the appropriate standards.

Ms BURNET - What is State Growth's involvement in the trial with the security screens?

Mr ABETZ – As I understand it, money was provided, then it's for Metro and Metro management to work that out with their drivers. That's why these questions are best asked at the Metro scrutiny hearings.

Ms BURNET - Minister, the Circular Economy Huon - you might be aware of it - Jerry White and former councillor Jenny Cambers-Smith are heavily involved and interested in transit and transport options. One of their concerns that they constantly raise is that ability to move from 'point A to point B' in the Huon Valley, through Kingston and up to the city. They wanted to do a trial on transport, or transit, on-demand. Could you give the committee some answers as to whether that kind of trial is a possibility?

Mr ABETZ - Any trial is a possibility. I'm not sure what we are currently minded to engage.

Ms HEYDON - I'll say that we don't have on-demand trials planned. Part of what we're looking at with the broader Greater Hobart bus review is to understand what the needs are. That could be, what is the best response - be it a traditional sort of route bus service or an alternative. It is part of the conversation we'd be looking to have, because part of that network review will be talking with communities and talking with key stakeholders. I will say that we're open to hearing and part of that will then look at, from a design perspective, how we can best meet the needs of the community.

Ms BURNET - I'm very pleased to hear that you're open to that, because it's a very simple and cost-effective approach. Whilst the Southern Outlet lanes are a very expensive option, it is really important that it's considered - all of those public transport and modal shifts are considered.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, what's the total value of consultancies in your output areas?

Mr ABETZ - That is a very good question. I don't know the answer to that. Secretary, do you have - put you on the spot? We might have to get back to you on that.

Mr O'BYRNE - Take that on notice?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, take that on notice, because you're asking in my areas.

Mr O'BYRNE - For this output.

Mr ABETZ – Yes. The Department of State Growth, I imagine, has a whole host of consultancies. Those that relate to me, I'm not sure.

Mr LIMKIN - Minister, we would have to take it on notice. We only have the information on a department basis, unless my finance team, who are still here at this hour, are working it through.

Mr O'BYRNE - We could just take it on notice. I'm happy to take it on notice.

Ms BROWN - Minister, will you ensure that the department has the funding to allow for fair and reasonable cost increases to be applied to all Tasmanian GA and school bus contractors?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, we will make sure that reasonable funds are available for contracting. These are commercial negotiations that will take place, or have taken place, in some cases.

Ms BROWN - Would you like to provide any more information?

Mr ABETZ – I suppose each one is, Mr Crane?

Mr CRANE – Through you, minister, under our contract model, there are a number of indices that reflect changes in things like fuel price, et cetera. They are all automatically calculated on the cost of delivering services. There are some mechanisms under our contract model to enable those additional costs - the cost of doing business goes up through indices and we reflect that in their contract.

Ms BURNET - In relation to active transport and bike lanes, I'm pleased to see that the government has helped fund trials in Hobart and in other places. In relation to joining up that network - you're looking at the Greater Hobart Bus Network review - but joining up existing bike lanes, is that part of your strategy as well? Also, is there any funding in relation to that?

Ms HEYDON - Part of what we look at with the infrastructure is where we can address gaps in active transport. Part of the Moving Hobart document, the draft document that's out there, talks quite a bit about active transport. We do consider through the grants and through the works that we're doing, how we can start making that a collective network that falls as part of the broader transport system. It is part of our thinking.

Ms BURNET - Presumably links up with buses? I'm aware that, when I was down at the park and ride, there wasn't a great connection across Algona to the park and ride, and I didn't see any bike racks.

Ms HEYDON - Part of what we're looking at in relation to the standardisation of the park and ride is, of course, the provision of bike storage, et cetera, to support active transport. We obviously look at what we can do within our own network, as well as making those connections through with councils for any plans that they have, supporting them with grants to bridge that gap as well. That's an iterative approach to developing that connected network.

Ms BROWN - Thanks, Chair. Minister, earlier today, the Premier agreed to table his savings strategy. Would you be willing to do the same?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, happy to do the same.

Ms BROWN – Great. That's it. When? You're going to take it on notice?

Mr ABETZ - Yes.

CHAIR - Are there any more questions?

Ms BURNET - Chair, just a procedural question. Those things that are being taken on notice, do they come back to each of the committee members or just the person who's asking?

CHAIR - The committee as a whole. If there are no further questions, then time for Estimates, the Minister for Transport, has expired. The committee will resume proceedings tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

The committee adjourned at 9.19 p.m.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Michael Ferguson MP

Tuesday 24 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Dean Winter MP
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Mr Mark Shelton MP
Mr Craig Garland MP
Dr Shane Broad MP
Mrs Miriam Beswick MP
Ms Anita Dow MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON MICHAEL FERGUSON
Treasurer, Deputy Premier and Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs

Gary Swain
Secretary

James Craigie
Deputy Secretary, Budget and Finance

Dean Burgess
Acting Deputy Secretary, Economic and Financial Policy

Jenna Cairney
Deputy Secretary, Business and Jobs, Department of State Growth

Brad Wheeler
Executive Director, Consumer Building and Occupational Services

Robyn Pearce
Executive Director, WorkSafe Tasmania

The committee met at 9 a.m.

CHAIR (Mr Wood)- Welcome, Treasurer, to the committee. Would you please introduce the persons at the table for the benefit of Hansard, their names and positions?

Mr FERGUSON - Good morning to you, Chair and to the committee. I'm pleased today to be supported at the table by the secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance, Mr Gary Swain; the deputy secretary, Budget and Finance, James Craigie; and Dean Burgess, acting deputy secretary, Economic and Financial Policy. I'm supported also by my Chief of Staff, James Abbott, and my advisor. Megan Hickey, who will be supporting me but not giving evidence.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Treasurer is three hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask the question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

I'd also just remind everybody that the microphones are sensitive, so be mindful of Hansard when you're moving papers and water glasses around the table. Also, it can be very difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I ask that members speak one at a time to assist with this.

Treasurer, would you care to make some opening remarks?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Chair, and good morning to the members of the committee. The 2024-25 Budget drives the delivery of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. It's taking action right now on the things that matter to Tasmanians and making life more affordable for our community. This Budget provides record investment in cost-of-living relief, health, housing, and education. We recognise the challenges in the national economy and the impacts that are being felt by our Tasmanian households and businesses. While the national economic indicators are concerning, there's still reason to be optimistic with our plan for investment in services and job-creating essential infrastructure that will support future generations of Tasmanians.

The Budget, together with our fiscal strategy, sets the path for a return to surplus by 2029-30. We believe that now is not the time for an austerity budget. Since last year's Budget, I've been clear, however, that the state's finances are under pressure. I've been very transparent about that. The Budget reflects the decisions that we made during the COVID-19 pandemic at an estimated cost of between $1.5 billion and $2 billion.

The government did not shy away from the findings of the commission of inquiry, agreeing to implement all 191 recommendations, with the Budget providing funding of $423 million over four years to meet the recommendations in order to keep children as safe as they deserve to be. This, coupled with a provision in 2023-24 of $649.9 million for the estimated cost of current and future claims, means that more than $1.1 billion is being provided from Tasmania's public finances to keep children safe and compensate those who've suffered harm.

The government's fiscal strategy is a fundamental element of our 2030 Strong Plan, to rebuild our fiscal buffers and to provide budget flexibility to be able to respond to future needs and shocks. The government has committed to return the net operating balance to surplus by 2029-30, in line with our 2030 Strong Plan to Tasmania's Future. We've also committed to keeping our debt position manageable.

The Budget delivers record investment into cost-of-living relief, together with record investment into health, housing, and education. Over the Budget and forward Estimates, we're investing $12.9 billion into vital health services across our state, an increase of 6.7 per cent, and $9.4 billion into education, which is increased by 6 per cent over the same period. Investment in health and education now account for 58 per cent of total expenditure across the Budget and forward Estimates.

The Budget continues to deliver on our $1.5 billion plan to provide 10,000 more social and affordable homes by 2032, with Homes Tasmania to invest a massive half a billion dollars over the next four years.

We're supporting growth in our economy, with an investment of $5.1 billion in infrastructure over the next four years. Of that, $1.9 billion is dedicated to roads and bridges, $650 million into health and hospital infrastructure, $359 million into schools and education facilities, and $287 million into keeping Tasmanians safe with investments into new courts, correctional facilities and assets to support Tasmania Police.

In closing, the 2024-25 Budget is a budget for our times at this particular juncture in the state's economic cycle. By delivering on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future, we are supporting our community through the provision of essential services and cost of living relief while also charting a careful pathway and a time frame back to surplus. I would be very pleased to take questions.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, your forecasting in recent times has been way off. Here's an example: in 2022, you forecast the net operating balance for the 2023-24 year to be a surplus of $19.1 million. A year later, you forecast a $297 million deficit. Then in the Revised Estimates Report, you forecast a $521 million deficit. You then went on to deliver a record $1.5 billion deficit. This year, you forecast a $792.8 million net operating deficit, but in Table 4.1, on page 61, you have allocated less for expenses in every year of the forward Estimates than you actually spent last year. How can these estimates be believed?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Willie, for your first question to me this year as shadow treasurer. I congratulate you. It only took you about eight months, but you got there. Thank you for your question, and I'll certainly be happy throughout the morning to answer all your questions. In terms of the Estimates going forward, these are prepared by the government, particularly with the support of the Department of Treasury and Finance, on their best advice. You did not mention quite a few things in your question, including the pressures that the budget has been placed under since, I think, the 2022-23 year which you first referenced. You did not mention the commission of inquiry response, did you? I don't believe -

Mr WILLIE - That does not account for all of it.

Mr FERGUSON - I do not believe that you referenced the extra cost that had been booked to the net operating balance in the last financial year, although you alluded to it, but

you did not mention that there is a very large provision on actuarial advice that needed to be recognised in the Budget and it has been properly recognised at $650 million. While we go forward, you also did not mention the downgrade in the GST receipts that this Budget does recognise of just short of $400 million.

One thing, hopefully, we may be able to agree on, whatever else happens today, is that the budget is under pressure and that we need to be very responsible and careful in the decisions that we make as a government, as a parliament, so that we can carry the state through a period of continued high inflation -

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Chair. Relevance? My question was very specific.

CHAIR - Mr Willie, I cannot put words in the minister's mouth.

Mr WILLIE - How can the forward Estimates be believed when his forecasting is so far off?

CHAIR - Please continue, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - But also recognising that we are making decisions as we set the budget, not just as a government but as a parliament, to ensure that we don't make knee jerk reactions. We have recognised that the budget is in deficit and we have tried not to correct that too quickly. If we did, and it is possible that it can be done, I believe that the pain and the damage to the economy would be too much.

In terms of the reliability of the Estimates, they have been prepared by Treasury, not by me, not by the government. They have been prepared by our expert people in the Department of Treasury and Finance. We would be happy to take your questions if you struggle to believe the work of the Treasury.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, I have looked into this and negative growth in government expenses hasn't occurred in the past 20 years under any government. Under your two previous attempts, it grew by 8.5 per cent in 2022-23 and then 14.7 per cent in 2023-24. Isn't it a fact we will see significant blowouts in the preliminary outcomes at the end of the year?

Mr FERGUSON - No, it is not a fact, Mr Willie, and you cannot state it as fact. We recognise -

Mr WILLIE - What you are projecting has not been achieved for 20 years.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - You have just asked me if it is a fact. No, it is not a fact, it is your hope.

Mr WILLIE - No, I am going off 20 years of history.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Because you are so negative. You have been a coward in the parliament, you have not been prepared to ask me a single question -

Mr WILLIE - I can't believe half of what you say.

Mr FERGUSON - since the March election because you're a coward. You're here today because you have to be here and you want it to be a negative outcome.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Chair. The Treasurer has just called a member of this committee a coward.

CHAIR - If the member is concerned -

Mr WINTER - I think you should actually take some control, with respect, Chair.

CHAIR - I am, Mr Winter and if the member has taken offence, he could ask the minister to withdraw that comment.

Mr WILLIE - We will see how the Treasurer goes today because I was hoping to have a reasonable conversation and his trademark arrogance is already writ large.

CHAIR - Please continue.

Mr FERGUSON - I'd like to withdraw it because it obviously does cause offence, but it is cowardly.

Mr Willie, you want a negative outcome, but we have a budget that's been prepared on best advice. We've made significant policy decisions in this Budget to carry a deficit position so that we can invest in health, so that we can deliver the commitments that we made at the election, so that we can invest in keeping children safe. It's an expensive position to take for the Budget, but they're decisions that we believe are the right ones.

I hear you ask me, isn't it a fact that the outcome at the end of the year will be much higher? And you asked me if that's a fact. Well, of course it isn't because agencies right now are managing their budgets as best they can. While you probably want the budget to deteriorate by the sound of your question, that's not our hope.

Mr WILLIE - You are making inferences -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - But you said it is 'fact'. You're the one making the inference.

Mr WILLIE - No, the question is around your Estimates and whether they can be believed. Past history says they can't.

Mr FERGUSON - You're the one that made the inference. I think you should recognise that. What we're doing is budgeting according to the policy decisions that have been taken. It surprises me that you're been so negative so soon. You've asserted it as fact that the outcome at the end of the year will be, I think you said, 'worse than is budgeted'. Well, let's wait and see

about that. Every agency is working hard to deliver those important new services and boosted services to our community. We've got the cost-of-living relief measures in there and as Treasurer and as shadow treasurer, we all have a joint responsibility to encourage agencies to do the best to meet their budget and deliver on expectation.

Mr WILLIE - If you're talking about things being expensive in the Budget, why don't you account for them properly in the forward Estimates?

Mr FERGUSON - If you would care to give examples, I'd be happy to respond.

Mr WILLIE - You are talking about investments in Health, the commission of inquiry but you're planning to spend less on operating expenses in every year of the forward Estimates than you did last year. That hasn't been achieved in the last 20 years by any government.

Mr FERGUSON - What you might be doing just now is identifying that we have a plan and we've budgeted for it. I asked if you could give me an example. You haven't, because we've actually allocated all the decisions and the commitments that we made at the election. They're all here, they're all loaded into the Budget. It actually means that expenditure in 2024-25 is significantly higher than was even forecast in the RER or the PFO, because we've made commitments that we're now honouring.

Mr WILLIE - No government in the past 20 years has achieved what you're trying to do.

Mr FERGUSON - If I can respond again, I hear what you're saying. I think what you may be doing is hinting at the overspend that occurred in Health last year. I think you may be doing that.

Mr WILLIE - There were a number of overspends. Your deficit -

Mr FERGUSON - Health in particular was significant overspending.

Mr WILLIE - We'll get to that.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - We've provided health with an uplift in their health funding compared to last budget and if you could just be good enough to recognise that every state and territory budget except Western Australia, are all under pressure. Everyone of us, every state and territories budget is under pressure. We could knee jerk reaction, fix it sooner. We don't believe that that's the right path for Tasmania.

During the morning I'll continue to answer your questions but in the end you won't be able to continue to sustain a position where there's too much spending because there's too much debt and on the other hand, as you've just done, there's not enough spending.

Mr BAYLEY - Chair, I'd like to start where I think most Tasmanians would like us to start, which is with the stadium. Last week, the stadium DA was submitted and it was revealed that the cost had blown out to $830 million before even negotiating construction contracts. It was also revealed that there's a $200 million funding shortfall when you consider your

$375 million every cent of the fed's $240 million, even though it's contingent on housing and a wharf and $15 million from the AFL. Yesterday in this committee room, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation revealed other major project elements of the project like the underground car park, the northern access road and moving the heritage-listed Goods Shed are completely uncosted and unfunded.

The financial impact report accompanying the DA identified that discussions had been had with Treasury regarding meeting the unfunded elements of the project. I quote:

> Table 18 outlined that there is a current capital cost funding shortfall in both funding scenarios for the stadium's construction. The source of this funding is currently unknown. However, it is currently assumed that the asset-owning entity will borrow to make up any shortfall.

Treasurer, can you detail those discussions with Treasury? What was Treasury's advice in relation to the shortfalls of funding to meet the $830 million stadium budget price tag?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Bayley, for the question. I'm sure you may have heard this yesterday from the Premier if you were speaking with him in his Estimates: the government position is that our expenditure in total will come to $715 million -

Mr BAYLEY - We'll come to that.

Mr FERGUSON - I accept that. The Budget and forward Estimates provide $610 million of that. Notably, there is a range of contributors to achieve that project, some state government, Australian Government, and the AFL. In response to your question, I invite Mr Craigie, the deputy secretary, to respond further, if you're happy to do that. Mr Craigie is also a member of the steering committee for the project, and may be able to provide the insight that you're looking for in Treasury's role.

Mr CRAIGIE - Macquarie Point Development Corporation procured services of KPMG to do a range of reports, one of which is the financial impact report that you have a copy of there. As part of preparing that report, KPMG consulted with Treasury to gain some understanding of potential GST impacts, and also to gain an understanding of how elements that they were asked to respond to would impact the key fiscal measures. Treasury provided some input to them on those impacts. We did not provide input to them on the numbers they produced, the expert numbers. We just gave them some guidance on understanding public finances and how they're modelling when you translate that into key fiscal measures will impact accordingly. We await their report to make sure that they got that bit right.

Mr BAYLEY - What about when it comes to borrowings? I hear you say again, Treasurer, that you're going to cap, and not one red cent above $375 million. The financial report is really clear that Mac Point Development Corporation will need to borrow to make up the shortfall in capital expenditure, and that the government sector will be liable for the debt of funding those loans. It does say here in the report, however:

> Additional grant expenses will likely to be required from the general government services to fund the interest expense of the borrowing.

Is this not a cost? Do you not accept that this is an additional cost to the government of this project, the servicing, the loan liabilities that the the corporation needs to take out in order to actually fund the project? Do you accept that you've been relatively loose with the truth when it comes to $375 million, and that these reports demonstrate that it will cost the public purse significantly more than $375 million?

Mr FERGUSON - My team here is willing and able to support you to the extent that we can. That is the government's position.

Mr BAYLEY - How do you explain this?

Mr FERGUSON - I hear the question. I understand where you're coming from, but that is the government's position. Questions as to how those partnerships will be, first of all, secured, as I think Mrs Pentland asked a question in the parliament of the Premier at the time, how those partnerships can be achieved secured and even publicly disclosed - those are matters that are in front of us. They are being handled through the Department of State Growth and Macquarie Point Development Corporation itself under the leadership of minister Street. That's probably where the questions are best directed in terms of how the process will be unfolded.

In a Treasury sense and from the accounting of all of these numbers, I'm happy to answer in any level of detail that you may care for.

Mrs PENTLAND - I wanted to ask a question in regards to Paper 1, page 56. I'm looking at your strategic action 6.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you for taking us to the page.

Mrs PENTLAND - To meet strategic action 6 by 2032-33, the government will need to increase own source revenue as a percentage of total expenditure by 22 per cent. Given the government has committed to not introduce new or increased taxes, how will this be achieved?

Mr FERGUSON - If I could briefly mention that the fiscal strategy, this is its second budget appearance. In that sense, it's a new fiscal strategy for our state, recognising as I did in the previous budget that the Budget is under pressure, having been walloped through the pandemic, together with the investments that we're making to offset cost of living pressures and to maintain our infrastructure program.

In the long-term, we wanted to have a fresh strategy that helps to rebuild the fiscal buffers. You never know what's over the horizon, so we want to prepare our budget for that. Our borrowings are manageable and I'm happy and expect to answer questions about those during the morning.

The fiscal strategy is about fiscal sustainability in the longer term and sets out a set of targets and actions in 2032.There is no single indicator of fiscal sustainability, that's why we have the collection of them to allow them to be taken together.

The one in particular that you've identified, No 6, which is around total general government sector owned source revenue. I would, if I may, refer you to an earlier page, page 50, which shows chart 3.2. I have to emphasise this is a graph that reflects the proportion, not the absolute value of own source revenues. Over the forward Estimates, the Estimates are

that it does return to a higher percentage as a portion of budget over the years to 2028. It doesn't necessarily point to new or increased taxes, that reflects the measure of own source revenues achieving a higher proportion to 37 per cent.

Mrs PENTLAND - It is 6.6 points, which is a 22 per cent increase.

Mr FERGUSON - I might ask the secretary or deputy secretary to respond further. What Treasury has done in generating that graph, noting that in the current year it's shown at 32 per cent, in the previous year it was 30 per cent, while the target is for it to be at or above 37 per cent - reminding ourselves that this is just one of the indicators of fiscal sustainability. The forward Estimates based on the budget and the key fiscal outcomes indicates a return to 37 per cent.

Mr SWAIN - That is combination of tax revenue increases, which will be mainly driven by conveyance and land tax.

Mrs PENTLAND - Did you say land tax?

Mr SWAIN - Yes, land tax and payroll tax. The major taxation revenue items in the Budget also returns from the government entities which will improve over time if you take out the effect of the Mersey Hospital, which falls away in the next year or so. It's an aggregate of the different sources owned source revenue to government. As the Treasurer said, it improves from 30.4 per cent of expenditure in 2023-24 to 36 per cent in 2027-28. I am not going to link that tax revenue directly to economic growth because there isn't a strong correlation. There is a number of factors that will affect those outcomes, including population, interest rates, inflation and so on. That's our projection of where it's going.

Mr GARLAND - How much revenue does Braddon based businesses, companies and other non-government entities produce for the State of Tasmania? Mining, forestry, farming, all those industries. What is that as a fraction of the overall Tasmanian gross domestic product?

Mr FERGUSON - I don't know the absolute number that sits with a particular region out of the state's total product. We would be guessing if we tried to give you a direct answer to that. I invite the Treasury team to discuss this with you further. I imagine if I asked for the same information for my electorate of Bass, I don't think it would be available. I hear what you're saying because Braddon is a powerhouse in the economy in those areas that you've identified: agriculture, primary production, mining. I would appreciate being able to give you an insight, but I'm not sure that we have it broken down.

Mr SHELTON - I would put Lyons up against that.

Mr FERGUSON - See how Lyons goes.

Mr SHELTON - Just throw that in the mix.

Mr GARLAND - To follow on, if I could. The numbers that are in the Budget are prepared on a state-wide basis. I'm just looking at my colleague, seeing if we have anything at the regional level.

Mr FERGUSON - It may be, Mr Garland, that, for example, a department like State Growth may be able to have an industry-level insight and have that lens over the product of a region, or the product of an industry by region. I even think that would be a fairly ambitious task in terms of how accurate it would be. It's a fair question. I'll be happy to take it on notice and explore it more deeply with the department through the week. Quite honestly, I'm not sure if the answer would be satisfactory to you, because I doubt that we have that level of data, but I'd be happy to have a go at it.

Mr GARLAND - If you don't mind, that would be good. It'd be interesting also the figure on a per capita basis, if I could.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes.

CHAIR - Mr Garland, if you could just write your question down and hand it to the -

Mr FERGUSON - I'd be happy to take it on notice. I just ask the committee to understand that I may not be able to give that level, in the way it's been described.

Mr SHELTON - Treasurer, another big budget week. Before I start, I congratulate Mr Swain and Treasury for the work that goes into the Budget. It's always a big week and it's a busy time for them all. I was with you through the budget process where you go out, have breakfast in Hobart, lunch up in Launceston with me, and then down the coast on the sell of the Budget. The other partners in this are, of course, small business and the business community around the state. So I'd be interested to hear what the feedback from the business community has been on this Budget.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Shelton, thank you for your question. Thank you for your complimentary remarks about our team. We've worked very hard on this Budget. It has not been an easy one to develop, but we've met all our commitments and it's charting the path that is, I think, most strategically useful for our economy and for jobs.

You mentioned small business, which I'll also address. The fact is, in Tasmania, our 44,000 registered businesses are the backbone of our economy. Many of them are in Lyons, as in Braddon, and their views are very important to our government, very important. We had great feedback on the 'roadshow' post-Budget in our communities in Hobart, in Launceston, and in Burnie, and we're very grateful for that. That reflects that people do know that our government has been very good for business. Over the last 10 years, there have been 46,000 new jobs. We're currently in a period of record-low unemployment and our economy has grown by 24 per cent to a record high level and our economy has continued to grow each year, including in the years where it's been quite challenged. The Budget is delivering for business and it delivers for jobs.

In addition to our investment of $5.1 billion in infrastructure and in addition to our significant investment in services, health, and education, we're also investing in training our future workforce. Although, it's fair to say our opposition has been particularly negative and critical - that's to be expected - but the Budget has been well received by the business community despite the known challenges.

To share with you some of the endorsements, the Master Builders Tasmania say the continued support for the High Vis Army is vital to help build Tasmania's future. By continuing

to fund the High Vis Army initiative, the government is supporting more apprenticeships, more tradies, greater female participation, and a better pathway into our industry. The Tasmanian Forest Products Association said that:

> We welcome the 2024-2025 State Budget. It will assist creating thousands of homes and supporting our state's timber industry.

The Housing Industry Association (HIA) said:

> The HIA commends the Government for the $30 million investment to deliver new and upgraded VET facilities and industry-standard equipment at colleges, secondary schools and trade training centres.

The Tasmanian Small Business Council said:

> Initiatives in today's Budget will support small businesses to reduce the cost of doing business.

The list goes on but one of the organisations that I hold very dear to the government is the Civil Contractors Federation of Tasmania. Great people, and their members are really building that infrastructure that's been such a critical part of our economic success in recent years. CCF Tas said:

> The Government has made the right call to continue to invest in job-creating infrastructure across the state in the State Budget. Now was not the time to take the foot off the gas by cutting infrastructure spending across Tasmania, as some have been suggesting. The $5.1 billion infrastructure pipeline in the State Budget will support thousands of construction jobs across the state and thousands more across the supply chain. This means businesses can employ workers with certainty and workers can plan their future right here in Tasmania. It's a win-win for the industry and the state.

As I close, they were very positive comments made. Business has a very close eye on the Budget and forward Estimates, particularly in regard to the fact that, like most other states and territories, we're still in a deficit position, having to work through that. However, these are the calls that show that you need to support those sectors that can continue to contribute to our state's economic prosperity and to the jobs that will be enjoyed by the men and women of our state.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, I'm going to run through the expenditure growth over the course of your government. In 2014, incoming treasurer Gutwein, with his budget cuts, had expenditure growth of 2.7 per cent. It was then 3.1 per cent, 5.6 per cent, 5.2 per cent, 5.8 per cent, 7 per cent, 7.3 per cent, 12 per cent, 8.5 per cent, 14.7 per cent. Next year, you're projecting minus 3.5 per cent and then the following year minus 2.7 per cent and then 1.5 per cent.

Which is it, Treasurer? Are you going to blow the budget or will this be one of the most austerity-motivated budgets in decades? If you stick to the targets, there are only two things that can happen.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Willie, for the question. I'm happy to take the question and I'll invite the deputy secretary to respond as well. We had a similar question yesterday and we took the committee to have a look at the way that election commitments are being honoured as well. We're investing in our state and we are delivering our plan. Now, our plan didn't cost as much as Labor's. I know that you don't want me to talk about Labor -

Mr WILLIE - People care about the state government's Budget.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I know that you're touchy about it, but you guys outspent us three to one.

Mr WILLIE - You're here to answer questions about the state government's Budget.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I hear the difficulty that you have with that, but that is a fact. We've committed and are delivering on our commitments. In, I think, budget paper 2, we reflect how they're being delivered, line by line. So that is a big uplift in spending in 2024-25.

I hope that you would be good enough to acknowledge that. It has a higher bias towards early delivery in our election commitments, particularly to community groups, sporting organisations, industry organisations. I hope you'd be good enough to accept that. It does make a major contribution to the shape of expenditure growth between last financial year and this one, and then over the forward Estimates.

We've grown our public service. I think that the numbers that you recited, if they are a reflection of expenditure growth, they've been investments in the public services. They've been investments into more staff and, as we go forward, I hope you'd be good enough to acknowledge that we do need to see some budget repair.

Mr WILLIE - We've acknowledged that you've caused a big problem for the State of Tasmania.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - See, this is what you do. You shift and change. What we're introducing is not an austerity budget. I've been in an austerity budget. I remember it very well. You weren't here, but I was. I was in opposition. I was sitting on that side of the table, and I was dealing with the 2011-12 austerity budget, which -

Mr WILLIE - Funny you say that, because your expenditure growth is actually worse than that time.

CHAIR - Order. Order. Mr Willie.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, I've been an MP in an austerity budget. It was bad for the state. Regional communities were up in arms because they were being specifically targeted by your side of politics, and we went into recession. The savings -

Mr WILLIE - You've got bigger cuts in your own Budget.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, the savings that your side of politics budgeted for weren't even achieved, and yet the carnage happened in the economy. That's what an austerity budget looks like. Some purest economists might say that was the way to go at the time. In fact, one did. I could name him, but I won't. He said it was 'an impeccably responsible budget'. But it led to economic carnage. It led to regional communities fearing that they'd have to leave their community because their kids couldn't get an education. Ringarooma, Edith Creek -

Mr WILLIE - You're estimating greater cuts than that period of time. Back to my question -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order. My question is which one is it, Treasurer? If you meet your targets in the forward Estimates, it's going to be savage cuts, or are you going to blow the budget?

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, we are introducing efficiencies in the Budget. You've known that. They're a lot smaller than the efficiencies that you have been proposing. I honestly say this is not an austerity budget. If it were, we'd be seeing a surplus position much sooner than 2029-30. I think that's a fair way down the track.

We've chosen a path that we think is the most acceptable to government, the economy and the delivery of stronger public services. I admit that it's been difficult, but unless you're prepared to commit a different plan to a genuine alternative budget, I don't really understand the position that you're inviting me to take. Do you want to see less spending or more spending?

Mr WILLIE - I'm holding you to account for your own figures.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - You rudely interrupt constantly. The point is, you are trying to adopt two positions at once. On the one hand, more spending, more expenditure, more expenditure growth; on the other hand, less spending -

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Chair. My question is, if the Treasurer holds to these figures, there will be savage cuts or he will blow the budget. Which is it?

CHAIR - Mr Willie, it's not a point of order.

Mr FERGUSON - I'm surprised that you call points of order the way you do. I'm answering your question.

Mr WILLIE - You're not.

Mr FERGUSON - I sense that you're uncomfortable with the answer. We are seeking budget repair. We've taken the decision, which is a difficult one for a Liberal government, to

slow down the return to a balance and a surplus position. I would have loved to have seen a surplus and a balanced position sooner.

We've taken the economic decision that we need to slow down the return to a balanced position and slow down the return to a surplus position so that we can continue to invest in public services and honour our election commitments - I think you'd be the first to criticise the government if we didn't honour our election commitments - and investing in those cost-of-living supports and the commission of inquiry.

These are all expensive. We have a position. We're working through it and I really don't feel it's professional to attack the Treasury the way that you have, because they've prepared -

Mr WILLIE - I'm not. It's directed at you.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - They've prepared the numbers for government.

Mr WILLIE - You are responsible.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, I sense your discomfort. The Treasury has prepared the Budget and forward Estimates' expected outcomes on the basis of the government's policy decisions.

Mr WILLIE - It hasn't been achieved for 20 years.

Mr BAYLEY - It's been established that the stadium will blow out to over $800 million. It's now established that there is a $200 million shortfall. Both the Budget and the development application acknowledged that additional expenditure outside of the forward Estimates will have to be met through short-term borrowings by Macquarie Point Development Corporation, and it is acknowledged that those liabilities will be transferred with the stadium to Stadiums Tasmania.

Do you accept that servicing that debt that Macquarie Point takes on and passes on to Stadiums Tasmania will come at a cost to the general government sector, and therefore will mean that the taxpayer will be up for well more than $375 million? You must accept that, Treasurer.

Mr FERGUSON - I hear what you're saying in the question. I think you were referring to yesterday's Estimates when you said that it's been established that there'd be a blowout. I don't think that's quite right.

Mr BAYLEY - It's established in the documents that have been submitted to the Planning Commission.

Mr FERGUSON - I completely understand where you're coming from. The CEO, Anne Beach, did say on the day of lodgement with the Tasmanian Planning Commission that while the estimated construction costs are higher than the project budget, it's going to be a value management exercise to bring it into scope. That was a statement made by the CEO on the same day that those documents were provided to TPC. I would have to emphasise -

Mr BAYLEY - The same day of the blowout.

Mr FERGUSON - I'm sorry?

Mr BAYLEY - The same day it was confirmed they had blown out significantly.

Mr FERGUSON - No, that's not -

Mr BAYLEY - Do you really believe that?

Mr FERGUSON - No, I think you're misrepresenting others here, because Ms Beach was saying that there is going to be continued work to bring it into budget. These are better questions for MPDC and the Minister for Sport and Events.

I'm happy to answer the question on borrowings. It will depend entirely on the structure of any arrangements that are reached between the organisation and private proponents. Short-term borrowings to achieve capital outcomes - it will depend entirely on the deal. It'll depend entirely on what long-term revenue options sit as part of those deals to service those borrowings. I don't believe it can be at this stage. I don't believe any assumptions can be made about who will be paying the cost of servicing those borrowings. You've alleged in your question that it'll be the state.

Mr BAYLEY - That's stated in the documents, Treasurer.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Bayley, it will depend on the nature and the structure of any commercial deals that are reached between the organisation and private players in terms of their contribution to the stadium, the assets and some of the services that might be provided. There may well be revenue models that help to either immediately retire or short-term retire those borrowings or to service them into the longer term.

Mr BAYLEY - Is there a Cabinet subcommittee that's overseeing the expenditure for this project?

Mr FERGUSON - I never talk about Cabinet; only the Premier can do that. I've had 11 years of impeccable history of not talking about Cabinet.

Mr BAYLEY - You can at least tell us whether a committee has been established?

CHAIR - Order, Mr Bayley.

Mr FERGUSON - There is a steering committee, which I've referred to earlier today, that Mr Craigie sits on.

Mr BAYLEY - A Cabinet subcommittee.

Mr FERGUSON - I wouldn't be in a position to discuss with you Cabinet arrangements. It's not my right to do that.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, interest on the government's debt is expected to rise significantly from $179 million in 2023-24 to $383 million in 2026-27, which is $61 million more than you forecast in February. It will then rise to $441 million in 2027-28. Together with the cost of the pension payments for the remaining members of the closed defined benefits superannuation schemes, these interest payments will consume 9.3 per cent of total cash revenues by 2027-28, up from 5.6 per cent in 2023-24. This is well above your government's Fiscal Strategy target of 6 per cent.

What measures will you implement to keep the interest payments within more manageable levels in the future, and how do you plan to address the gap between your current financial strategy and the rising costs?

Mr FERGUSON - I accept that the numbers are higher than in February. I think you must be referring to the revised Estimates report of February, which was Treasury's work in February based on policy decisions and changing revenues. We stand by that document. Things have happened since February. Even the Pre-Election Financial Outlook (PIFO) confirmed the Revised Estimates Report (RER). What I'm trying to say there with those acronyms is that even the Treasury's pre-election estimates were the same as February.

The thing that has changed in the meantime is significant policy decisions have been made, in particular commitments made during the election, which far and away related to stronger public services. The other additional point is that in the RER we factored in something of the order of $230 million for the commission of inquiry. That's now grown to $423 million. There has been a significant increase even just for the single policy domain of the commission of inquiry response.

The changing cost of servicing borrowings is a reflection on the different profile of new expenditure, which, as I reflected in an earlier answer to Mr Willie, we've seen a significant uplift in expenditure in 2024-25 compared to what was forecast in last year's budget. I think we all understand the reasons for that, but you have taken me and the committee directly to the fiscal strategy, which I'll address. We do breach the fiscal strategy target around cost of debt including defined benefits superannuation to cash receipts.

I have to emphasise that we also had the importance of the fiscal strategy in view in last year's budget, and I welcome renewed interest in the fiscal strategy. It's really about 2032. It's about where we need to ultimately set our targets to be able to make informed decisions around the budget, not just from the government point of view, but from the crossbench and the opposition, so that we have, first of all, that transparency which wasn't there prior to in this level of detail under this new Fiscal Strategy to allow people to see how we're going -

Mrs BESWICK - When the interest payments will consume 9.3 per cent of total cash revenue, is it possible to get back to that?

Mr FERGUSON - The importance of the Fiscal Strategy is that it sets out 11 indicators of what financial sustainability will look like and give us a time frame to achieve that by 2032. This helps to guide decisions by the government, the opposition and the crossbench about the pressure points that the budget is under.

I want to emphasise one thing on the inclusion of the defined benefit superannuation. We did have a superannuation provision account prior to the Liberals coming to office. That was

abandoned and the money was spent. We're now going to look to how we can reinstitute that process so that we are putting away windfall gains to help the state meet the cost of those defined benefit schemes. We didn't shy away.

I got Treasury advice when we were putting this Fiscal Strategy together that it would be wise to include that, but I have to also emphasise that we meet that on a cost emerging basis, so it's not actually debt, but in the accounting standards it can be made to look like debt and borrowings and that's perfectly acceptable to me and to the government, but it is in fact met on a cost emerging basis each year. As we put aside windfall gains to that superannuation provision account, that's how we continue to improve the sustainability going forward.

Mrs BESWICK - You've spoken about this Budget being all about not taking the foot off the brakes and ensuring increased economy. How do we balance this with that, given the more our economy grows, the more our CPI grows, the more interest rates go up and that's trying to control our economy going up? I feel like we've almost put ourselves into the bucket of making it worse.

Mr FERGUSON - I think you may have meant to say 'not taking our foot off the accelerator', not the brakes.

Mrs BESWICK - Not putting our foot on the brake.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I welcome the banter. It's a fact that we felt that now wasn't the right time to be taking our foot off the accelerator in respect of the capital program. The capital program has been an important part of our state economy in recent years. It's been a great driver. During a time when we were worried about demand in the economy, it's been a great driver for aggregating demand in the cities, suburbs and towns of our state and it's actually been a great success. Not only do you get the jobs during construction, but you get the long-term productive assets.

I want to draw your attention though as well to the fact that Hobart's CPI has been lower than national CPI. With respect to making sure that we're not adding to the inflation, feeding the inflation dragon, I think we've taken a responsible path there and as we go forward we'll certainly be mindful of the way in which you framed the question, Mrs Beswick.

You didn't mention Mr Eslake's independent review of the state's finances in the question, but perhaps the question was informed by that, and I've welcomed that report. I think it's essential reading for every MP in Tasmania. I'm glad that we've gone through that process largely as a result of you and your advocacy as a new member of parliament. We will be responding more fully to Mr Eslake's independent review report in coming months and we'll respectfully read and respond to those recommendations.

If I can make a comment as Treasurer, over the long term we do need to encourage and invite private sector investments in Tasmania. As a state government at this point in time in the economic cycle, we felt that the public sector investment in capital is crucial. I hope that's answered your question.

Mr SHELTON - My question is to the Treasurer. Reading through the 2024-25 Budget, there's substantial cost-of-living relief relief there for the Tasmanian community. I was wondering whether you can expand on that and provide some more detail on the cost-of-living relief in this Budget.

Mr FERGUSON - The Budget does provide record investment in cost-of-living relief. We completely get it and understand that households have been struggling with cost of living; and I said repeatedly at the roadshow that with the high inflation, our state has not escaped, with the rest of the country. It's not just as the peak passes and inflation comes down. It's not as if the problem has gone away because of its compounding effect of the increases to the basket of groceries and your household bills, the continued inflation at any level actually captures previous increases in price. It's been a struggle for people and we want to be there to help them. We've been very conscious of that.

Thirteen interest rate rises for an average mortgage means thousands of dollars a month, between $1000 and $2000 a month every single month for an average mortgage. While that is occurring, people are feeling the pain. People are feeling this most in their mortgage repayments and rents, at the supermarket and when they fill up the car. As a state government, we know that we can't influence those costs, but we are doing what we can to help the household budget. To answer your question directly, that's why the Budget provides more than half a billion dollars in cost-of-living relief over four years to help Tasmanians with day-to-day living expenses. These include helping with bus fares, school and housing costs, and additional emergency food relief. There's funding of $344 million over four years in concessions - that's the biggest part of that agenda, with almost $211 million allocated for electricity concessions.

To assist with cost-of-living relief, last financial year the government delivered $74 million in energy bill relief through the renewable energy dividend. Everybody should have received $250 on their Tasmanian household electricity bill and $300 for each small business. Funds have been released to retailers at the end of June and credited on each customer's next bill.

Just occasionally, if MPs feel that they have a constituent who believes they haven't received that, they're welcome to be in touch with Mr Duigan's office to follow it up, but I haven't found one yet.

In 2024-25, Tasmanian concession customers will receive up to a massive $1433 in electricity bill relief. The annual electricity concession this year is approximately $633. This is in addition to the $250 rebate, the $300 in Australian Government energy support and the $250 Tasmanian government's supercharged renewable energy dividend.

Quickly, for water and sewerage, concessions of up to $237.78 are available for eligible concession cards, and eligible concession card holders can also receive council rates remission assistance of $379 as a TasWater customer or up to $559 for ratepayers who are not TasWater customers.

Mr Shelton, we are doing what we can as a state government to support Tasmanians through this period of challenging higher inflation. We'll continue to do that and help our economy in the meantime and Tasmanians with their cost-of-living challenge.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, not only have you allocated less funding for expenses across the forward Estimates than you spent last year, but there's a growing share of expenses for non-service delivery like depreciation, nominal superannuation expenses and borrowing costs, meaning expenditure for genuine service delivery is shrinking. Isn't that effectively a cut to service delivery?

Mr FERGUSON - I'll ask the secretary to assist as well. We are managing our Budget and being as careful with public taxpayers' money as we are able to. I sense in the question that you'd like us to be spending more money.

Mr WILLIE - I want you to account for it properly.

Mr FERGUSON - This is the problem, you always interrupt.

Mr WILLIE - Well, you asked me a question.

Mr FERGUSON - This is the problem. When I sense in the question that you want us to spend more money, but in other forums you're saying we're spending too much money, you can't have it both ways. I'm happy to take the question. I will answer the question in detail if you wish me to and with our Treasury officials.

We've funded our plan. It's allocated in the Budget. I've gently drawn your attention to the significant uplift in expenditure in 2024-25 compared to what was forecast last year. You continue to overlook that. I just gently remind you -

Mr WILLIE - Twenty years of history.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I gently, respectfully request that you would acknowledge that. There's a significant uplift in new spending in 2024-25, which I think helps to explain the very flat expenditure growth profile over the Budget and forward Estimates. I'd ask the secretary or Mr Craigie if they'd like to elaborate.

Mr SWAIN - There are a few different considerations. One of the discussions we've had leading up to the formation of the Budget was the extent to which there are resources available in the economy to support additional expenditure. We know that we've just moved to 4.3 per cent unemployment, but we are essentially a pretty full employment economy. That's been part of the thinking. The expenses that you've talked about historically I don't question. We are coming off a period of expenditure growth over a number of years. We're coming off a period of growth and expenses.

Mr WILLIE - We've never gone to negative growth.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr SWAIN - It is true that the expense forecast is pretty flat. The revenue forecast is also reasonably flat if you have a look at it. That's partly going back to an earlier question. There's more or less an offset between some decline in GST revenue coming out of effects of

national interest rates, that's pretty much offset by uplifting state taxation. That's why the revenue is reasonably flat.

Some of the expenditure that is in the Budget does go to future expenditure growth. For example, coming out of the commission of inquiry, there's quite a lot of work done before the budget on what that expenditure needed to be to meet the 191 recommendations. From that process some of the expenditure will actually go to target future delivery models. Examples there are that there'll be work going on in relation to the youth justice delivery model that should flow onto four or five different departments and their activities. The same is true for out-of-home care, where there'll be a more fundamental review of how that model works.

There's also some provision in the Budget that can be targeted towards productivity growth in the State Service. One of those is the $280-odd million that's provisioned for ICT expenditure. I think there will be pressures on forward expenditure, but there's also some constraints on resource availability. There will need to be rigorous budget management going forward in relation to expenditure costs, which is planned for the upcoming year.

Mr WILLIE - Do you acknowledge there are non-service delivery costs that are increasing across the forward Estimates, but expenditure remains flat?

Mr FERGUSON - I acknowledge that expenditure growth is very flat.

Mr WILLIE - And the increasing cost for non-service delivery?

Mr FERGUSON - I think you acknowledged borrowing costs in your question earlier.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, they're increasing significantly.

Mr FERGUSON - They're increasing because we're spending significantly more on public expenditure, including in stronger public services, cost of living relief -

Mr WILLIE - You're borrowing to fund operating costs.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, you know that that is the case. I've stated the same myself. I'm not sure what you're adding to the discussion. We do need to see fiscal restraint going forward. We do need to see an efficient budget process. You'll probably interrupt me and get upset about this, but you accepted our budget efficiency dividends in your pre-election policies. You assumed that our budget efficiency dividend program would be fully delivered, and then you went further, with your $2 billion savings measures. I think you acknowledge -

Mr WILLIE - Just because you make it up doesn't mean it's true.

Mr FERGUSON - I can add up, and it is true.

Mr WILLIE - You're here to answer questions about the State Budget.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I've got it here. If I need to bring it out, I'll bring it out.

Mr WILLIE - Back to my question, Chair.

Mr FERGUSON - $2 billion in cuts. The expenditure growth, as I and the Secretary and others can acknowledge, not ignoring the fact that expenditure growth has taken a significant lift between 2023-24 and 2024-25, not overlooking that, expenditure growth over the forward Estimates I acknowledge is very flat.

Mr WILLIE - Employee expenses are set to drop by nearly $100 million this year than what you spent last year. How will you achieve that, Treasurer?

Mr FERGUSON - You've asked me a question and I'll answer it, but you've again ignored the overspend that occurred in Health, so I'm bringing it to the table. You need to do this better. When you ask this question, you need to acknowledge that Health made a significant overspend, and you could explore that with the Health Department if you wish -

Mr WILLIE -Yes, we'll get to that.

Mr FERGUSON - If you wish. I'm letting the committee know that there is a reason for that and you continue to ignore it, but I can't ignore it. Going forward, we've increased the Health budget by 6.7 per cent compared to last year's budget. So Health is getting an increase in funding and I've acknowledged that Health had an overspend last year as well.

The question that you asked me is how are you going to manage going forward? It's through strong budget management, working with and supporting agencies to do their very best to work within the Budget that's been approved by the parliament, to run a tight ship and to be as efficient as possible while at the same time delivering those stronger and better public services that we committed to.

Mr BAYLEY - We've discussed the cost blowouts on the stadium and we've discussed the fact that Macquarie Point will need to borrow to meet that expenditure, but there's also additional expenditure in the Budget for Macquarie Point Development Corporation - $5 million for an equity contribution.

Do you accept that most ordinary Tasmanians would consider that, given Macquarie Point Development Corporation's sole focus at the moment is delivering the stadium by ministerial declaration or direction, this should be considered a cost that gets ticked up against the stadium and at least makes the state government's contribution $380 million, for example? It is an additional cost? Do you accept that?

Mr FERGUSON - I accept on face value the premise of the question, but I think we'd have to put some better context on it, because regardless of the ultimate use of the precinct, regardless of the application, the site has to be remediated, so they are sunk costs regardless of the nature of the ultimate development there. We are committed to the stadium project, but remediating the site - I don't think you can roll that into the cost of the stadium. I'll ask the Secretary and Deputy Secretary to respond further.

Mr SWAIN - Yes, I think that's entirely correct, Treasurer. It's identified on page 123 of budget paper 1 that the $5 million is for rehabilitation. I also note that at a previous time there

was a Commonwealth payment to the state in the order of $50 million which was to get the site rehabilitated and ready for use. It has always been intended that that site would be used.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess a follow-up question for that is, if for some reason you do not get to build the stadium - the Planning Commission rejects it; Tasmanians overwhelmingly reject it; you can't fund it - what is the government's plan for that site? Would you leave it vacant for decades to come?

There was obviously a pre-existing agreed master plan for development there. In fact, your government had contracted out to interstate developers to start building and ultimately had to pay those developers out so that they were released from the contract. What would you do with the site? Would it be your intention to develop it going forward?

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Bayley, I respect the question, but I can't really answer a hypothetical like that. I will answer it in two parts. First of all, like you, I acknowledge that the Tasmanian Planning Commission hold the decision-making power together with the Houses of parliament on a final vote. I acknowledge that and acknowledge that there is a process to be followed.

I am not prepared to engage in a hypothetical about what if a certain scenario emerged, but in any event, I would have to refer you to my colleague, minister Street, who is the minister responsible for MPDC. We're committed to our project; the Budget supports it. I think most of us hope that it will be built -

Mr BAYLEY - It's fair to say that it's always been the government's intention though to develop that site?

Mr FERGUSON - That is true. That is correct.

Mr BAYLEY - Has anything changed there? Is it your intention to develop that site?

Mr FERGUSON - I do not know if I am falling into a trap or not but yes, it is our intention to develop the site. That has always been the intention. We have a particular vision for how it can be developed, which is there. I don't see any possibility, as your question suggested, that the site goes undeveloped. At the same time, I have to choose my words carefully so that I show respect to the Planning Commission and future votes of each House.

Mr GARLAND - Treasurer, Mr Eslake suggests it could legitimately be argued that the substantial volume of mainland investment in Tasmanian residential property over the five years to 2022 was a major contributor to the decline in housing affordability for Tasmanians during this period. Mr Eslake suggested the government should consider extending the surcharges currently imposed on the stamp duty and land tax payable by foreign purchasers of residential property of 8 per cent and 2 per cent respectively to all non-Tasmanian purchasers of established residential property, that is, to investors from mainland states and territories. This would benefit Tasmanians through either additional revenue raising or preventing cashed-up mainland investors from buying up our housing stock. Treasurer, will you consider this as an option for further investigation?

Mr FERGUSON - It would be illegal to do that. That was perhaps one of the things in the report that surprised me - the suggestion that we could place a levy on fellow Australians.

It is a levy or a tax measure that we are legally able to impose on foreigners, but the Australian Constitution specifically prohibits imposing it on Australians. You could pass a law in the state parliament to do that, but it would be thrown out by the High Court in about 5 minutes, I think. Maybe six minutes. It would be thrown out very quickly.

Can I just comment on the report or the narrative that you've brought to the table? I will be, and the government will be, responding to Mr Eslake's report in as comprehensive a fashion as we can, including in those particular areas. Mr Eslake is inviting a revenue measure there to send a signal in a way to outside investors that we don't really want you to come and buy homes in Tasmania. But I think we have to leave open the fact that, with our population now 575,000 people - I remember when it was 475,000 people, I was an MP; it wasn't that long ago. We have seen fellow Australians - non-Tasmanians - choose to make their home here, and they could have been considered foreigners under that definition, but we welcome them as fellow Tasmanians today.

I think that that particular proposal is really problematic. I think it's coming from a good intention, but I don't believe that that would be something that any state government would want to do or would get away with in the High Court. Briefly as well, I recognise your and Mr Eslake's comment about housing affordability. We see that occurring with the increasing value of property here in Tasmania. To support home affordability and the home ownership vision, we are implementing the Stamping Out Stamp Duty initiative to try to encourage not just young people, but predominantly young people, to not give up hope, and that there will be special supports provided to them only if it's their first-ever home. That's an advantage that a first home buyer has when they go to an open home that somebody who's looking for their second home doesn't have, so they actually have a competitive advantage in that. We hope that makes a real contribution. I hope that's a satisfactory answer to the question. I'm happy to take a follow up.

Mr GARLAND - Would it be worth seeking legal advice from the Solicitor-General on that matter just to clear up and ascertain if it is possible or not possible under legal requirements?

Mr FERGUSON - It would be necessary, I think, to take advice if the government was going to pursue that option. We frequently take the Solicitor-General's advice, and the advice by nature is something that we're not able to release and share, because then people would say 'Show us the advice,' wouldn't they? I understand and respect that, but we wouldn't be able to do that. I don't think the government could proceed with this proposal based on what we know about the way that the Constitution governs what States and territories are able to do and not do. I don't think I can do a better job of answering the question than that.

Mr GARLAND - I think the legal advice would clear it up.

Mrs PENTLAND - Have you sought advice from the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation (TASCORP) as to how a change in the credit rating would affect borrowing costs?

Mr FERGUSON - I'll invite the secretary to answer your question, Mrs Pentland.

Mr SWAIN - No, we haven't yet sought advice. It's actually a really complicated matter. I have joined the TASCORP board in the last few months and I've been spending a bit of time on this. There is a question. The ratings agencies will give some detailed consideration to the

Budget. They've already indicated that to us; we've had an initial discussions with them. We have more detailed briefings at the end of October, which is part of their standard process. The complexity is, if there were to be any change in the state's arrangements, the extent to which that is factored in by the markets in advance, so that you might not see a significant change in the cost of borrowings for the state. At this point, it's really a hypothetical about how the rating agencies will respond. I obviously don't want to predict that, because their methodologies are complex and have a whole range of different factors in them. In any case, if there were to be any change, then it's a market outcome - what's happening in the market for debt in terms of supply and demand, and the extent to which any changes are pre-empted and forecasted by the market. It's a very hard question to answer.

Mrs PENTLAND - You'd say that it's probable that the rating is going to change?

Mr SWAIN - I wouldn't want to speculate on that. We've had a look at the methodologies. They have some elements that are quantifiable, some that are more subjective. I really wouldn't want to speculate.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. My question is a really simple one. Treasurer, can you please inform the committee of the Budget's outlook on the Tasmanian continued economic growth?

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, Mr Shelton, for the question. The Government's long-term plan has built a nation-leading economy that is in the corner of Tasmanian businesses, and as I reflected earlier, has created over 46,000 new jobs and is delivering record low unemployment. Our economic performance is strong. We're not in recession, and we haven't been in recession. That means that more Tasmanians are employed and more investment into things that Tasmanians care about. We keep talking about health, education, housing and community infrastructure - they're very important to us, and we'll continue to harness Tasmania's competitive strength to build on these gains and to grow an even more resilient and diverse economy for the future.

The strength and resilience of our economy is born out in key metrics such as gross state product, state final demand, employment, export trade, retail trade, and private investment. They're all significantly up from when we came to office. In all of these areas, we're at, or near to, record highs. That really does point to the resilience and the underlying strength of our economy here in Tasmania. It is still growing, even through times of very challenging economic headwinds. When some said last year we're in recession, we grew 1.1 per cent. The Budget forecasts this growth to continue in key areas and pick up in the out-years. Treasury's estimates show both gross state product and state final demand to return to growth of 2 per cent or higher from 2025-26. Treasury also forecasts the employment to grow by a net 3.35 per cent over the Budget and forward Estimates, which would in itself equate to around 9000 new jobs.

In relation to population growth, that's been more subdued after a very strong period of growth. Treasury forecasts that population growth will pick up and increase to around 0.7 per cent by 2026-27. We continue to have high business confidence - the highest in the country, equal with Queensland and Western Australia, according to National Australia Bank's Business Confidence Survey. That's why our government is 100 per cent focused on what matters most to Tasmanians under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. We're prioritising jobs, investment and economic growth, and recent results show that our economic plan is delivering for Tasmanians.

Briefly, Chair, if I may, just to indicate that after the Budget was locked down and sent to the printer, there have been some small improvements in Treasury's economic forecasts. I think members would be quite interested to know that on page 28 of budget paper 1, where the forecast for gross state product change in 2023-24 was shown as 2 per cent, Treasury upgraded that to 2.25 per cent. In 2024-25 it was previously 1.25, Treasury have upgraded that to 1.5. Where state final demand was previously 1.5 in 2023-24, it's been upgraded to 1.6, and where it was in 2024-25, SFD was 2.5 per cent, it's now changed to 3 per cent. Small increases, but increases.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, in your earlier answer you referred to Health overspending their budget, yet on page 203 in Table A1.16, you plan to spend less on Health in every year of the forward Estimates than you did last year, including a $130 million cut to wages. It's widely acknowledged that health inflation and health expenditure is significant, and even Treasury acknowledges that through fiscal sustainability reports. How can those estimates be believed?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you for the question, and I'll ask the author of those estimates, the secretary, to respond to your question. He can tell you whether or not they can be believed.

Mr SWAIN - In relation to the Health overspend of last year, I think there will be a detailed answer provided through the department and the minister in that portfolio, but I can say that there were a range of drivers of that, and they were quite complex, and there were some operating expenses - OpEx - that were reclassified as capital expenditure - CapEx. There was some additional revenue from the Australian government that matched with additional expenditures. A whole range of drivers, that I am not best placed to answer, that go to that differential, that uplift between the 2023-24 Budget and actuals, or preliminary outcomes. I don't know that I have a lot to add to my previous answer that it is a profile that will be challenging and require careful management. That's acknowledged through fiscal sustainability reports, as you've identified, that Health has been a challenging cost pressure for governments in Tasmania but all around the country, and that will continue.

I believe the Budget also has some offsets that we need to also consider. The new expenditure for State election commitments and commission of inquiry will be challenging in the other direction just because of resource availability in the economy. I don't know that I can add much more than that.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, you'd think with health inflation the way it is; you would see an uplift in spending, particularly in the out-years of the forward Estimates. Yet it's flatlining and probably unachievable.

Mr FERGUSON - Well, I don't know if it's unachievable. You have said that a few times now and you also asserted that it was a fact.

Mr WILLIE - Well, I've made a very good case.

Mr FERGUSON - You also said it was a fact that it would happen. We recognise it'll be challenging, no questions about that. I said that at last year's budget, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - And you blew the budget.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, Mr Willie, Health overspent in the last financial year and they leaned into their SPA as well to be able to do that. It's then been reflected in the preliminary outcome. We acknowledge it's challenging, but expenditure growth profile is a necessary one unless you would like us to go deeper into borrowings, which you haven't yet had the courage to say.

Mr WILLIE - We'll get to this. On page 66 in Table 4.3, the General Government Cash Flow Statement, it shows a cash deficit of $794.4 million for the last financial year and a cash deficit of just over $1.5 billion this year.

The last year shows a cash deficit of $395.7 million and across the forward Estimates we see deficits totalling just over $3.8 billion.

Treasurer, when you talk about a net operating surplus in 2029-30, that's fine, but when will there be a cash surplus to stabilise the debt?

Mr FERGUSON - We can't answer that, Mr Willie, and I've actually publicly said as much previous to today. The Government's taken the position that while we're in deficit budgeting for now, because we don't want to take the slash-and-burn approach to Health and Education that I witnessed when I was on that side of the table in 2011-12. We're not doing that. We're doing gentle measures around an efficiency process, as I've articulated previously. In the Health space, for example, efficiencies outweighed by four-to-one on new funding that comes into that agency compared to last year's budget. We're not able to do everything that you would ask. You're asking us to spend more, but also to borrow less, and the two are incompatible. We're working through it, doing our best.

I recognise as well that at each other minister's Estimates, that minister - whether Health or Education - could be asked those questions about how they're going to work with their secretary to work with the budget that parliament's approving. From my point of view, we recognise that there are significant challenges. I get the message on health inflation, I really do. I've been Health minister for five-and-a-half years. I know exactly how demand pressures materialise and notwithstanding the fact that we got elective surgery levels to the lowest in the state's history, they were difficult to work with health economics, because health is expensive. However, we have a 6.7 per cent increase to the Health budget compared to last year and in the point of your question about when can I tell you that we will have a fiscally balanced position that is not in the forward Estimates and I'm not going to today attempt to put a date on that, but the government's policy is to return to a net operating balance surplus in 2029-30 and when I talk about surplus, I mean a real surplus.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you, Chair. I want to move to the Tasman Bridge. We all got an update from the Premier yesterday in relation to the Tasman Bridge and the acknowledgement that the original proposal was to build wider pathways on both sides of the bridge to support more walking. It's emerged that obviously budget funding and capacity to do those upgrades isn't there because it requires significant structural upgrade. I'm sure you know this from your role as Infrastructure minister.

At the same time, the stadium traffic movement and other data shows that the Tasman Bridge is going to be significantly overcapacity at times and also relies heavily on a modal shift, people not driving, people walking and people bike riding, particularly from the Eastern Shore.

What's the capacity of the budget going forward to finally invest in what is needed for the Tasman Bridge to actually undertake those active transport upgrades that were planned?

Mr FERGUSON - I really appreciate the question, Mr Bayley, thank you for asking it as appropriately as you have as well. It's a major project for our state.

I wouldn't like to overstep and go into another minister's portfolio, but I can speak from some history here that that project's very important to our state and the funding is being provided in the Budget both from state government and the Australian government. I think the figures were 65:65 $130 million towards that project.

I'll put this as delicately as I can. It's not for want of money, that project has had to be re-scoped, it's actually a technical need to, I think the word was 'windage' on the bridge. I'm not sure if that word was used but the fact that that modelling has shown that there's only so much additional infrastructure you can build, including to protect pedestrians with the height that's required, that puts unacceptable strain on the bridge. I think that that would be the bigger reason why that project is being redesigned or re-engineered to still allow those side walkways to be effective but not according to the original vision after getting that technical advice.

I hope that's a good answer for you because it wasn't for want of budget, because if to achieve the project objectives it was a simple matter of allocating a few more tens of millions of dollars and seeking federal support to do the same, I think the government would have been quite prepared to do that. It's actually much more about the structural engineering advice as to what's achievable.

Mr BAYLEY - Well, that's right. It seems to be about the structural integrity of the base and the foundations and so forth, which will probably need attending to at some point, I would imagine, and we'll need funding.

For my follow up question, 65:65 split with the federal government, I assume the pitch to the federal government was very much around active transport, fixing those walkways, allowing for additional modal shift of people. Now, the fact that it's scaled back and we're really just getting some pretty basic - really important, I acknowledge - safety upgrades, do you think it jeopardises that federal government funding in any way, shape or form? I assume that the application was very much around active transport and improving options for commuters, particularly active commuters.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Bayley, the secretary will answer this question as well. In fact, it was as Infrastructure minister and as deputy secretary of State Growth at the time we secured that funding. I'll let the secretary choose his own words, but really quickly acknowledge that I don't want to overstep into another minister's portfolio and speak more about the project than I have, but in terms of the financials and the engagement between the two governments, that would be going not via Treasury, it would be going via State Growth and the federal department.

Mr SWAIN - Treasurer, I'll try not to go too far given it's another agency, but it was actually more the other way around. It was more bridge strengthening project that had an active transport to mention and at that time the federal government was very nervous about the precedent setting of funding a project primarily for active transport. There was a lot of

discussion around congestion and the arrangements that were occurring in other jurisdictions where there was a huge public expenditure from the federal government on congestion projects that were in the form of tunnels or large infrastructure and the conversation with the federal department was how to avoid that and modal shift was one of those. It was kind of an active transport project that was born out of bridge strengthening and not the other way around.

Mr BAYLEY - The bridge strengthening is now just for the bed of the bridge, as opposed to the foundations and the structures?

Mr SWAIN - Yes. I mean, when it was originally conceived, what was happening under the water was not anywhere near as well understood as it currently is. I've probably dated in my knowledge of that now, but I think there's a much more sophisticated understanding of that than there was when we set out in the process.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thank you. I just wanted to talk about that page 56. The strategic action to target which is on gross debt per capita. The strategic action to target for 2032-33 include gross debt per capita of $20,000 and then for 2023-24 preliminary this was $16,267 and budgeted to be $19,452 in 2024-25, an increase to approximately $25,000 in 2028. Just wondering if you could outline the budget repair measures that the government will take to ensure that this target is met by 2032-33.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mrs Pentland, for the question and I would answer this question in a similar way, regardless of which measure that you would have taken us to, whether it was 1,2 or 11 because, taken together, it gives us the indicators of fiscal sustainability into the long term.

Can I just quickly mention as well, if I may, that in the fiscal sustainability report published in 2021, it forecast without corrective measures net debt would grow to between $16 billion and $29 billion by the mid-2030s? You know, we don't want to be there, between $16 and $29 billion, and so that's why even Treasury advice in 2021 for all MPs, for all policymakers and commentators is to be aware of the need for corrective actions and that's what we're doing in this budget. You know, you've heard some earlier questions today where I'm being challenged on low expenditure growth over the Budget and forward Estimates and the efficiencies that we're implementing across agencies which are uncomfortable for agencies to implement? I'd rather not, of course, but we as a government believe that big bureaucracies can be more efficient and give us a better way of supporting those stronger public services that we've committed to. It's about also ensuring that the revenue growth that is published in the forward Estimates allows us, over time, to contribute to that more sustainable position. I would have much rather, as a Liberal treasurer, liked to have had an earlier return to balance and an earlier return to surplus, but we took the view that that is not achievable in the short term. The damage to the economy, and probably the damage to public services, would be too great. The benefits, if any, would be outweighed by the losses in our economy and families and employment.

I have lived through an austerity budget. I have worked in the opposition through an austerity budget. First of all, it didn't work. Second, it created economic carnage and we went into a recession. The goal remains unchanged, even though the target's here. It's the 10-year strategy to take us to 2032. It'll be about constant reinforcement and reminder to treasurers today and treasurers tomorrow, and premiers and cabinets today and tomorrow, to be very mindful of new policy decisions that put further pressure on the budget.

CHAIR - With that, we might have a five minute break and resume at 10.35 a.m.

The committee suspended from 10.29 a.m. to 10.39 a.m.

Mr GARLAND - On the Marinus Link model, in simple terms, Treasury had to buy back Marinus Link from TasNetworks. It was called an equity reinvestment, but it will cost the state $103.5 million. The business case for Marinus Link will be prepared over the next six months. Will you be making the final decision in response to that business case on whether to go ahead with the project? If not, who will?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Garland, for the question. I think you asked me will I be the person that makes the decision? And if not, who will?

Mr GARLAND - Yes.

Mr FERGUSON - It won't be myself as Treasurer who will be making that decision. That will be a whole-of-government decision. You do point out that there is a provision in the Budget to - I think we use the words 'make whole' - or an inequity reinvestment for TasNetworks. I will ask the deputy secretary to speak to that in a moment, to give perfect clarity to how that works. That's about recognising the Tasmanian investment that's already occurred in Marinus. It actually provides a significant benefit to the state when, subject to a positive FID, other governments, Victorian and Australian governments, will be obliged to make new investments there.

You mention the whole-of-state business case. The position that the government adopted about a year ago now was that the government would prepare a whole-of-state business case to inform its position on the final investment decision for Project Marinus. The government is preparing that right now. That's analysing a range of financial, economic, social and energy market impacts of the proposed cable and associated energy developments. I think you'll be interested to know that the government has already indicated that the business case will first of all be made publicly available. It will be fully published. It will be subject to a peer review, which is also occurring. It will be completed at least 30 days before the final investment decision date for Marinus Link cable 1, which we understand, from the company under its new ownership, is currently expected in May 2025. At least 30 days before an FID decision is requested, it will be made publicly available. You'll be able to read it. Your constituents will be able to read it.

There is funding allocated in the state Budget to support Treasury's resourcing of that project team. You asked me if I'll be making the decision. I've answered that. Of course, I'll be a contributor to a discussion and a decision on that.

I did ask Chair if the deputy secretary could just fill in any gaps that we have left on the equity reinvestment. Or are we covered?

Mr CRAIGIE - There's a brief explanation on page 374 of budget paper 2, volume 1, that describes the purpose of the equity reinvestment. It acknowledges that in March 2024, TasNetworks sold Marinus Link Proprietary Limited, the entity responsible for progressing the Marinus Link project, to the joint ownership of the Tasmanian, Victorian and Australian governments. The government has agreed to make TasNetworks whole in respect of the

borrowings it made available to MLPL to progress the Marinus Link project prior to divestment, and funding is provided for an equity contribution of $103.5 million in recognition of the costs incurred by TasNetworks.

Mr SHELTON - Treasurer, can you please inform the committee about the Revitalising National Competition Policy Review and its implications for Tasmania?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Shelton. I wouldn't want people to not be aware of that either. There have been four major waves of competition policy reform in the last 50 years. The Australian government is currently leading a process called Revitalising National Competition Policy and that has a fifth round of reforms that are proposed. In December last year, Treasurers, state and federal, agreed to commence a new wave of reform. Through the Council on Federal Financial Relations, we're jointly developing a long-term pro-competition reform agenda. This work will recognise the significant changes in the economy over the past 30 years since the original National Competition Policy (NCP) was established in 1995 following the 1993 Hilmer Review.

Our government is very supportive of a revitalised NCP agenda and the economic benefits that further reforms could make to the state. We can see potential here for a net positive for our state of Tasmania. We know that increasing competition and reducing red tape can boost productivity and increase confidence, support jobs, innovation and economic growth in our state.

To ensure the success of this, the government supports strong institutional and governance arrangements that are supported by all levels of government. States and territories and the Australian government have agreed to work together to support and enhance competition across existing, new and emerging markets by fostering market conditions that are favourable for the entry and growth of new businesses, products and service offerings.

The principles will also be revitalised to address the contemporary competition issues. The reform agenda is envisioned as a 10-year program of reforms that reflect national priorities and challenges that competition-focused reform can address.

Before you ask, the reform agenda will likely address shared priorities that include overcoming cost-of-living pressures, adapting to the net zero transition, digitalisation, improvements to labour mobility, expansion of the care and support economy and creating a more dynamic business environment.

Two new intergovernmental agreements are being proposed by the end of this year and specific jurisdictional implementation plans will be developed in 2025. I would hope to be able to update the committee or the parliament and the community generally about actions and changes to policy that can support this agenda going forward, noting that while it is in the national interest, as the state Treasurer, I'm acting in the state's interest.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, you said something interesting just before the break about the health department leaning into its SPA to meet an overspend and there is some transparency in the budget. I had a look in the break on page 130, footnote 1 says:

> The decrease in cash and deposits in 2025 reflects additional expenditure from the department's agency financial management account in 23-24 to meet demand pressures.

We can see that it's been reduced from just over $157 million to just over $6 million over the last year. What was that funding set aside for in that account?

Mr FERGUSON - I wouldn't have that information. I don't think I would have that information. I'll look to Mr Craigie and Mr Swain, but that would probably be a question that Health would answer but I'm happy if we have answers to provide them. Do you have any information?

Mr CRAIGIE - Treasurer, I think all I can add to that is each agency has a specific purpose account that they use to manage their finances. Agencies also have their own source revenue. Health generates its own revenue which it puts into that account which it can use to fund its services. The balances vary over time depending on the timing of the revenues and the timing of expenditure out of those accounts. But as the Treasurer alluded to, and as you can see by the movement and the balance, there were significant drawdowns in 2023-24 through that account.

Mr WILLIE - We'll ask the Health minister that question, but are there guidelines around how this is used? Are you authorising other agencies to meet over spends with their specific purpose accounts?

Mr SWAIN - Yes, the SPA accounts are governed by the *Financial Management Act* and there are arrangements in place with agencies as to how that's used and transfers within budget areas for different departments. Broadly, there are, and the management of that sits with the agency.

Mr WILLIE - We've heard a lot today about the challenges, particularly in Health, and trying to meet your estimates across the forward Estimates, but you've effectively reduced the Health department's capacity to deal with that by drawing down on this account, haven't you?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you for the question. I don't believe that I have taken that action. That's been a decision of the accountable authority. I don't think that's something that the Treasury or the Treasurer has imposed or done, but I won't be speaking for others at this table. I don't feel that would be fair. It would be a question for the health outputs. Do you have anything to add?

Mr SWAIN - I think that's correct. We did have some conversations with Health through that period about how they would manage the expenditure that they were incurring, so that's true, but at the end of the day, the accountability sits with the agency.

Mr WILLIE - With the Royal Hospital beds, we've been talking to them about what it was set aside for.

Mr BAYLEY - There's $610 million in the budget for the Macquarie Point Urban Renewal project. We already know, as we've discussed here, that stage one of the project, the stadium and a few other bits and pieces is going to cost well over $800 million according to documents and then there's significant other bits unfunded.

Stage 2 and stage 3 are critically important. These are the bits that the federal government's $240 million hangs off. We must meet a housing component and we must upgrade wharf 6. Treasury has been in discussions with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation minister, as we have alluded and discussed. Do we know how much stage 2 and stage 3 are going to cost?

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Bayley, I wouldn't avoid the question, but it would be best if the deputy secretary who sits on the steering committee could be able to answer that as best he can, noting that this is not Treasury's project. This is a project that has an authorising environment that does include the steering committee on which Treasury sits, but the authorising environment is much more directed through the Department of State Growth, minister for Sport and the MPDC itself.

Mr BAYLEY - I can appreciate that Treasurer, but the scale of the investments here and the scale of the risk as identified in the state Budget is pretty extreme.

Mr FERGUSON - I wouldn't say extreme.

Mr BAYLEY - I would.

Mr FERGUSON - I know you would, I wouldn't.

Mr BAYLEY - Most Tasmanians would.

Mr FERGUSON - The state contribution of $375 million is one third of one of the billions that we're spending in infrastructure. I'll just make that point.

Mr BAYLEY - But we all know it's not $375 million.

Mr FERGUSON - I nonetheless respect the question. We're here to answer your questions and I make the deputy secretary available to add any further insight that he's able to.

Mr CRAGIE - Thank you, Treasurer. All I can add is that there's an executed project agreement between the Commonwealth and the state that's been signed by the relevant ministers that's publicly available on the Commonwealth website.

The Department of State Growth is responsible for the administration and delivery of that project agreement, not Treasury. I don't think I can really add anymore.

Mr BAYLEY - What happens if, as expected with the stadium itself, costs blow out so significantly? The state Budget is already in record debt going well out into the forward Estimates. What happens if we can't get to those stage two and three projects in relation to the $240 million of federal funding?

Mr FERGUSON - I think you'd be inviting me to engage in a hypothetical, but we have a project plan and we have a committed group of people working together to achieve that objective. I respect that you don't agree with the project and at least to your credit you've been consistent about that, but we disagree on this one and the government wants to see it go ahead -

Mr BAYLEY - Tasmanians will be up for the bill, wouldn't they? The $240 million?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I beg your pardon?

Mr BAYLEY - The Tasmanians would end up having to reimburse the Commonwealth for $240 million, would they not, if we didn't get to the wharf upgrades and the housing?

Mr FERGUSON - I think that there's a much broader set of factors there, including the fact that the documentation that came with the project commitment's funds of 240 million from Canberra in itself stipulated that wharf 6 would be underpinned by appropriate commercial agreement-making contributing to either the upfront capital value cost of upgrading wharf 6 or a different model that involves more of a lease type and an amortised model over decades.

I'm going to invite the secretary to respond further, and my closing comment would only be that we're committed to the project and also making sure that it is financially a good outcome for the state as well.

Mr SWAIN - I can just add a little bit of detail and, again, try not to go too far into other departments' and ministers' responsibilities.

The Commonwealth's interest in that site was around urban development in particular, and the stadium was a mechanism for stimulating greater urban development and, at officer level with the Infrastructure department, they were particularly interested in its location, which is sort of at the centre point of the three main transport routes in and out of Hobart.

The initial agreement that's been signed still needs to have a lot more detail added to it in subsequent negotiations, but it is about the wider precinct. So, there's a way to go in terms of that detail and, if you were in a situation for any reason why the stadium couldn't continue, I suspect that that would lead to further discussions with the Commonwealth.

Mr BAYLEY - And likely repayment by the Tasmanian taxpayer?

Mrs BESWICK - Treasurer, you mentioned yesterday that you wanted to normalise debt, making sure it remains manageable and avoiding unnecessary borrowing. You stated the government has borrowed to build and that this borrowing should be done at a reasonable level. Can you share what you consider to be a reasonable level of debt and what specific criteria or guidelines you use to determine what is an acceptable level of debt and when you would actually be projecting some of our debt to be paid down?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mrs Beswick, for the question.

I don't want to be too challenging in response, but it doesn't sound like my usual word, that I would use that word 'normalise' of debt. Now, if I have used that word, I'll nonetheless respond to your question.

I don't want, and I have never sought to try to be relaxed or send inappropriate messages about borrowings going forward. I take a conservative view on debt. I accept that debt plays

an important role in public finances, in particular that it is appropriate to use borrowings to sustain a capital program.

It is appropriate to use borrowings to get a state or a country through a pandemic because you're actually investing in the here and now, which are necessary preconditions for a prosperous economy in the future. So, it is appropriate that governments can borrow to do things and activities that have a broader policy rationale than just paying today's bills. I get that.

If I have used that word, I accept that. I don't think that's my usual description, but I do want to see borrowings over time being limited and constrained and that's my attitude and that's my belief and that's why in this Budget, while being very direct about the level of our borrowings and our relative borrowings compared to other jurisdictions, I always make the point that while we have the lowest debt in the country, I always make the point that that's no surprise.

We're the smallest state, we should have the lowest debt, and I then refer, always, to how that looks compared to other jurisdictions through a range of lenses, whether it's by the size of our population, the size of our economy, or the size of our revenues. I make a proportionate reflection and in that respect we're very competitive - I think the third lowest in the country.

So make those points. I don't have a number in my mind, because I know that, in the future, future budgets will need also to be shaped by the circumstances that confront a government and the opportunities that present.

I do want to see an uplift in our GST, I do want to see the national economy grow, I do want to see the GST pool recover back to some of the earlier estimates of growth forecast which have actually all been downgraded, because that'll be part of our economic success going forward and in the meantime our borrowings are manageable, affordable. But, at the same time, with the fiscal strategy, I think it demonstrates that as Treasurer - and the Rockliff government - we are keen and determined to accept the deficit budgeting for the period of time that we're in at the moment to invest in the capital program, which is the lifeblood of strong economies in our regions going forward, but not to ever send a message that borrowings can be unlimited, because I've never thought that way or said that.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thank you, Chair. Minister Ferguson, when implementing efficiency dividends, what specific guidance do you give department heads to ensure they meet targets without reducing the quality of essential services? Do you acknowledge that setting blanket targets passes the responsibility for difficult budget decisions onto departments, rather than showing strong leadership from Treasury? And how much pressure would departments face to meet these targets, especially in areas like Health, given the government regularly overspends on Health? How can you promise that saving tens of millions won't harm patient care or reduce frontline services, considering past budgets have struggled to control Health spending?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mrs Pentland, for the question. I respect the question and I think you've asked it very fairly. So the budget efficiency dividends - and I will refer to them as efficiencies or savings measures - they're all targeted at the back line. We've seen significant growth in the in GGS spending over the life of our government and to the point that we have -

I don't have the figure exactly in front of me - something like 8000 more employees in our state public service than when we came to office. Is it 8000?

Seven thousand seven hundred. We have a significant growth there but we also want to protect our frontline services, protect our public service jobs, but finding more efficient ways of operating.

Now, we've seen efficiency dividends used in the past. I saw them in, they were budgeted in 2019-20 but not proceeded with. They were a significant larger effect on budget than this efficiency dividend. But that efficiency dividend was just before COVID and, during the pandemic, that was entirely reversed out and it was clearly not the right time when March 2020 turned up.

The earlier dividend efficiency program or budget savings program I've touched on earlier in the hearing in 2011-12, they were much larger. This one represents approximately 0.5 per cent of total annual expenditure in this financial year 24-25.

In comparison, even the Liberal budget savings measures in 2020, that represented more like 0.75 per cent of total annual expenditure. So, more like 75c in $100.

Now there are principles, because you asked me specifically how are we going to protect those frontline services, and I would absolutely wish to take a moment, if that's okay with the committee, to speak to the principles for agency specific saving strategies. Now, I won't read this out in detail unless you ask me further questions.

But accountable authorities have a number of responsibilities under the FMA and some flexibility is necessary at an agency level for them to identify savings measures to achieve their efficiency allocations.

To ensure a consistent approach, agencies have been provided with guidance that outlines the government's strategy and expectations on the types of savings that should be identified by each agency.

The following principles and guidance have been developed. I won't read them out in full, but there are five:

- First of all, savings measures must be achievable in both the short and long term. This means that agencies must identify savings measures that are structural and achievable on an ongoing basis.

- Second, savings measures must be allocated to activities and costs within the control or influence of the agency. So, for example, you shouldn't be trying to make savings when it's actually Australian Government funding. You can't do that.

- Third, savings measures must consider operational impacts. This means that the savings measures must consider matters, including but not limited to, timing and transitional issues, staffing impact, internal communications and change management requirements.

- Very importantly, number four, savings measures must not negatively impact on the outcomes of frontline services and there's some detail there that's been provided if you ask me, I'll elaborate.

- Finally, five: savings measure achievement must be able to be reliably reported to budget committee.

We believe that we can have a more efficient public service, notwithstanding the fact that we are putting much more into the Budget than is being asked for in savings.

Mrs PENTLAND - Can I ask if you could just elaborate on point four a little bit more? Could we table that document, or whatever you're reading there?

Mr FERGUSON - By the time I've answered this question, I will in fact read it all out:

> Savings measures must not negatively impact on the outcomes of frontline services. This means that while a savings measure can be allocated to any agency operating cost allowed within these principles, including those associated with frontline services, such as a reduction of staff, it should have no impact or limit the impact on the intended outcome of frontline services, i.e. no reduction in services.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thank you.

Mr SWAIN - I was just going to follow on in relation to principles 3 and 4, which were around operational considerations and frontline services. When you think through those matters in practical terms, the agency delivering the services really has to make choices around how those efficiencies are best met, because Treasury is not going to have the detailed knowledge of their operation to be able to fulfil those two principles. In addition to that, under the *Financial Management Act* it is the agency's secretary who is ultimately accountable for the efficient use of the resources made available to them through the parliament.

In relation to employee growth, from the middle of 2014 to the middle of 2024, the growth was 31 per cent or 7683 - I think it's FTE.

Mrs PENTLAND - Sorry, can you repeat that?

Mr SWAIN - It's 7683 full-time equivalents.

Mrs PENTLAND - Sorry, that's the increase from -

Mr SWAIN - That's the growth in the State Service from June 2014 to June 2024.

Mr SHELTON - Treasurer, could you please outline the risks to Tasmania's revenue and in particular outline the impact on our finances if the no-worse-off guarantee is not made permanent?

Mr WILLIE - The one you signed up to?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Shelton. It's an important question, and the no-worse-off guarantee must be made permanent. It must be perpetual. I really appreciate the question and your genuine interest in it.

Total general government sector revenue is expected to be $8.95 billion in 2024-25, which represents an increase of $529 million compared to last year. Over the forward Estimates, revenue is forecast to grow by $497 million. We touched on that earlier in terms of revenue growth. GST revenue is estimated to be $3.519 billion for 2024-25. GST revenue is the single largest source of revenue for Tasmania, representing 39.3 per cent of total GGS revenue in 2024-25. Tasmania's GST revenue is highly sensitive to the size of the national GST pool, as well as Tasmania's share of national population and Tasmania's GST relativity, which of course is determined by the Commonwealth Grants Commission, the CGC.

I'm pleased that the recent release of the CGC's 2024 update provided an uplift in Tasmania's relativity. We grew to a relativity of 1.83.

I'm also pleased that in December last year the federal government announced a three-year extension to the no-worse-off guarantee that you asked me about. This is important. Three years is welcome. It's not as good as it being made permanent, but it's better than one year, which I was concerned that they may do just to get past an election. We were pleased with the three-year extension.

This outcome is a result of our advocacy together with other state treasurers and premiers on the national stage. We've been relentlessly lobbying the Australian Government regarding GST distributions, and this outcome is a good step forward. Without it, I'm sure the committee would like to know how much we'd be worse off by. The figure is $253 million.

Funding received through the no-worse-off guarantee is critical to enabling us to invest into the things Tasmanians care about like health, education, housing and infrastructure. While this outcome ensures we don't lose hundreds of millions of GST in the short term, we have to maintain our pursuit of a permanent and ongoing agreement to ensure that we always receive our fair share. I'll stop there, only to add that there is a Productivity Commission review to be completed during and by the end of 2026.

Mr SWAIN - I was going to blend the two -

Mr FERGUSON - You're welcome to jump in with the CGC in the meantime, but the key goal for us is to be an active participant in the Productivity Commission's review, which will be occurring and should be completed by the end of 2026. It is a key strategic get. If you're a Labor politician, a Liberal politician or an Independent or Greens politician, we should be on an absolute unity ticket here to stand up for Tasmania through that process and, regardless of who wins the next federal election, ensure that we get long-term, perpetual and enduring revenue certainty out of those future arrangements.

Mr SWAIN - The step before the productivity review is the CGC review of methodology - the five-yearly review. That's scheduled to complete in February this year. Through Mr Burgess's area of Treasury, we've been very active in participating in that process. That will set up the current methodology that will then be considered by the Productivity Commission. That's a very important step.

One of the things that Tasmania has been arguing for a number of years is the concept of cumulative disadvantage. There are issues of scale and demography that affect individual cost, but there's also a cumulative effect across service delivery and cost structures that needs to be taken into account. We'll be continuing to be very active in that process.

Mr WILLIE - I heard before that there were conversations between the department of Treasury and the Health department around this specific purpose account and the $150 million. What was the $150 million set aside for?

Mr FERGUSON - In respect of the specific purpose account in Health, I wouldn't be able to answer that question for you. I don't possess that.

Mr WILLIE - You said there were conversations between Treasury and Health. Surely there was a conversation about what it was set aside for.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, I'll be making my deputy secretary available to you in a moment, but I don't personally have that knowledge or information. Health would, but I would be quite comfortable if Mr Swain first, or Mr Craigie second, would care to elaborate any further. Reflecting on the conversations that were had, we respect those conversations, but I think the question is, do we possess that knowledge?

Mr SWAIN - We had some conversations around the retained revenues and appropriation being the source of funds going into the SPA over time, and how that could be used in relation to the overspends. We talked that through with Health, but at the end of the day, it's their SPA account to manage.

Mr WILLIE - The question was, what had they set it aside for?

Mr FERGUSON - I respect the question. I don't have the answer to that question you've asked me now for a third time. I don't have that information. The accountable authority here is the Health department and Health secretary. If I had the information I would be comfortable sharing it with you, unless anyone here can tell me I have access to that?

Mr CRAGIE - All I can possibly add is that the Health specific purpose account is there to help support the funding of health services.

Mr WILLIE - Is it government policy now to raid government department accounts to prop up the Budget?

Mr FERGUSON - No, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - It looks like it.

Mr FERGUSON - I've answered the question.

Mr WILLIE - You talked earlier about a net operating balance that's not in the forward Estimates. You said it was a real surplus. Do you admit that even if we give you that net operating surplus in 2029-30, it doesn't stabilise the debt position?

Mr FERGUSON - It depends on the size of the surplus. I think you might be verballing me, by the way. When I said -

Mr WILLIE - Are you talking about balance?

Mr FERGUSON - I think you are. I'm trying to be fair, but I believe you are verballing me. I have often reflected on the simple fact that the 2029-30 year is outside the forward Estimates. It is the policy position of the government that it's that timeframe. Don't you want me to be realistic? We believe that's a -

Mr WILLIE - I want you to be truthful.

Mr FERGUSON - Fine. I'll be both realistic and truthful. I've made the point that the government's position is that that is the realistic and sensible timeframe for the return to surplus. You may feel that you could do it better, sooner, faster. Second, I've talked about what kind of surplus. I've talked about a real surplus - a proper surplus. I can't forecast today what the size of that could be for obvious reasons. It's off the forward Estimates. That's the policy ambition that we have. The extent to which you need to go into further borrowings over the Budget and forward Estimates and the out years would clearly be a reflection on the level of success of getting to that surplus how quickly, and at what size that surplus would actually be in dollar terms.

Mr WILLIE - When you have a cash surplus.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, the size of the net operating balance will be a direct contributor to the cash balance and the fiscal balance. Because they're off budget in 2029-30, we wouldn't be able to guess, at this point in time, the magnitude of those. That's the stated policy objective: to achieve a net operating balance surplus in 2029-30. If you're making a point that doesn't necessarily mean that you've capped out your borrowings, I would agree with you. I've said as much publicly. We're into a hypothetical that I'm not able to -

Mr WILLIE - You're talking about the hypothetical.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I would like to finish my sentence, if that's okay, just to make the point that we don't know, and nobody can know, until we get closer to that year.

Mr BAYLEY - Treasurer, $610 million in the Budget for Macquarie Point Development Corporation is a huge amount of money by any measure for an average Tasmanian. $800 million plus for the stadium likewise is also huge. It's huge in everyone's minds. I appreciate you're not the relevant minister overseeing the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, but you are the Treasurer. You would be sitting on the Cabinet subcommittee that oversees the spend.

I wanted to ask your view in relation to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation's commercial activities. Do you think they should be consistent with the corporation's principle objectives and functions? Do you think that any of its commercial activities should be appropriately costed and managed? Do you think that it should be compliant with the government's competitive neutrality principles? Do you think those three things are reasonable

expectations to have of a government-owned entity spending $600-plus million? Consistent with this act, appropriately costed and managed and compliant with your own government's competitive neutrality principles?

Mr FERGUSON - Let's take this together. I respect the question and the good intention behind it. I recognise that you oppose the project. That is a slightly different way to ask the question which moves into process.

Mr BAYLEY - 100 per cent.

Mr FERGUSON - Please don't make any assumptions about Cabinet committees. Unless the Premier is prepared to share that with you, it's not my role to share with you how Cabinet works because I'm sworn to a process there. I invite you to take these questions to the relevant minister who has the direct relation with MPDC.

In broad terms, without wanting to overstep the mark in any way into another minister's portfolio, as Treasurer, I broadly agree with the direction of your question. I don't want to walk into traps because government policy and the corporate intent of MPDC can change. If there was a need for certain approaches to take opportunities that exist in the corporate sector to get more private investment into the stadium, we ought to be doing that. Fresh capital is a relief on the budget. I hope we'd agree on that. If there's fresh private capital that can come into the precinct, I see that as a positive if it's well-managed. If it's well-managed, and particularly if it leads to -

Mr BAYLEY - Costed and managed.

Mr FERGUSON - You take the long view on these things. We want to deliver our social and economic objectives here. It's reasonable for the government to tell MPDC what, as its owner, it expects it to perform, and the way in which it should do so. I'm trying not to sidestep the question nor step into a policy area that I don't have day-to-day responsibility for.

Mr SWAIN - I'll speak in terms of Treasury advice, because I obviously can't talk to government policy. If there are processes that involve proposals from the private sector for what they may do and they come out of competitive procurement process or other negotiations, I think it would be available to the government to consider whether the current act contemplated all those things. You could also look at other frameworks that we have, so, for example, the arrangements that apply to state-owned companies. There might be elements that become more relevant. That wouldn't be unusual as a policy consideration at the time, but it would very much depend on what came out of negotiations or processes. It's hard to predict.

In terms of competitive neutrality policy, that's something the state generally supports, so, in terms of Treasury advice, we would be seeking to operate within that framework, particularly if there are further national e-competition policy developments and if the states request of the Commonwealth, which is that any future arrangements are underpinned by contributions to the cost of those reforms is actually honoured, that would probably become an obligation under agreements anyway.

Mr BAYLEY - While I'm hearing you broadly accept that they're sound principles that should be adopted, in the wake of directing the Macquarie Point Development Corporation to junk the previous development plan for the site and proceed with the stadium, why do you think

those principles would need to be edited out of a statement of ministerial expectations? When we're dealing with such vast amounts of money and complex negotiations, that no longer needs to be consistent with its corporate principles, no longer needs to act appropriately, costed and managed, and it doesn't have to comply with government's cost neutrality? That's exactly what happened.

Mr FERGUSON - With respect, that's your spin on the scenario but, broadly speaking, the government, in trust for the people of Tasmania, owns the precinct, owns the corporation., is the recipient of federal funds, AFL funds to a much smaller degree, and is responsible for arguing its case for state contribution towards the project. So, it's a state project. But the vehicle through which it's been delivered, as you know, is through MPDC, with the policy support and agency support of the Department of State Growth. We've had a lot of expertise in delivering major capital projects over the years.

I don't want to seductively fall for just agreeing with you on this but it is the government's entity that it owns in trust for the people of Tasmania, and driving a project means driving the corporation as well.

Mr BAYLEY - And setting appropriate standards for it to meet. And that isn't spin, Treasurer, it's a statement of fact that those principles were edited out of the ministerial statement of expectations for the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. When we're dealing with $600 million-plus, when it's public funds, and when we can all expect it to go beyond that, abandoning appropriately costed and managed principles is an alarm bell for everyday Tasmanians.

Mr FERGUSON - Again, if I can just pick up the question, we're driving the project and statements of expectation, ministerial charters do change over time across all sorts of government businesses .

Mr BAYLEY - This looks like a significant winding back of constraint on the corporation, though. This is abandoning some pretty fundamental principles that -

Mr FERGUSON - I wouldn't necessarily want to agree with you on that either but I don't have the subject experts to hand today with me at this hearing and I'm not the principal minister here. But many of these principles will persist going into the future. For example, when there's a procurement there will be principles that do need to be observed.

Mr BAYLEY - They were relevant before the stadium. They have been ditched this time.

Mr GARLAND - The Eslake review recommended that an amendment be considered to the *Charter of Budget Responsibility Act* in an attempt to stem the flow of spending promises from the major parties during state election campaigns. Two of the suggested amendments were requiring the major political parties to indicate how they proposed to fund their election promise and they submit costings to Treasury for a review 15 days before an election, with a review of those costings to be completed and published by the secretary in the week before the election. Minister, will you support either of those initiatives?

Mr FERGUSON - That is a very good question from a respected person, Mr Eslake, who I respect. I particularly appreciated his contribution. It's not just in his personal capacity. This report was an initiative of Mrs Pentland, Mrs Beswick and Mr Jenner, and they deserve a

lot of credit for that report. I know that you would add yourself to supporting that but that is their achievement, to get the government to agree to that. It's brought a new perspective to a debate and contest of ideas on public finance management.

For good reason, the government did need to provide a level of response when it was released because some of the key recommendations were not acceptable to the government because they flew in the face of some strong commitments we made at the election. We intend to honour election commitments about not introducing new and higher taxes. But just putting that to one side, it's a report worth the read and his recommendations will all be responded to in the fullness of time, including the very interesting ones you've raised at the table here today. Today is not my opportunity to lock in yes or no on those particular recommendations, but they do now sit on the public record.

This is not intended as another free kick at the opposition in Tasmania, but it is concerning to me when individuals, in a contest of ideas in an election campaign, seeking the vote so they could form a government, even compared to the Liberal Party's, I think, $1.8 billion in commitments around OpEx and CapEx, that we could be doubled by our opponents just to win votes.

I accept the premise of the question that we will need to respond to those recommendations. We're intending to have a response to the Eslake independent review by the time of the next budget. I think that's broadly our goal, our timeframe to be able to do that. It's a fair bit of work. Noting Mr Eslake had several months to write the report, we'd like some time to be able to consult with agencies and the Cabinet process to do a full and comprehensive response to it. I'm certain that some of the recommendations won't be acceptable and I'm also certain that we will adopt some of his recommendations in full. The secretary would like to add, if that's okay.

Mr SWAIN - I was just going to make the point that the costings process is a bit imperfect in that it's a tight timeframe and you're effectively costing off the information provided. Certainly, in relation to capital costs, costs will move around a lot through the scoping and development phase of a project. So, a costing at the front end by anyone is likely to be wrong by the time you get to a more sophisticated understanding of the project. So, it's inherently difficult. We have discussed internally, though, that the alternative is not having one, where you don't provide any guidance on those costings. So, the approach adopted at the moment is to try and adopt a common methodology for every political costing, no matter who it comes from. I make those comments just to make the point that it is actually quite a complex consideration how to do this properly, in response to Mr Eslake's recommendation.

Mr FERGUSON - And just to make a point that might have been lost in the last couple of months, the Budget was written and locked down, and expenditure decisions had already been committed to the budget process. Then Treasury take approximately six weeks to draw up the actual technical documents. The Eslake independent review report actually came in between. For anybody that felt the report was ignored, I would absolutely say, please don't take it that way because it was not possible for any meaningful response to occur in this Budget process. We look forward to speaking more about this and one thing we won't be doing is ignoring that report.

CHAIR - Thank you. Just to let the committee know that as a resolution of the committee, the Tasmanian Audit Office is in attendance and happy to come in and be involved, if required by the committee.

Mrs BESWICK - Treasurer, how do you come to the $649 million for the commission of inquiry payout figure for the victim-survivors? How is that calculated?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you for your question, Mrs Beswick. I'll take some time to respond to this. In recent years, claims under the National Redress Scheme for institutional child sexual abuse and civil claims against the state of Tasmania through various government agencies in relation to institutional child sex abuse in state care have increased. The 2024-25 Budget provides $103 million in 2024-25 to meet National Redress Scheme and associated civil compensation payments related to institutional abuse. This includes an allocation of $75 million for the recent settlement of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre class action. That number is contained within the $103 million. Over the Budget and forward Estimates, the total appropriation allocated for the settlement of redress and civil claims, and the AYDC class action is $150 million.

Specifically to your question, the process that led to this is as follows. An independent actuary engaged by the Department of Justice conducted work and led to an estimate that was then provided to the Department of Justice toward the end of last financial year. That independent actuary has estimated the state's abuse-related liability for all current and future redress and civil claims is $646.9 million as at 30 June 2024. So, at a point in time, an independent actuary provided that advice and I think it was somewhat agreed that that process should occur between Treasury and Justice and, unless I'm mistaken, the Auditor-General.

Mr CRAIGIE - The independent actuary's appointed by the Department of Justice and the Auditor-General has had an interest in recognising that liability.

Mr FERGUSON - Okay, that's a better way to express it. The preliminary outcomes report for 2023-24 recognised this liability as at 30 June 2024. The accounting treatment for this provision required the recognition of an expense in the general government sector income statement of $571.2 million. That, on its own, had a significant impact on GGS financial results for 2023-24. Even though that amount had not been paid out, under the accounting standards it needed to be recognised in that financial year. I will ask if I've answered your question and what was the last part of your question?

Mrs BESWICK - No. Thank you. You said there was $75 million. Is that all that's been committed to so far?

Mr FERGUSON - No, there's more to it than the $75 million. That specific amount is the agreed settlement that was reached between the State of Tasmania and the plaintiff lawyers representing a class in a class action. But there are other payments that are, in fact, budgeted in real-terms cash principally to meet the state's share of National Redress Scheme payments which arose out of an earlier royal commission into institutional child sexual abuse.

Mrs BESWICK - So, the $150 million you mentioned, that's the cash flow of that over the next four years?

Mr CRAIGIE - There's a difference between the accounting recognition of a liability and the timing of the future payments. As the Treasurer has already responded to, the $150 million across the forward Estimates is the estimated expenditure that will reduce that liability. Under the accounting standards, because the liability has been able to be calculated and determined, using the actuary's estimates, the accounting standards require that you recognise that liability as a provision in the year you do that. You expense it. That's why, as the Treasurer commented, there's a significant impact on the preliminary outcome result, which is the recognition of that provision. That's a non-cash item, that's just an accounting entry.

In the future when those payments are made, they won't be expensed. They'll actually reduce that liability, but they'll be the cash flow impact. The $150 million includes the cash flow impact.

Mr SHELTON - The Budget identifies a significant level of infrastructure expenditure. What are the key projects that will be delivered by the government in this Budget?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you Mr Shelton, for being such a great advocate for our capital program, including in your electorate. The Budget supports $5.1 billion in infrastructure investment over the Budget and forward Estimates and that makes intergenerational investment through the construction of contemporary productive assets and this really is central to our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future.

I won't go through the numbers again as I did in my opening statement, but they are on the record. Funding is continued for the very exciting new Bridgewater bridge, which is coming up out of the water. It is the biggest transport infrastructure project in the state's history and you can now see the finish line insight and it's a wonderful outcome. Our government deserves a lot of credit for driving that project, but so too do the men and women working on the tools on that job and delivering it for Tasmanians.

Major road projects also include the completion of the Midland Highway 10-year action plan, one more summer of work, the southeast traffic solution between Hobart and Sorell, upgrades to the Lyell Highway, works on the Bass Highway between Launceston and Marrawah and improvements to the West and East Tamar Highways.

The Budget invests $650 million into intergenerational health infrastructure. Of that, $155 million this financial year. This funding will progress major upgrades to the Royal, the LGH for Stages 1 and 2 and investments at the North West Regional Hospital and the Mersey. Significant investment is also undertaken here in Hobart's St Johns Park to support new mental health and well-being beds and mental health services, not just for the south, but for the state.

There's a significant funding of $359 million into schools and education facilities, major infrastructure upgrades planned for 15 Tasmanian schools across the state, as well as four new super-sized child and family learning centres and they are in all of our communities. The Budget also includes infrastructure investment of $356 million into tourism, recreation and culture assets and $287 million in law-and-order capital projects. The government has also allocated $1.2 billion in equity funding through non-GGS entities. That includes our MPDC we've been discussing, as well, our government businesses.

These are important to us. I'll just touch on them. Only funding for Tasmania Irrigation to support tranche 3 irrigation projects, Energy on Farms initiative, the Lake Leake Dam Life

Extension project and equity funding being provided to Hydro Tasmania for the redevelopment of Tarraleah Power Station, and colleagues, if you haven't managed to get there yet please ask minister Duigan for an invitation. You will never forget it. These are investments not just in the here and now, because they are jobs in the here and now, but their investments in our future competitiveness, our future productivity to help set the state up for a great future and a positive future.

Mr WILLIE - In the other hearing, Treasurer, the department secretary for Health just said that you approved the raiding of the Health account. Did you approve it without knowing what it was set aside for?

Mr FERGUSON - I'll just ask for some advice, Mr Willie.

Mr SWAIN - You did approve it, yes, but I don't think you were briefed on that aspect.

Mr FERGUSON - We're happy to discuss the process for the allocations, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - You approved the rating of $150 million and you didn't ask to what it was set aside for?

Mr FERGUSON - I'm happy to discuss with you the process and how it works, but your questions around a raid are a strange question because regardless of the balance of the SPA, it still has an impact on the net operating balance for the state. Being part of the approvals process is different to knowing what the funds were originally set aside from which is where you were coming from.

Mr WILLIE - Did you know what it was for?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I've already answered that question, Mr Willie. We don't have that information.

Mr WILLIE - I appreciate the questions around the fiscal strategy today and my read of it, you're in breach of or going to breach 9 of the 11 fiscal strategies and the credit agencies themselves are making concerning comments now in the media. We had Mr Martin Foo from Standard and Poor's saying it's very unusual to see financial targets and then a few sentences later, a frank admission that the state is going to breach all of its own targets.

You had rival agency Moody's Investors Services, John Mannings, he said a government's failure to achieve its own financial targets prompted doubts about its commitment to budget repair. He also said that he went on to talk about your unfunded election commitments and the negative impact that would have on the Budget. I heard Mr Swain, earlier, suggest that markets could already be starting to price a lower credit rating for Tasmania, and how much have TASCORP issued bond yield market rates moved since the Budget was issued, is the first question. Are they trading at a higher rate than before the Budget? Are you across this issue, Treasurer, given the implications for the state Budget?

Mr FERGUSON - I'm more than across it, Mr Willie. I've given a very strong narrative about my position on borrowings. They need to be carefully decided and constrained where

possible and kept at a manageable level. We are prepared to borrow to build and we are prepared to borrow to protect our state through the pandemic. We're also further prepared to borrow during a period where the Budget is in a deficit position as we carefully choose the timeframe for return to surplus position. I also recognise that if we would follow your advice, we'd be borrowing a lot more money.

In respect of ratings agencies, I try not to provide commentary on ratings agencies because they are necessarily independently arrived at and the ratings agencies that Tasmania engages with are S&P and Moody's, so we don't try to influence them through our public statements as tempting as, occasionally, it might be. In respect of future issuances from TASCORP, I will defer to the Treasury Secretary who sits on that board and - secretary, if you're prepared to share a narrative, I won't put words in your mouth, but we do have a strong narrative in the budget papers prepared by the Treasury about the weight cost of our borrowings and they're affordable for Tasmania.

Mr SWAIN - Yeah, I will not say too much and I'll use the word I used before. I didn't want to speculate because, just conscious that that speculation could be interpreted in the market. I'll just say broadly, there'll be supply and demand factors at play that go beyond Tasmania, including the level of state debt that's been issued around the country that will play into markets. A whole range of international and national factors will also be at play and it'll be the timing and quantum of any additional debt that's been sourced by Tasmania that will come into play relative to anything the rating agencies might do in the future. I just think it's too speculative to really comment on.

Mr WILLIE - What about my question regarding the bond yield market rates moving since the Budget has released?

Mr SWAIN - I don't have a specific answer to that question.

Mr WILLIE - Will you take that on notice, Treasurer?

Mr FERGUSON - No, I won't.

Mr WILLIE - You won't take that on notice?

Mr FERGUSON - It would be a question for a GBE scrutiny here with Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation in November-December, but I don't have that information at the table and I'm not sure I'd be sharing it with you.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you, Chair. Treasurer, I want to go to an issue that there's been some backward and forward about for many years, and that goes to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. My understanding is that you've signed an exemption for Treasurer's instruction so as to allow for a sole tenderer contract to be issued at over $20 million. What's the rationale for the request for the contract for fixed wing aeromedical services to be given an exemption?

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Bayley, would it be okay if I took it on notice? But I'll do my very best to present the answer back to the committee before we rise.

Mr BAYLEY - Of course.

Mr FERGUSON - I'll get you the detail to that. I'll have it to you, if I can, before that time.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess further to that, I'd be interested to understand your rationale for allowing a sole tenderer, contract of over $20 million, at a time when we have cuts across the public service. It just seems to be a slightly a reckless act on one hand when you are cutting the public service and impacting on the services that Tasmanians expect and deserve, on the other.

Mr FERGUSON - I will pre-empt a future answer. If I can ask my Treasury team to present some information that I can bring to the committee before 12.10 p.m., we will do that, but also to give you an assurance, Mr Bayley, that I receive requests from agencies for an exemption to a Treasurer's instruction very rarely, and consequently they're very rarely granted. I can assure you that I take those matters on very careful advice. On the small number of occasions when I've provided an exemption to a TI, it's only ever been when I've had supporting advice from the Treasury, not just the agency requesting it.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you, and I appreciate that and that's why we ask for that explanation of the rationale.

Chair, just by way of process, do I need to write that out with the questions and answers coming before the end of it?

CHAIR - No, only if I am unable to bring it to you before 12.10 p.m.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you.

Mr GARLAND - I started the day with a hard question; I might finish with an easy one. What has the salmon industry contributed in the way of tax in the last financial year? And overall, what have they contributed since they've been in this space?

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Garland, thank you very much for the question. It's not as easy as you forecast because I don't have that information immediately to hand. I will be able to obtain it for you and I will obtain it for you, but I'll be doing so after asking my team to speak with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE).

You asked what's the budget amount of income from that industry. I'd be looking for things like marine farm lease fees. Also, we made some changes to the regulations so that we have a full value capture for the cost of regulation so I'll make sure that we cover that as well. I would need to take some time and come back to the committee with that information, if you'd be good enough to place it in writing.

Mrs PENTLAND - I just wanted to ask some questions about the Tasmanian Gender Budget Statement. With regard to young people and employment, education and training, females in Tasmania seem to be doing it tough as far as getting engaged with employment and study. If you have a look there at the 15- to 24-year-olds, they sit at 11 per cent in Tasmania; in comparison to Australia, they sit at 7 per cent.

You spoke about the High Vis Army and we know that women only take up 3 per cent in the construction industry. I was just wondering what incentives you might think you need to introduce to help with females 15 to 24 getting engaged with employment or study?

Mr FERGUSON - Great. Mrs Pentland, I appreciate your comments on the Tasmanian Gender Budget Statement. This is the third time that we've issued a gender budget statement to accompany the budget papers in the package.

Mrs PENTLAND - And it is appreciated.

Mr FERGUSON - This is by far the most comprehensive of the three that we have produced. It's been quite an evolution over those three years and I've paid particular tribute to ministers Palmer, Howlett and Ogilvie on this and I feel that they've really driven this.

Mrs PENTLAND - It's brilliant.

Mr FERGUSON - I've helped to propel them towards what I think we agree is a better and better report. The intention isn't just to provide a positive lens, although it does do that, and there's some exceptional positive data in here about our economic and social improvement, particularly for women and girls, but it's also intended to put a transparency into areas of future improvement and inequality, and that's what you've zeroed in on.

I would suggest that this question may though not be best answered by me as Treasurer. When you've asked me, what are the initiatives and programs, I could speak to them, but I wouldn't do anywhere near as good a job as the ministers responsible, in particular Ms Ogilvie, and to a lesser extent perhaps the Premier in his role as Minister for Infrastructure, who would be able to speak to the High Vis Army initiatives, the Women in infrastructure and the Women in Civil. While the Budget contains funding for these initiatives, I'm not the portfolio minister delivering them and I'd commend you perhaps better through those channels.

This document is in fact led not by Treasury but by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) as well, supporting the Minister for Women, so I'd be happy to take on notice if there's any part of my answer that failed to answer your question, but I feel that if it's not already the case that the minister for Women has presented to you committee - I don't think she has -

Mrs PENTLAND - No, she hasn't.

Mr FERGUSON - Then I think that would be a better question in those outputs.

Mr SHELTON - Treasurer, could you please outline how the government has strengthened the Buy Local Policy to support local businesses?

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, Mr Shelton. We've implemented the Buy Local Policy. We tried to do it in opposition and I think you might have had a bit to say about that in opposition and we couldn't get it through as a private members bill, but we implemented it in government. We introduced this policy in 2014 which introduced for the first time specific enhanced opportunities for the local Tasmanian businesses and suppliers to secure government contracts.

As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, which we took to the election, we committed to the local weighting test in our Buy Local Policy to be increased from 25 per cent to 30 per cent. I'm sure you'll remember when we first brought it in, we started it at 10 per cent and it's been a success. That new 30 per cent weighting commenced on 1 August this year.

The economic and social benefits test has also been contemporised to ensure that government procurement activity really maximises the potential economic and social benefits for our state from our spending. The intention is how much effort we can put into Tasmanian taxpayers' hard-earned money to incentivise Tasmanian businesses who employ our people to get the benefit of that.

You'll be pleased to know, and I'm sure the committee would like to know, that in the June quarter, 78.6 per cent of contracts are valued at $50 000 or more following an open procurement process were awarded to a Tasmanian business. That total value in that quarter was $58 million. We're committed to supporting our businesses, especially our small businesses, to thrive, to hire more staff and invest in our local economy, and so strengthening it creates even more opportunities, as we've reflected to do.

But there's more to do and as part of the next 100 days, the government has commenced consulting with the local business sector on removing red tape, including the introduction of single form tendering for all tenders that would be otherwise subject to an RFQ process, as well as developing user-friendly simplified form and procurement documentation, and I signed those letters about a week ago.

This consultation process will ensure that single-form tendering will meet the needs of suppliers as well as the government. We're introducing single form tendering for both goods and services at procurements valued below $250,000, as well as building and construction and roads and bridge procurements at below $500,000.

We'll be looking at other ways to reduce the administrative burden on small business through the consultation process. We encourage any members to engage with your local business members if they would like to speak up and have something to say about that. It's available on the website right now.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer, last week, the Standard and Poor's Mr Martin Foo was warning that Tasmania's AA+ credit rating could change if the ratio of debt to operating revenue increased to above 120 per cent. He said that would likely be a trigger for a lower credit rating. We've established today that debt is in freefall and not stabilised. Treasurer, what's your plan to make sure that doesn't happen?

Mr FERGUSON - All right, thank you again for your very positive and optimistic question, Mr Willie, and I say that sarcastically. You have been relentlessly negative and you have still an unanswered question which I believe will remain unanswered for the rest of this year in this parliament. Do you want us to spend more or do you want us to spend less?

With respect to the credit rating, I note the comments that have been made, but we also note the more recent assessment that occurred that secured our credit rating. We don't try to influence Tasmania's credit rating through public statements, newspaper articles and Estimates hearings. They need to be independent and we need to be seen to be maintaining a respectful distance from the credit rating agencies in our public statements.

The thing that you perhaps didn't say was that a credit opinion from Moody's for the state was published prior to the Budget on 26 August. That opinion affirmed the state's credit rating of Aa2 and stable. S&P's latest credit opinion for the state was published last June. On 12 June

2024, this opinion affirmed the state's credit rating of AA+. Stable. We have seen a ratings downgrade a number of years ago, I think it was 2016. We respond accordingly and importantly, from our government's point of view, I will absolutely reject your continued misrepresentation.

We have not established, as you have said in your words, that debt is in freefall. We have not established that, Mr Willie. We're managing. Our borrowings are manageable. I don't want them to be in freefall and I don't want a public narrative that continues to be negative about our state.

Mr WILLIE - The rating agencies -

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie, you're the opposition and you have an opportunity to put pressure on the government, to scrutinise government, ask hard questions, even tricky questions, but in the end, you will be called to explain. Do you want us to spend more money or less money? At the moment you are trying to have a bob each way and that's just not credible.

Mr WILLIE - I'm holding you to account.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Willie. I'd be happy if you did. If you want to hold someone to account, have an account of your own.

Mr WILLIE - We did ask questions of you about the State Budget. Credit agencies are making very concerning statements in the media. We heard from the secretary earlier that this is a very complex situation. How many, or what sort of resource is Treasury allocating to briefing and supporting rating agencies through their review?

Mr FERGUSON - That's a routine part of Treasury's existing operations. We don't put something in the budget to pressure up to the ratings agencies. It's an existing practice that is done in an appropriate way and Treasury would be regularly available to any ratings agency - S&P or Moody's - to share with them an insight into the budget and the forward Estimates and to discuss borrowings and issuances and the like.

What I don't respect is you running our state down, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - I don't run the state down.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I know you will be very keen to interrupt me as you see me pull out this rare document, Labor's plan for budget repair, wherein you want the government to cut spending by $2 billion and you would hit up the health system.

Mr WILLIE - You can try to talk about other things, Treasurer, but your record speaks for itself.

Mr FERGUSON - I'll just wait for you to finish interrupting. In the health system alone you've established 170 -

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Chair. It's not relevant to my question.

Mr FERGUSON - You're adorable.

Mr WILLIE - It's very patronising.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - $172 million in health alone.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Chair.

Mr FERGUSON - If you want to ask the question, you have got to be prepared to hear the answer.

Mr WILLIE - You're not answering it, Treasurer.

Mr FERGUSON - You've claimed -

Mr WILLIE - My question is about Treasury resources and the credit rating.

Mr FERGUSON - I am answering and I will continue to. You've claimed that the Budget needs to spend less money, but you've also, throughout this hearing, been saying that the government should be -

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Chair

Mr FERGUSON - Spending more money. I've never known so many points of order.

Mr WILLIE - Well, it's being ignored and I'm about to dissent in the Chair's ruling.

Mr FERGUSON - You're ignoring the Chair.

Mr WILLIE - Well, I'm about to dissent in it because you're not answering the question.

Mr FERGUSON - Treasury engages with the ratings agencies.

Mr WILLIE - We might have to go with the Speaker, to get you back on task.

Mr FERGUSON - If you want to raise threats, that's on you. The Treasury engages with the ratings agencies on an as needs basis whenever the ratings agencies would want to come and speak with Treasury, they are made available. It surprises me that you're asking me where is the allocation for Treasury to engage?

Mr WILLIE - I am asking a general question about how you engage with the rating agencies, given their concerning statements.

Mr FERGUSON - You are twisting and turning and I really do struggle when there's so many interruptions. The fact is we wouldn't need to put in a specific allocation for Treasury to do some new initiative in this space because that's not how it works. The relationship between the credit ratings agencies and the Department of Treasury and Finance is a professional one

of client and supplier and it works well. We don't need to put a new amount of money in the budget to provide for that work. I'm surprised at the reactive behaviour from the shadow Treasurer.

Mr WILLIE - It sounds like you're not worried about the credit agency comments in the media. Should Tasmanians be worried about it?

Mr FERGUSON - Well, those comments are made and I respect those comments and the government has a position. We're under some challenge on our position and it's from your side of politics, Mr Willie. The challenge is that you want us to spend more money on Monday but less money on Tuesday, and it's so inconsistent. Whereas our position, which I accept, we have to explain and justify. We're in a deficit budget position for the Budget and forward Estimates. I could balance the budget much sooner, but the pain would not be worth it in my view, in the government's view. The pain in the community, the job losses, the economic disruption, the loss of business confidence. I remember what an austerity budget looked like.

Mr WILLIE - You are forecasting more cuts in your Budget then.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I'd just like to finish answering the question.

CHAIR - Let the minister finish.

Mr FERGUSON - I want to make the point that I accept that you should be challenging us and scrutinising us. No problem. I'm able to answer those questions. What I'm not able to do is, on the one hand, meet your demands for more money to be spent and also to meet your demands for less money to be spent. In respect of the ratings agencies, I don't want to see that politicised and I would ask you to be very careful in your own public statements. The ratings agencies, those decisions are for them to make and we should not see any politician - state, federal, Liberal, Labor - interfering in that process.

Mr BAYLEY - Treasurer, you've just put out a media release talking up the $86 million of funding to 100 community groups. Now, this question is certainly not a reflection on the merit of those bids and the very good work that community groups do in our community. We acknowledge they do deserve public funds and need public funds, but we will make the case that it should be done in a transparent, open and fair process.

The Integrity Commission, following the 2021 election, called the kind of process that your party engages in at election time to allocate this funding as 'indirect electoral bribery'. During the election this year, the Director of Public Integrity, Geoffrey Watson SC, rightly called it pork barrelling, fair and square. These are decisions that are made by people inside the Liberal Party. I don't know, and the community doesn't know, what is the criteria? Who's making the decisions? That was evidenced itself during the election campaign where your party - probably the only media release that it put out without someone's name attached to it or comments attributed to it - was announcing the successful bids in relation to this funding.

It's the third election in a row where this kind of thing is happening in the face of expert advice. Can you tell us what are the criteria by which decisions are made to allocate this funding and who is it that actually makes the decision about which club gets how much money?

Mr FERGUSON - I sense a genuine interest in this and I appreciate and respect that. All political parties are entitled and do make commitments to the electorate in an election context. I hope that will always be the case and it should be. I mean, Liberal, Labor, even Greens, I think made commitments to the electorate and there is a place for that. Tasmanians, when they are voting at an election, they deserve to know well, what will you do if we vote for you and you form a government? That's what we did.

I will just pick up on one thing that you indicated in your question. We're quite proud of the decisions that we made to award those organisations those funds, they're in the Budget to be scrutinised.

Mr BAYLEY - The Integrity Commission criticised it, Treasurer.

Mr FERGUSON - I'll come to that, I promise. The thing is, that is a fraction of the commitment that we made to sporting and community organisations. A fraction of the overall plan, which by far and away is about building stronger public services, stronger concessions for people with cost-of-living pressures, responding to the commission of inquiry and our infrastructure commitments.

Mr BAYLEY - $86 million is still a hell of a lot of money.

Mr FERGUSON - It's a good amount of money, but it is nonetheless a fraction of our overall. I'm not trying to diminish it either, but I just want to put that perspective in front of the committee. One of the key recommendations - I seem to recall but I don't have it in front of me - from the commission previous to this election was that if you're going to make an election promise, particularly to an organisation, you need to not just tell the organisation. You need to publicly announce it and that's what we did.

Mr BAYLEY - How did you make those decisions though, Treasurer? That's the question. Criteria, and who actually makes the decision.

Mr FERGUSON - It's an important one because you brought up the Integrity Commission report, which was from some years ago. I have a quote here. The commission report or the recommendation stated that:

> When made, such promises should be backed by policy and must be publicised to all of the electorate, not just the intended recipients.

That's from Paper 2: Grant Commitments in Election Campaigns dated April 2022.

Mr BAYLEY - Is that the same one where they called it indirect electoral bribery?

Mr FERGUSON - It could be, I'm not sure. I know that the Greens made promises to the electorate -

Mr BAYLEY - And processes by which they are undertaken.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I'm not sure you'd apply the same language to your own party. Greens don't usually -

Mr BAYLEY - We have a different process.

Mr FERGUSON - To be fair, I don't think the Greens normally live by the same standards they demand of others. That's something I'm accustomed to. For us, our policies were carefully considered. I'm sorry that we couldn't say yes to everybody, but we had to say no to a lot of people, including those who, having -

Mr BAYLEY - Against which criteria did you make those decisions?

Mr FERGUSON - One of the criteria was affordability. I had a number of organisations - I could name them, but that would be impolite - who'd received massive promises from the Labor Party and asked us if we could match it. I often had to say, 'I'm sorry, we're not able to do that; it's not affordable', which helps explain how Labor got themselves into a $4 billion promise spending spree that didn't even result in an improvement at the ballot box.

It presents that challenge for government and for both sides of politics to try to run a fair campaign. You asked me about process - announcements are made by the party organisation in an election campaign and members, ministers and candidates are all involved in that.

Obviously, there are internal considerations to how you can ensure that commitments are affordable but also present good value for the electorate generally and lead to good social, sporting and health outcomes.

Mr BAYLEY - Treasurer -

CHAIR - Order, Mrs Beswick has the call.

Mrs BESWICK - Treasurer, you mentioned earlier you were hoping to squirrel away some dollars for the Defined Benefits Fund Scheme. How do you propose to do this?

Mr FERGUSON - I respect the question enormously because it's a further demonstration that under the Rockliff Liberal government we want to be very responsible with public money. We don't want to see debates where there are constant demands to spend more money and at the same time you are being asked to explain why you're having deficits and borrowings.

We need to have a different direction. I hope that the Fiscal Strategy as laid out in the budget papers is useful to members and allows people to see that the Budget is challenged. There is not an endless supply of money such that we can do everything that would be important to an individual member of parliament, lobbyist, activist or genuine stakeholder organisation.

In the pre-election period we outlined new steps, which I'd be happy to share with you. While my team are helping me find the correct part of that policy, we're re-establishing the superannuation provision account when and for the purpose of securing windfall gains in such a way that helps to, again, build up the state's resources to be able to meet future known unfunded superannuation liabilities. This was originally set up by the Rundle government back

when I was a school teacher in the 1990s. The SPA was set up by the Rundle Liberal government and was intended to cover the superannuation costs of former state servants.

That got up to something like $1.5 billion against that fund. That money was spent; the fund was shut down. Labor spent that money.

Mr WILLIE - You're talking about it like it was cash backed. It was cash in deposits.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - The Labor government at the time said, 'We're getting the hay out of the barn'. What they meant to say is, 'We're spending the money'. The intention here, Mrs Beswick, is to re-establish that fund. Windfall gains - that is unexpected revenue windfalls that occasionally occur - we would deposit on a 50 per cent basis into that account over and above any GST windfall. For example, anything over and above Treasury's budget forecast would go into that mechanism, again, offsetting the retirement benefit fund's future liabilities, so that would effectively reverse the scrapping of that account.

When the Committee's ready, we have the answer on the Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS).

Mrs PENTLAND - Treasurer, doesn't a policy of vacancy control put you at risk of losing high-quality staff who are vital to the operation of government departments? How do you ensure that essential positions are not cut while you're still following this policy? Can you explain how the Vacancy Control Committee decides which positions to keep and which to eliminate? Do you have a breakdown of the types of positions that have been removed because of this policy? Are there opportunities for savings in management roles or are those positions considered untouchable?

Mr FERGUSON - I'll try to be as brief as I can. First of all, there will not be reductions to frontline staff like nurses, doctors, paramedics, police officers, teachers and child safety officers. We're protecting that frontline.

I wouldn't say that higher order positions are necessarily exempted at all. We'd be looking for sensible measures. They must be in line with those five principles that I outlined to the Committee earlier, which I hope gives the committee some satisfaction. While we need to see some sensible budget sustainability measures brought into the budget process - we need to do that and I hope one day we might all agree on that - the focus is absolutely on protecting those public services.

If there's a moment, do you want to do that RFDS? If we're happy, I have the information on the Treasurer's instruction exemption.

Mr CRAIGIE - Sure. The short answer is no, the Treasurer was not required to approve an exemption under the Treasurer's instructions. A slightly longer answer is that under the procurement guidelines and the Treasurer's instructions, procurement is devolved to accountable authorities, and there are a range of mechanisms and flexibility they have within the TIs such that they can exercise some discretion. There are a range of measures that they can't; some of those must come to the Treasurer. In this case, I'm advised that Health did not need to get an exemption from the Treasurer for that procurement.

Mr BAYLEY - Are you advised as to why they wanted to rest on a sole tenderer?

Mr CRAIGIE - I don't know the specifics of that tender other than that it didn't come to Treasury to get a request, so it must have been within the framework that the accountable authority had to make that decision. In the relevant Treasurer's procurement instructions, it sets out reasons for not going to a broader market approach and doing a sole process. I don't have them in front of me and I can't -

Mr BAYLEY - That's a matter for the Health department?

Mr FERGUSON - Yes.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Treasurer has expired. The committee will suspend proceedings until 1.00 p.m.

The committee suspended from 12.11 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.

CHAIR (Mr Wood) - The time being 1.00 p.m., the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs will commence. Welcome, minister, to the committee and I invite you to introduce the persons and their positions at the table for the benefit of Hansard.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon to the committee. I'm pleased to introduce to the committee, to my left, Kristy Bourne, Acting Secretary, Department of Justice together with Robyn Pearce, Executive Director at WorkSafe Tasmania; Brad Wheeler, Executive Director, Consumer Building and Occupational Services; to my right, Jenna Cairney, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of State Growth and Acting Deputy Secretary Economic Development. I'm supported at the table by my chief of staff.

CHAIR - Good, thank you and welcome everyone. The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs is 1.5 hours.

The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in the correspondence to the minister.

I will also just remind you that the microphones are quite sensitive, so be mindful of Hansard when moving papers and the like around the table. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I would ask members to please speak one at a time to assist with this, thank you.

The minister would like to make an opening statement.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Chair and, again, good afternoon to the committee. Tasmania's small business sector continues to deliver for Tasmanians. It's the beating heart of our state's economy and the platform for Tasmania's future growth. Our ongoing support for

the small business sector is empowering more businesses to grow in the face of national economic headwinds.

Pleasingly, the ABS data to June 2023 shows that Tasmanian businesses have the highest survival rate compared to other states and territories, while the latest year-on-year figures show that the number of Tasmanian businesses has increased 2.4 per cent. We recognise the significant contribution our small businesses make to our economy and will continue to support them to grow and to thrive.

The 2024-25 state Budget continues the government's record of providing support to businesses, workers and consumers, recognising the valuable work undertaken by the teams in both WorkSafe Tasmania and Consumer Building and Occupational Services; most of us will call it CBOS from here on. Whether or not they know it, most Tasmanians would be protected by the legislation administered and services delivered under this portfolio every day, whether that's as a worker, an employer, a rental property owner, a tenant or a consumer.

While responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of workers ultimately rests with employers and workers, WorkSafe Tasmania plays a critical role promoting a broader understanding of work, health and safety across the Tasmanian community and enforcing relevant laws when necessary.

On the other side of the portfolio, CBOS plays an important role as Tasmania's regulator for consumer protection, building standards and occupational licencing services. I'm delighted to take on this new area of responsibility, Chair, and to the committee, we look forward to your questions and discussion.

Ms DOW - Minister, is there funding for the Regional Chamber Alliance in this year's state Budget?

Mr FERGUSON - Chair, if I may, I'll invite Ms Cairney to open up the batting.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister, there is funding in this year's Budget for a Regional Chambers Program. I can find that in here, which is - I'll just check the amount.

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, will that be then administered by the TCCI again as has been in previous -

Ms CAIRNEY - We're in discussions with the TCCI now, yes, that they would assist the department in administering that amount. I was just hoping to get the exact amount for you if that's okay, it's certainly in here and should be on the tip of my tongue. It's $100,000 each year for four years. Apologies for the slow response there.

Ms DOW - Minister, in 2022-23 the Tasmanian government funded three main programs to fund advisory services for operators of small business, some of those that employ less than 19 employees. They are the Tasmanian Business Advice Service, which is still being funded until July 2025, the New Business Support Funding, which ceases at the end of September this year, and the Small Business Incubator and Accelerated Program, a two-year program, where funding ceased at the end of July. The funding for the New Business Support Program is $200,000 and has been cut in the state Budget. I received further information yesterday that

after this was raised with the Premier at the Budget roadshow, that this funding has been reinstated, and I would like you to confirm that that is the case, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Ms Dow, for the question. It was actually raised with myself and I've discussed it with the department. There may have been other conversations as well that I'm not aware of, but we are not able to do everything that a stakeholder might like us to do. The New Business Service was a pilot program, so it was a limited term initiative, the New Business Support Pilot Program, but we have been able to secure that program for a further period -

Ms DOW - How long is that, minister?

Mr FERGUSON - as a reasonable newcomer to the portfolio, I've had a good look at this with the department and we've had a discussion. The NBS had an initial funding allocation of up to $250,000 through to June, which you may have said in your question. A further allocation which was through the supply bills pending budget was provided to extend that pilot through to 30 September.

I will look to you, Ms Cairney, if you could outline what we've been able to do in the meantime.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister, we have been able to extend that program again for another nine months, that'll take us up to the end of this financial year and with up to $75,000 to continue that service. So, it was $250,000 for the first year, we extended it by $750,000 until the Budget was passed and we have another $75,000 until the end of this financial year, and then future funding will be in discussion for future budgets.

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, do you evaluate that program then? What's the evidence base for then it being omitted from recurrent budgets?

Ms CAIRNEY - We will do reviews on all our programs. It was a pilot program and therefore, we'll be evaluating the effectiveness and getting feedback from people that have used the service and look at the demand as well for that service moving forward and provide advice through to government.

Mr FERGUSON - I might just add to that, if I may, Chair and Ms Dow. As we consider these things - I mean this was a consideration in the setting of the Budget, and the fact that it isn't in the Budget as a specific line item would suggest that there are competing demands for limited funds in the budget process and we have to weigh up those options very carefully. However, we've been able to find a path through, and one of the further considerations going forward will be having a regard for what regional demand there is for services to ensure that programs are delivered in such a way that does have some equity for different regions and I think that that's one of the reasons that we were keen to find a model that allows this program to continue, at least for the time being.

Ms DOW - Well, feedback that I've received, minister, is that it has been a successful program in the north-west and right across that region. I'm pleased that you're taking that into consideration.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, data from the Real Estate Institute of Australia's Housing Affordability Report is in the Budget and if you extract that, it shows that Tasmania's median rent is rising and it's higher than the rest of the nation. In a cost-of-living crisis, this is adding significant pressure to renters. It is adding to their levels of stress and it is contributing to the risk of homelessness and/or homelessness itself. We acknowledge there is rental assistance in the Budget, of course, but as has been required for so long, we need some structural reform in this space so as rents are controlled to make sure that the rights of tenants are protected and rents are not excessive. Why are you so resistant to introducing this kind of reform to assist some Tasmanians who are so deeply in need?

Mr FERGUSON - I may have missed something in your question, so thank you for asking. I've heard everything you've said except was there a part in there of what specific reform you were proposing?

Mr BAYLEY - Rent controls and the ability to control rents and put some of the balance back in the favour of tenants. Rent rises, of course, are never prohibited. There are proposals out there that rents can certainly increase. But if there's a problem with it, the onus of responsibility is shifted to the party with the most resources, which is the landlord, as opposed to the one undergoing the stress, which is the tenant.

Mr FERGUSON - Okay, Mr Wheeler, who is at the table to support the hearing, may add to my answer in a moment. From the outset, I don't think any mainstream political party in this country supports rent capping, but I don't disagree with you that you need controls and the RTA does contain some control mechanism so that unreasonable rents can be managed. That's an important point and shouldn't be lost in the public debate.

Mr BAYLEY - But it shouldn't be lost that it's the tenant who has to take a case to challenge that. Is that correct?

Mr FERGUSON - I hear what you're saying. You have presented the question as a question with an inherent conflict between a tenant and a landlord and we would not want to promote that notion of conflict but agreeable relations between the parties to a rental agreement. Even the federal Labor government, which is a different flavour of politics to our Tasmanian Liberal government, acknowledges that rent caps, while politically popular or seductive for a party like your own, could actually lead to less rentals being available in the pool for renters. That could be a perverse bad outcome for renters who rely on a stock of rental properties to be in the rental pool.

I don't disagree with your premise that you need to have some sensible controls. I'll ask Mr Wheeler, if it's okay with the committee, to speak to that on how that process works in practice. Our government would continue to be resistant to that proposal because it wouldn't actually represent a reform. It might represent a very backward step for renters in Australia if landlords decide that it's too hard to be in this sector and they sell their properties to get out of it and invest their funds elsewhere; we all know who will buy that property. It'll be people who aren't renters and that could be a very perverse bad outcome for renters.

Mr BAYLEY - It has to be part of a suite of reforms, but I take your point.

Mr WHEELER - I can give you some figures for unreasonable rent. During the 2023-24 financial year, the commission received 53 unreasonable rent increase applications. One was

assessed as unreasonable, four were assessed as reasonable, 36 were determined to be partially unreasonable with a reduced amount ordered, three were withdrawn, four were lodged outside the statutory time limit, two did not really relate to an increase in rent, and three remain under assessment. We get that sort of traffic. I can also talk you through the process if you like.

Mr BAYLEY - No, that's not necessary, I'd be really interested in, and I appreciate there are probably not the data for this, but how many tenants would perhaps have liked to have challenged their rent increase but find it too intimidating and they don't have the resources or they don't have the digital or other literacy to be able to do it. There are a whole lot of factors involved, but I appreciate the data. It's really helpful.

The second question should be easier and it's about minimum standards for energy efficiency and other standards, electrical products in tenancies and so forth in rental properties, in a cost-of-living crisis to ensure that houses are well insulated and have energy-efficient appliances in them. It seems like a no-brainer where everybody wins. I'm also interested in why you are so resistant to introducing measures that enforce and ensure that these kinds of reforms and these really positive initiatives aren't mandated and tenants don't therefore get to enjoy the benefits of an efficient house and lower bills.

Mr FERGUSON - If it's okay with the committee, I'll ask Mr Wheeler, who leads this area, to respond to you more fully. I just make the broader point that there is a real place for making sure that standards are fit for purpose and are appropriate and fair to all concerned. I wouldn't want a divide across or between the table that we don't agree at least on that. How best to express that is perhaps the question, and how far you go. The more that you push one side of the partnership between the landlord and the tenant, the more you push the pendulum against one side, it'll actually potentially cause a distortion to the rental pool itself. I think we should be conscious of that. The more cost that you put on the owner of a property, you are going to lead to higher rents as well. If a landlord can argue that 'The government made me make these improvements to the house', good as they are, it's going to lead to a higher rent. I think we should have that as part of the discussion wherever that proposal is being put forward. Mr Wheeler, as to those minimum standards, could you speak to that for Mr Bayley?

Mr WHEELER - The minimum standards are set out in the act. That's what we work to. The most recent change was Mr O'Byrne's change for public houses.

Mr BAYLEY - Window dressings.

Mr WHEELER - Which I understand they have to comply with by 6 November around window furnishings. Those minimum standards do change from time to time.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, you said in your opening statement that Tasmanian business has increased 2.4 per cent. How is that measured and what is the future target for the government for Tasmanian business?

Mr FERGUSON - That is based on ABS measure. I think that the point being made was that that was a very strong growth in business during a period of time where there were some challenging economic circumstances. The partner statistic that I used was survival rates of small businesses. I know that you would agree, small businesses surviving the first year is actually a major milestone. To see Tasmania having the highest rate of survivability is something I think our small business community should take a great deal of pride in.

From the government's point of view, we want to have business conditions that are conducive to achieving those outcomes. I don't believe we have a target for the number of small businesses that Tasmania should have. We have the policy objective that if somebody wants to break free from employment and establish their own enterprise, we want them to feel that, first of all, it's a goal that's worth having. Secondly, that they can make a decent living out of it. Thirdly, that the supports are in place and the government has acted proactively to remove impediments like red tape. I would absolutely welcome questions or discussion on red tape. We want to be a culture where enterprise thrives.

Unless Ms Cairney has a different answer, I don't believe we have a stated numeric target for the number of small businesses.

Ms CAIRNEY - That's correct. I turn your attention to page 337 of the budget papers that contains performance information, output group 1. The performance measures are around accessing provision of information and advisory services to SMEs. That is an indication of the numbers of business to which we provide advice. We have a target number in there. I would say that that target is conservative by its nature. Then we would expect to exceed that given the trajectory of growth. How we measure our success or the impact that we're having on businesses is very much in terms of how many businesses we provide advice and services to.

Mrs PENTLAND - In your response just now you said you'd like to see some questions around red tape. Can you expand on what kind of questions you'd like to see us ask?

Mr FERGUSON - No, no, I'm not trying to say you should ask me a particular question. I would welcome a discussion on red tape. I think it's one that has always required, and, I think I can say, has always received bipartisan support. When I've been responsible for red tape measures, I've presented them in such a way we've always been able, in my experience, to get the support of the whole parliament. I don't think we've even had a division. And the point here is that we do have an appetite for further rounds of red tape reduction. It's much easier to say than to do it in practice. That's my experience as well and I think it might have been in fact you, Ms Dow, that was the shadow minister when I took some building red tape reduction measures.

Ms DOW - I was.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, it was you and Ms Butler. So, that's the stated position. We have a small business advocate in the Department of State Growth who works in the Office of Coordinator-General. He has a dual role of red tape reduction coordinator.

I've spoken with Mr Clues. I've said to him that one thing that I want to do in this new portfolio for me is to work again on a new round of proposals. I don't have any subject matter specifically to share with the committee today but I have specifically set the question. We want to speak to businesses that have recently set themselves up and started and ask the question: how many times did you face a red tape barrier? And let's find ways then to - you still need regulation. I think we all know that - but how can we remove unnecessary regulation?

Secondly, how can we put time frames on regulation that is deemed necessary so that it is user-friendly and reliable and doesn't put people into a position where they, in good faith, apply for a particular permit and then they don't know how long they have to wait for an answer

yes or no. They should know broadly what the performance expectation is, whether it's a government department or a council.

And the other point that I'll offer is that we're currently consulting and I can answer if there's more detail requested. We're currently consulting on single-form tendering for businesses while in Tasmania. So, for government procurement of goods or services with a threshold below $250,000 - how can we make that a single form and an easy process, a low documentation form of bidding for those government procurements, those government tenders? The threshold was $250,000 and I think it was $500,000 for construction projects.

So, to try to make it still getting a good effective taxpayer return in terms of value for money for the government contract, but to make it easier for small businesses to, even in the first place, to bid for it and to feel that it's not an over-investment of their time.

So, those are the sorts of things that I'm interested in and are working with the red tape reduction coordinator. I would hope to bring a bill into parliament, either myself or minister Abetz, one of us, that does more in the red tape reduction space.

Mr SHELTON - Thanks, Chair. Minister, small businesses are often cash poor and have to manage cash flow strategically. I'm often approached by businesses in my electorate about grants to assist with purchases.

Is there or are there any grants that my local businesses might be interested in for purchasing items beneficial to their growth and employment opportunities?

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, Mr Shelton. We actually do have a grant program that will shortly be available. All members of parliament are welcome and encouraged to share this with your local electorate.

We want our small businesses, even during these more challenging times - because our CPI increases to our cost of living also applies to their small business - so, what can we do to help them to believe in the future and to still be able to flourish?

Many businesses do continue to experience cash flow difficulties as the result of working capital stress or they need assistance to diversify or change business operations, not just so they survive but so that they can take advantage of an opportunity that might be in front of them. But, if it's a bit hard or a little bit out of reach, our grant program would like to assist them.

We're calling it the Small Business Growth Strategy Grant Program. It's designed to support small businesses with grants to assist them in purchasing items that would support their growth. I hope members are aware that we ran round 1 of this program and, in the first half of this year during the campaign, we made a commitment to establish a new round of that program.

So, round 2 will have $1 million available. The funds are in this Budget. They will open in October, next month, and we'll provide grants of up to $10,000 for eligible small businesses with capital purchases such as new tech, small-scale manufacturing equipment, computers or point-of-sale terminals.

Successful small business applicants will receive one-off grants of between $2500 and $10,000 to make those purchases. We would need to see them being prepared to contribute at least 30 per cent toward the project.

By way of an update, under round 1, grants were available for both individual businesses and the peak bodies or the various chambers around our state, RTOs. Round 1 was established to provide support under a range of streams. In that round 1, we received 211 applications. More than $8 million was sought. Therefore, 27 applications were successful and awarded and 20 of those were from business and seven were from membership organisations. Round 2 is a different model and we hope it will reach even more deeply into the community.

Ms DOW - The Small Business Incubator and Accelerator Program, which is $250,000 statewide, wasn't funded in this year's Budget. This means there'll be no publicly funded program to offer intensive assistance to operators of small businesses who have verified growth but do not have the capacity or capability, or in some instances both, to take advantage of their growth opportunity. Why would you cut assistance to small businesses who have the potential to grow when our economy is in decline and given the current state of the Budget? Will you reinstate this funding?

Mr FERGUSON - We do provide support. There is a competitive process through the budget setting process. In my other role as Treasurer, I have a level of insight into that and competing bids do need to be carefully considered. We have provided significant support in this Budget towards the Small Business Growth Strategy here in Tasmania.

Ms DOW -The question was about the Incubator and Accelerator Program.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I know. We've also supported the Tasmanian Small Business Advice Service for small businesses who have held an ABN, as well as the new business support pilot which we discussed earlier. These did replace the previous Enterprise Centres Program following that independent review which was undertaken two or three years ago. The total amount of funding allocated to the Tasmanian Business Advice Service is $807,000 per year.

Regarding the incubator funding, I might ask the director to speak to that. I hasten to add that in another output and under another minister, minister Ogilvie, Minister for Science and Technology, we are putting extraordinary support towards our incubator centres. The enterprise model that we have here in Tasmania, which is intended to be a specific support to new businesses looking to be part of the startup ecosystem.

Ms DOW - Would they have reach across the regions or are they only in major city centres?

Mr FERGUSON - I would not be the best person to ask about that. It is in another minister's outputs. My understanding is that it is intended, while physically located in those centres, to be as broad in support as possible.

Ms DOW - Is that why it's not in this Budget?

Ms CAIRNEY - The Business Incubator and Accelerator Pilot Program was an election commitment in 2021. It was a $2 million program and was delivered upon with round 1 and round 2, resulting in nine separate programs being funded. What I can say is that either incubator or accelerators were able to apply for grants of up to $250,000 and that the round 2 closed on 10 February 2023.

All four of those programs that were funded in round 2 are still currently being delivered. For other supports for intenders and new businesses, Business Tasmania service is the front door to government, we hope, for any businesses at any stage of the business life cycle, including those thinking about starting a business or if they've just started a business.

There's dedicated information on resource on the Business Tasmania website and a range of guides and tools. We have this 'Thinking of starting a small business' guide which comprehensively outlines all the things that need to be considered if someone is thinking about starting a new business.

Ms DOW - I think what was so good about these initiatives is that there was one-on-one support provided to those people. This is about people that, in my understanding, already have an operation in place but have the potential to grow, and just need some additional support, advice and mentoring in many ways to realise that potential in their business. I would have thought that would be exactly the type of people that this government would want to be supporting to enable them to employ additional staff.

We know the economic benefit that that brings, particularly in regional Tasmania. You haven't answered the question, minister. Will you reinstate the funding? I'm still not really clear as to why it wasn't continued.

Mr FERGUSON - As Ms Cairney has indicated, for that program to be put back into the Budget as a continued or new initiative is not currently in the budget for extended funding, but the existing program is still underway and is still running.

I don't have a comment on its value because I have not been in the portfolio long enough to be able to speak confidently to that, but I will say it is no doubt delivering value for the current four applications that are still all being delivered right at this moment in time, because they were only funded as recently as 2023. Those four applicants are receiving $850,000 in total funding.

We can't do everything at all times, Ms Dow. There's pressure on the Budget. This morning I spent three hours explaining to the shadow treasurer that it's not possible to fund absolutely everything that you would like to, and I wouldn't rule out seeing it funded in the future. For the time being, our grant programs are transparently in the Budget. The design of the small business growth grants is absolutely about having a deeper penetration into the Tasmanian community.

Round 1 - didn't I just say it was about 27 successful applicants? I would like to see a lot more than that in the new model.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, we have a few questions in relation to the newly developed Palawa Business Hub. The Palawa Business Hub has made strides in offering culturally appropriate business support and connecting Aboriginal businesses. The Closing the Gap

Agreement that your government has signed up to has a specific target - target 8 - around strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal people and their communities.

This Palawa Business Hub fits neatly within Closing the Gap target 8. Forgive me if I missed it, but can you confirm if there's an allocation in the Budget for the Palawa Business Hub or Aboriginal Business Support full stop, and if not, will you commit to looking to give this initiative the support that it deserves?

Mr FERGUSON - I am aware that the Palawa Business Hub has received quite a significant amount of funding from the Australian Government, and that's to be commended. If we can encourage new enterprises that reach the Aboriginal community, that is a very good thing. We have some initiatives that we are co-funding as well. Could I ask Ms Cairney to provide that detail, though?

Ms CAIRNEY - Certainly. The small business unit has been exploring how best to reach the Aboriginal business community, and is focusing on identifying and developing those key relationships with the community. That includes Marrawah Law, who are leading the establishment of the Palawa Business Hub.

Discussions with that organisation have highlighted that the awareness of Tasmanian government services and supports is low within the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, and many small Aboriginal businesses, particularly at the early stage or those thinking about starting a business, are not leveraging the extensive opportunities.

As such, we provided $25,000 to Marrawah Law to support some communications activities with the Tasmanian Aboriginal business community. We've also provided some further funding of $5000 to support the development of a program of networking and information sessions. I can share with the committee that the Business Tasmania Team will be doing a state roadshow with the Palawa Business Hub next week.

We are, as Business Tasmania, not just this portfolio of small business, but across our different sectoral areas we are in active discussion with the Palawa Hub and to see where there are other areas of opportunity to make sure that our range of supports and services can be supported by the Palawa Hub. That includes potentially identifying some further funding options through our different portfolios, strategies and plans.

Mr BAYLEY - Another one in terms of tenancies, specifically the residential tenancy regulations which have recently come into effect and enabled the eviction of vulnerable farm workers when employment is terminated. Migrant, young and other farm workers are a vulnerable cohort of our community and they perform work that, as we all know, is incredibly valuable within the economy. We saw during COVID how important our Pasifika and other workers were.

This new regulation may deter some of those workers from coming to the state if they can't have the security of tenancy they need. Other states do it better. Advocacy groups including TasCOSS, the Multicultural Council, the Migrant Resource Council, Community Legal Service and Tenants Union have basically said that the practical effect of the proposed amendments is that on-farm workers whose accommodation is conditional on their employment, will be more vulnerable to exploitation.

How is it acceptable that we are introducing new regulations in this state that basically enable exploitation of what is already a vulnerable cohort of our community? Will you commit to doing anything about it to turn this around and make sure that these incredibly important farm workers, who rely on farm tenancies, are protected into the longer term?

Mr FERGUSON - I respect where your question is coming from. This was a pragmatic solution for the agricultural community that wants to be able to do an even better job at providing accommodation to workers. You've spun it one way. I would like to invite you to consider it a different way.

Mr BAYLEY - The advocates are calling it exploitation.

Mr FERGUSON - This will in fact potentially lead to a better outcome where there's more reliability in the on-farm sector to be able to provide accommodation to their workers. That's exactly why we've done it. We're not doing it to take away from people's enjoyment of their quality of life and a job; we've actually done it to enhance the availability of rules that are fit for purpose and that meet the needs of the agricultural sector.

We've had strong advocacy on this from a different perspective that you didn't mention in your question - from primary employers in Tasmania.

Mr BAYLEY - Vested interests, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - You say vested interests, but these are industries and employers that are committed to their workforce. I mentioned TasFarmers as well. They wanted - and we agree - that where accommodation is part of the employment agreement, it's entirely reasonable and indeed very sensible for us to take this approach.

Those regulations are now in law and they've been in place for four days since 20 September. We want to see people supported, but the primary purpose of that accommodation, as I'm sure you would acknowledge and others hopefully as well, is to accommodate on-farm workers.

Mr BAYLEY - Of course, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't afford them some protections, minister.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - There are, and we'd be happy to discuss those protections, but we're not proposing, and the new regulation doesn't deal with, people being accommodated on farms who don't work there. It's not somehow a backdoor way of having unfair rental agreements with people. It's really about bringing the residential component of a successful employment outcome to good policy. That's entirely why we've done it.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, you know that housing is close to my heart. Adrian from REIT has publicly come out and said that Tasmanian residential investment is the worst it's been in 10 years. We have an all-time low vacancy rate at 1.7 per cent, and I would appreciate some more information on the rental increase disputes and complaints. I would appreciate if you could elaborate on that process.

Mr FERGUSON - If the committee's happy, I'll invite Mr Wheeler to respond in some detail. Alongside his role at CBOS, Mr Wheeler is also the Residential Tenancy Commissioner by title, and he is dealing with those issues and those disputes, so I'll invite that question to be directly responded to.

Mr WHEELER - We deal day-to-day. We have a team that deals with day-to-day disputes, a range of disputes, including unfair rent increases. The other major one is bond disputes. I can talk you through the process for bond disputes if you like and how we go about that?

Mrs PENTLAND - Okay.

Mr WHEELER - Most of the bond disputes process is automated through our MyBond system. That allows landlords, property managers and tenants to interact online with their information rather than through a paper system or something of that nature. A bond dispute claim will normally be lodged. Often, it'll be by the owner, because it's about wanting to claim some of the bond. The tenant is notified and the tenant decides to agree or disagree with that dispute. That happens through the My Bond system. If they do end in dispute, then both parties are given 14 days to provide evidence to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner. The Residential Tenancy Commissioner then begins assessment and may need more evidence, may need to go out and ask them for more evidence. Effectively, we make an assessment and a determination is given.

Essentially that's one of our major parts and the other part is mainly around that thing, but we also get complaints from tenants around things like minimum standards. The team that does this work sits right outside my door and I often hear them having very long conversations with tenants and sometimes landlords around issues.

Mrs PENTLAND - With rental increases, how do you deem that something is unfair as far as the rental increase goes?

Mr WHEELER - I haven't heard if the commissioner has an authority to investigate unreasonable rent increases. Section 23 of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* allows a tenant to contest a proposed rent increase by applying to the commissioner to assess the increase. If satisfied the increase is unreasonable, the commission may reduce the increase or prevent it entirely. On receipt of an application, the commission will contact the owner and invite them to respond and demonstrate why they think the increase is reasonable. The act requires the commissioner to determine the reasonableness of that increase and we regard things such as rents in the immediate area. We do a check against other rents in the area, whether that level looks broadly correct or not, to avoid gouging. We also look at things like size, condition, included amenities, and make a determination. From memory, it was around 53 unreasonable rent increase applications last year.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you please provide an update on the Small Businesses Growth Strategy and the implementation plan that was released in February 2023?

Mr FERGUSON - I appreciate your question and your support for the business community. The Small Business Growth Strategy was launched last year in collaboration, I must hasten to add, with our excellent partners, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Tasmanian Small Business Council, wonderful people committed to the success

of small business in Tasmania. The strategy identifies the priorities that build the foundations for a thriving business sector. We believe that with more than 40,000 small businesses registered in Tasmania across many different sectors and in all the regions, it's important to have a plan on how government and that sector can work together to enhance the positive environment for small business.

The strategy centres around four key themes of people with connections, place, enabling business and technology. Each theme has several objectives that assist in the creation of a supportive environment for business. If any members are interested in a copy of that, they are welcome to ask for it. It is on the website. We want to promote that and gain awareness of that. The first iteration of the implementation plan which you asked me about was released in early May last year. It sets out the initial actions, 114 in total.

As of the end of last year, all 114 activities had commenced, 73 were in progress, 12 were ongoing and 29 activities were complete. I can advise the committee that a progress report on the status of all of these activities will be publicly released on the Business Tasmania website in coming weeks.

A key initiative which I've reflected on already this morning is round 1 of the Small Business Growth Strategy. As you know, round 2 of the grant program is scheduled to open next month and we're very keen to get the word out about that and no doubt see some very exciting proposals being supported. I'd like to thank the TCCI and the TSBC for the work that they've done working with government as partners in the design and delivery of the strategy. We see them as long-term partners in the delivery, not just of this strategy, but also responding to challenging issues as they emerge as we've recently done through not just the COVID pandemic, but also these costs of living challenges which have been confronting, not just for households but for small businesses.

Dr BROAD - Minister, you discussed that you are new to the portfolio. I'm not sure if you've held the portfolio before.

Mr FERGUSON - I have, yes.

Dr BROAD - I believe there's the opportunity for fresh eyes and perhaps some changes, especially in the way that building construction is currently regulated. I want to build a case for a review into the powers and functions of CBOS as it relates to the building regulation, and to do that, I'll use the case of some constituents of mine.

Ken Belvin and Tasha Jordan and the dramas that they've gone through and the massive cracks in the system. I'm not trying to apportion blame, I'm just trying to highlight basically how the system has let them down and seeking some clarity.

Mr FERGUSON - We are open to your advocacy.

Dr BROAD - Yes, to do that, I need to give you some background. Ken and Tasha engaged Golden Homes, and that might trigger a reaction, to construct their house and from the very start there were massive issues for the first thing that the builder did was started digging on the wrong block. The soil test was incorrect and this has all been revealed in subsequent reports. It was given as M class, whereas all the other blocks in that particular subdivision were given as P class, so obviously, problematic.

Then there were obvious faults in the construction, so much so that around town it became a topic of conversation among the builders in this subdivision. There's a lot of new houses were going up in this subdivision and I can go through some of those. Things like bricking up two metres to a deck, building a deck and then bricking up on top of the deck up to a roof holding and no engineering.

Other issues such as lack of waterproofing in the bathroom. If anybody walked into this house, you could see that there were massive faults all the way through and yet it was signed off by the building surveyor. They engaged with CBOS quite early and basically the only opportunity for them was to go through the courts. They engaged legal representation and started taking Golden Homes through the courts. When Golden Homes realised that there were some significant issues, then the licenced builder who was an employee of Golden Homes withdrew his permission and then Golden Homes subsequently declared bankruptcy. In that bankruptcy review, Golden Homes were found to be trading insolvent for up to two years.

The other issue is, is that there's a history of insolvencies in phoenixing. That gives you the background, but just to explore the issues one by one, there was a letter sent during caretaker conventions from the Department of Justice to Kenneth Bellman from Ross Smith dated 7 March in that was highlighted that I note the director is not able to:

> … refer matters such as yours to TASCAT until such time as the legislation that will enable this, the Residential Building (Miscellaneous Consumer Protections) Act, is proclaimed.
>
> I'm currently not able to provide conclusive advice as to when this will occur, but it is progressing.

My first question is, when will that be proclaimed? This is not going to solve all their issues but the first question I've got is when will the Residential Building (Miscellaneous Consumer Protection) Act actually be proclaimed and enacted?

Mr FERGUSON - Let's work in reverse order of your questions. The latter part of your question, I'm advised that all parts of the act will be implemented by 1 October 2024, so just in a short few days. I refer to the same act that you named, the Residential Building (Miscellaneous Consumer Protection) Amendments Act. That bolsters the existing framework by introducing a range of reforms to reduce building defects and provide more effective measures to resolve building disputes without going to court. That's in place on 1 October.

Dr BROAD - One of the issues was -

Mr FERGUSON - I'm happy to come back to the first part of your question when you're ready as to considering future models.

Dr BROAD - One of the issues with CBOS is you engage CBOS and you say, look, there's huge building faults. Then CBOS says, can you get a report? Then the client will go out and they engage Gabriel Barnes who did a report and there were extensive faults throughout this. But then it is the building owner who must prove that there's negligence and then CBOS, using that, should be taking on the builder. Why doesn't CBOS do that investigation rather than a client who's already suffered significant financial hardship having to pay extra to get a false

report that CBOS then uses to judge whether or not they should give fines or impact the licence of any of those building professionals?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you for bringing it the way you have. I totally applaud the way you've advocated that. You've asked me about the role of fresh eyes in this space and without in any way wanting to cast a shadow on my predecessors in this area, I am prepared to have a fresh look at these matters. I'll give you that undertaking from the outset. I would only say, and I'd certainly ask for some advice and I'm happy to share it with you at the table. I'm not sure if the model that you've suggested does get the balance quite right in terms of the role of the owner versus the role of government.

If CBOS was expected to undertake those building reports, that could be very costly for the government and we'd have to recover the funds somehow. I'll leave that as an unanswered question. But there clearly is a role for the building owner. The real question, which you bring to the table, is how can the dispute be quickly remedied and resolved in the interest of true justice here. I might leave my own comments there only to emphasise that I am prepared to have a close look at the transcript of your questions and to be prepared to consider some level of review of the way these things are managed, whether or not that means doing something differently within the department or what does it mean perhaps tweaking some legislation. I would leave that as unanswered at the moment.

Dr BROAD - Before you throw to Mr Wheeler, there's another issue as well that's tied up in this. That's the idea of the whole phoenix thing. What we've seen is there is a number of individuals who are closely associated with each other who have numerous ABNs and have had a number of phoenixing and bankruptcies. In the past these same operatives have been involved with Easy Way Homes, with South Point Properties, with Golden Homes and from what I understand, they are again currently trading as New Age Homes. There're two individuals who have a business relationship and their partners. There are dozens of ABNs and so as soon as Golden Homes went under they have phoenixed into another building organisation and the builder has basically, in effect, lent the building licence to Golden Homes. They weren't the builders themselves. They engaged an employee who lent, in effect, his building licence to Golden Homes. When his building licence was withdrawn, that's when basically it all crumbled. It was obvious that Golden Homes engaged a junior builder, very young, just out of his apprenticeship, who constructed the house. It was obvious that he didn't have the skills to build the house, so this builder lent his, I would allege -

Mr FERGUSON - Credential.

Dr BROAD - Lent his credentials. Golden Homes employed somebody who wasn't up to the job, a young guy. It's not his fault, and then when it came to the court case, it was obvious that they were going to lose. Ken and Tasha Jordan are the most substantial creditor on their list, then they've declared bankruptcy and basically, there's very little protection.

I understand that they did receive a grant from CBOS but a very small amount that basically just paid their legal fees. Their legal situation is ongoing, as they're probably going to try to take on the building surveyor, the geotech company. This just highlights that there are so many cracks for people who know how to work the system that they are once again trading under a new name. There's been numerous stories in *The Advocate* about this particular group. So they've phoenixed once, people were buying blocks, they didn't get their deposit back. They

went bankrupt. They phoenixed as Golden Homes. Golden Homes has gone bankrupt and now they're trading again.

Mr FERGUSON - Okay.

Dr BROAD - So, anti-phoenixing as well, if Mr Wheeler would address that.

Mr FERGUSON - I hear what you're saying. There will clearly be a domain there that we really can't fix that problem because it would be governed by federal law. But I don't reject the premise of the question. If I can ask the secretary to make a comment. I think we're at the point now where we're making more observations than directly answering the question, but I'll ask the secretary and Mr Wheeler if he can also join in at what we are able to do through this instance here.

Ms BOURNE - Sure, thank you. As acting secretary, complaints and stories similar to what you have described are not uncommon and I can appreciate the trauma and frustration that many consumers who purchase property or build their own home face.

I think there is a lot of work happening across CBOS in the compliance and dispute resolution space to try to refine those processes. As the Deputy Premier has alluded to, I think there is some scope for us to look at the process, the structure and the way that those functions are performed to make sure that we are complying with our legislation and providing the best possible support to consumers, noting the new jurisdiction, TASCAT, which will provide opportunities for particularly defect rectification work to be ideally addressed before someone is forced to go into the court system. But I think that there is an opportunity to look at what else we can do to make that process more streamlined and ideally, ensure that consumers are aware of their options in a timely way so that they don't have to go through processes that cause a great deal of trauma. Those stories are certainly not something that we're not aware of, but I don't know if Mr Wheeler would like to add anything else, Deputy Premier.

Mr FERGUSON - That's a pretty good answer. Mr Wheeler, if you have anything further to add otherwise -

Mr WHEELER - Other than we are dedicated to constantly reviewing and improving our business and we are able to provide sanctions to building service providers that don't achieve.

We have an investigative team around that, and as has already been mentioned, we're aware of things like phoenixing but that is a matter for ASIC and not within our brief.

Mr FERGUSON - I will close that out if that's okay. The issue of - I'm just going to use Dr Broad's own description - lending the credential to a succession of building companies is something I feel we can take an interest in and we will. You've asked me, will we have a fresh look at this? Yes, we will, Dr Broad. I might even seek out an opportunity to have a chat with you and -

Dr BROAD - That would be excellent. If you could meet those people too, that would be excellent.

Mr FERGUSON - But we'll just - without being able to give you a policy outcome -

Dr BROAD - That was not my aim. I would be like to just finish this one off -

Ms BURNET - You have had quite a long time, Dr Broad.

CHAIR - I will let a little leeway. Please be conscious of time.

Dr BROAD - Just this one thing. From what I understand, despite there being a litany of issues, nobody has received a penalty. The building surveyor, the geotech, the builder, nobody has received a penalty or any sort of repercussions from CBOS.

Mr FERGUSON - I will be brief in response, recognising the time. Many of the remedies are civil remedies that people would be looking to achieve an outcome. I think what I'll look for is a discussion with you, Dr Broad. You obviously know a fair bit about this. I will undertake to have a look at process and policy that might help to prevent or mitigate those kinds of stories occurring in the future.

Dr BROAD - Thank you.

Ms BURNET - Minister, this is around WorkSafe. Are you confident that all government departments currently have processes in place to ensure compliance with work health and safety obligations of the PCBU, the person conducting a business or undertaking? Specifically, can you confirm how many work health and safety breaches there have been across Tasmania Police and the State Emergency Service in the last financial year, and the nature of those breaches?

Mr FERGUSON - I'll ask Ms Pearce, the executive director of WorkSafe Tasmania, to respond to your question. I will say there's never a guarantee, regardless of sector, that everybody is meeting all of their obligations. That's the whole message of WorkSafe policy, law and practices: that it's a joint responsibility of all players in an enterprise. The reason I'm saying it like that is because it's a reminder that you can never set it and forget it, and say, 'Job done, we're now compliant'. It's a daily question: 'Am I compliant?' Maybe some would say hourly questions. With that context, we have a shared responsibility to have safe workplaces, government and non-government. Ms Pearce, can you speak to the question of any performance improvement notices to state agencies, especially DPFEM?

Ms PEARCE - I don't have information with me in relation to those particular agencies. Certainly, there are incidents we respond to that involve those agencies. There are, at times, complaints across State Service agencies that we look into. Whether or not contraventions have been identified and notices issued. I would need to look into that data.

Ms BURNET - But you could take that on notice?

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, we'll take that on notice and provide the committee with whatever data we can that's useful, noting that we wouldn't want to conflate a complaint with a contravention.

Ms BURNET - Understood.

Ms PEARCE - In terms of the detail, that would be at a very high level in terms of the nature of the contravention. It wouldn't have specific details due to some confidentiality issues.

Ms BURNET - Thank you. WorkSafe Tas conducted a number of spot checks relating to COVID-19 during the pandemic. It's been put to us that during the time, WorkSafe Tas became aware that most government departments and many private sector employers do not have the capability to complete a risk assessment.

Did WorkSafe undertake action to remedy this lack of compliance, particularly in the State Service? Will you ensure there is an audit to ensure the government is complying with work health and safety obligations relating to job safety analyses?

Ms PEARCE - Risk assessments are a fundamental requirement under the legislation, as the first obligation for a PCBU is to identify the risks in their business and then to mitigate those risks. We tend to see that the lack of understanding around risk assessments is more prevalent in small business than in mid- to larger sized business. I would include government agencies in that.

In terms of doing proactive visits, when we attend an agency in response to a complaint or an incident and we start to look at their assessments, the very first questions that we ask are: 'Have you identified the risks?', 'What are the hazards?' and 'What have you put into place?'. I haven't seen anything from those that is suggesting that there is a systemic gap across the State Service in the identification of risk. Our ability to be able to run a proactive program in that space would be dependent upon what the other matters are that we're dealing with at a particular time. Our inspectors will deal with investigations, complaints, and incident notifications. They tend to have the highest priority as we deal with them in accordance with national compliance and enforcement policy. Our observation in the state government is that there is certainly a much greater focus on managing work health and safety risks.

Ms BURNET - My question was around private sector employers as well. Are you seeing that?

Ms PEARCE - We certainly see in the small business sector that that is a challenge. We have identified that. At the Safe Work Australia level, as a result of the Boland Review, there has been some work done to develop some simple tools to assist business in undertaking their risk assessments. Through our advisory service we provide free services to small to medium businesses to assist them with establishing safety management systems. That goes to also helping them to undertake risk assessments as part of that. In previous years through Work Safe Month, we've run specific workshops and events focused on helping to educate people more on risk assessment as well. It is that very fundamental underpinning of the legislation.

Mrs PENTLAND - I have concerns about the procurement single form for tenders under $500,000 for the construction projects. Does Homes Tasmania have access to this single form? Does it pose a risk with the tendering process for residential builds? How are you ensuring Tasmania is getting the best price for residential builds?

Mr FERGUSON - The question would belong better in my Treasury outputs. We've been through those.

Mrs PENTLAND - You discussed it before.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, we did. We did. Did we?

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, you did.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, I thought so. I did mention it, you're quite right, in an earlier answer. I would best answer that question by highlighting that that is a really important initiative. Small business said to us that they want it to be easier. The hurdle to overcome in bidding for government contracts for goods or services - for a smaller contract, some say, 'For the chance that I'll win the contract, it's not worth my investment of time, which costs money to put that bid in'. What we're seeking to do - and I'm not trying to be too granular about this - but as a matter of policy, what obstacle reduction can we achieve here by moving to a lower documentation process for procurements that are at the smaller end of the scale is intended to encourage more participation by the smaller business sector.

We are consulting on that specific proposal right now. It's only just opened actually. I don't have a date for that, but we are consulting right now. Quite honestly, if you or others or any individual business groups might have strong feelings about this, I would welcome that. Let me know. I will pass it through to Treasury so it can be part of the assessment of feedback of that of that targeted consultation.

What we're seeking to do here is to do more and better for our small business community. To be fair, even larger businesses at times expressed frustration that if they've been unsuccessful at winning a tender, it's actually potentially cost them a fair bit of money to bid for it. That's a strategic decision by a business, whether they're big or small, as to whether or not they want to win that job. What we're seeking to do here is to make sure that the regulation side of a procurement is at the right proportion for the size of the actual purchase the government wants to do. At a smaller cost purchase below $250, that the documentation and the legal exchange of documents that sits with that is proportionate to the size of the of the job. We're seeking to get it right. I feel quite excited about this.

Noting that you've asked me a question about housing, I might offer to take that on notice if that would be okay, because I don't know that there is a particular risk, even though you've asked me about it.

Mrs PENTLAND - Specifically Homes Tasmania, would they have access to the -

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, they would. They would be part of this. Homes Tasmania wouldn't do too many builds below 500. That would obviously be a single, small dwelling purchase, wouldn't it? It's not outside the realm of possibility, but most of its investments would be at a larger scale, multi-unit developments, for example. I'll take it on notice if that's okay. But from a policy point of view, it's not about eliminating the red tape but reducing it.

Mrs BESWICK - How do you interact strategically with the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and councils to support small businesses and commercial premises?

Mr FERGUSON - That's a question that straddles two portfolios, Small Business and Planning. I can answer some of that and I have some experience in the Planning portfolio.

As a government, it's really about making sure that the planning provisions have as much consistency as possible between jurisdictions, I mean, between the 29 councils, so you have the one statewide planning scheme so that it is more user-friendly. One of the key drivers was not so much our small business constituency but the building and developing constituency was a big driver for us to initiate that single Tasmanian planning scheme so that it was not like going between two different countries when you go between two different councils.

That's largely being achieved. I think there's a small number of councils yet to get onto the single statewide planning scheme. The intention there is to make consistent planning rules so that, particularly in the building space, and those who are doing subdivisions and developments are better able to develop a proposal and maybe even then get business in a neighbouring council area as well.

Another important point would be around PlanBuild. PlanBuild is a new IT platform that's been constructed. This particular initiative has had a lot of authors and the federal government have supported this initiative. The state government budget has supported this initiative. Last year's budget put a further $2.4 million toward it. This is an initiative that is about making it easier and streamlining development in Tasmania by allowing real-time information about planning and the building and construction industry. It is delivering a central access point for industries, property owners, developers, planning and permit authorities, and referral and reporting authorities to manage planning, building, plumbing and other development-related inquiries and applications across the state. Some members of the committee might be particularly excited that Hobart City Council is one of the first adopters of that initiative and we want to see that rolled out right across the state.

This is about having a much more streamlined and unified, if I can use the term, one-stop shop through an online portal for the entire life cycle of development, removing different kinds of forms and being able to have live access to see how your development is progressing, and then to be able to perhaps go in and seek some better service should yours be hanging around for too long. I'd be happy to discuss PlanBuild further if there is interest, but that is a very exciting project.

Mr SHELTON - Mrs Pentland asked about bond disputes. Renters and landlords in my electorate want to know what the government is doing to resolve the backlog of rental bond disputes. Can you please provide an update to the committee on this issue?

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, there is a backlog of rental bond disputes to be resolved. In partnership with Property Agents Board, I'm pleased to announce the allocation of $2 million over three years, using the surplus funds that are held in the guarantee fund. The significant investment will allow the residential tenancy commissioner, Mr Wheeler, and his team to create new roles aimed at addressing that backlog of disputes concerning rental bonds. We know that backlog isn't good enough. I'm pleased to be working with the Property Agents Board to reduce it. We're committed to ensuring that rental bond disputes are resolved promptly and fairly. Both of those are important, providing greater certainty and support for both tenants and landlords across the state.

I know that the rental bond dispute backlog has been a concern, more especially for tenants, so I'm pleased we are taking action. I'm advised that this will see a significant improvement to the efficiency and timeliness of dispute resolution, ensuring a smoother process for all that are involved. It is a tight rental market at the moment so this funding and

reducing the backlog will also provide more support for bonds. When the disputes are settled or resolved, it will allow a return of bond funds to people that may well need it for their next rental.

The Property Agents Board have approved the allocation. Good on them. The investment will not only address the immediate backlog, but also help safeguard against future delays or new build-up of backlog by providing that ongoing support and capacity to the commissioner's office.

Dr BROAD - Has CBOS received or investigated any complaints from long-term residents of caravan parks, and has CBOS taken any steps to ensure that Australian consumer law is being followed in caravan parks when it relates to long-term residents?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you for the very good question. The answer is yes, CBOS has and I me, as an MP, have received complaints from long-term residents of caravan parks. We have a fair bit to say about this, so tell me if it's the level of detail you're looking for. I will specifically address the question about whether Australian consumer law plays a role here.

Many long-term residents of caravan parks own the dwelling they live in but they don't own the land on which their dwelling stands. I don't think anybody's challenging that, by the way. Dwellings are of very different types, including small buildings or even caravans, with or without their wheels removed, with constructed annexes. In these circumstances, residents are unlikely to be covered by residential tenancy legislation. However, laws relating to long-term residents of caravan parks cross a complex range of planning, building and other laws. We've investigated this deeply prior to me even coming to this role. Contract law, the Australian consumer law and codes of conduct potentially apply to owners and residents of caravan parks.

We are acutely aware of concerns that have been raised by a number of long-term residents of caravan parks in Tasmania. I'll name it up, there's no point avoiding it, in particular from residents in and around the Beauty Point area in northern Tasmania. I have heard of others as well.

We are reviewing the laws. The way we're doing that at this point in time is that we have a discussion paper, a comprehensive one. In case any member hasn't yet seen it, I commend it to your reading. That discussion paper is out there right now. Information sessions, face-to-face sessions are happening around the state in all of the major centres. Beauty Point was yesterday. To encourage discussion, we would like people to read and understand the ideas in that discussion paper and to consider the questions being asked within it. We're very attuned to this particular issue. While I'm not able today to announce a policy outcome, we will no doubt have a policy consideration in response to that discussion paper.

I won't talk about some legal actions that are underway at the moment, but I will reflect that some people are seeking a remedy under Australian consumer law. That's worth noting. We can take further questions should you wish. CBOS potentially has a role in relation to Australian consumer law complaints.

Dr BROAD - In relation to CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and licensing, I understand that this is under review. The system's seven years old and I get reports that it's confusing, irrelevant, hard to access, costly to licence holders, which is in addition to licence fees, and it seems adjudicated extremely inconsistently. This issue is causing much concern in

licenced trades, not just electrical, but it certainly has been raised by people who are electrical contractors. Is there an active review, when will it be finished and any outcome, potential outcomes?

Mr FERGUSON - It is a live issue and, yes, the electrical sector has raised it and has also raised that issue with me. I will, if you don't mind, ask Mr Wheeler from CBOS to speak to the matter. Before he does, I will very briefly say I have committed to the electrical sector that before we make any formal changes, we'll be consulting with them to seek their views and input.

Mr WHEELER - CBOS is currently reviewing the CPD determination 2018 that outlines CPD requirements of the trades licence under the *Occupational Licencing Act*, namely gassing, plumbing and electrical trades. The aim of this review is to ensure the determination is contemporary and provides certainty for individuals seeking CPD as well as meeting industry needs. We have also just updated our review of assessment so when an assessment of a CPD course is reviewed we have an updated review process for that in place.

We are looking at it; a formal consultation hasn't yet occurred. We've had some very initial conversations with areas, but we will consult with stakeholders in due course. We're aiming to consult in early 2025. The three areas we need to put some focus on in terms of CPD is ensuring that CPD is trade specific that it possibly looks at business management because it's an issue that's for small businesses of that nature and safety. They are the three areas we'll be looking at.

Mr WINTER - Minister, during the debate on the Industrial Manslaughter Bill, the previous minister for workplace safety or Consumer Affairs told the House in front of victim/survivor families that she was working on industrial manslaughter laws and then conducted consultation and was looking to progress it, yet when the second reading speech came through the Legislative Council, the ministry had disappeared and there'd been a reshuffle.

During the debate, the Leader of the House read your words in front of the families:

> It has been our government's consistent position that an industrial manslaughter offence is not required in Tasmania's Work, Health and Safety laws. Such conduct is adequately and appropriately captured and provided for within our existing manslaughter offences under the *Criminal Code*.

It was so distressing, minister, that the families left the Chamber in tears.

Why did your government and former minister disingenuously inform families that you supported them and were working on legislation? Why was that position changed to say that the government's consistent position had been that it didn't support industrial manslaughter laws?

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, Mr Winter, for your question. I welcome the question and I welcome the subject matter. This has been a matter that's been resolved in the parliament in both Houses, as you know. I would challenge some of the assumptions in your question. We have, however, wanted to work closely to ensure that any changes to criminal law in Tasmania is done in a carefully devised and properly constructed way and we had concerns that the

private member's bill that was ultimately agreed to in parliament was not consistent with the way that our legal framework works in Tasmania.

There were concerns around the way it interacts with the *Criminal Code* and the way that it did or didn't interact with existing crimes of manslaughter. It surprises me that you would bring up the question in the way that you have. I wouldn't have thought that you could say that the government had earlier been more supportive of an industrial manslaughter offence. We didn't support it in the House of Assembly unless you're trying to rewrite history.

Mr WINTER - Well, I can quote from the minister if you like.

Mr FERGUSON - It just surprises me that you that you've presented it that way. It is true that the previous minister was, through the review of work, health and safety laws - OH&S laws - considering a range of proposals. The best way to make sure that we do protect workers is that we do send a clear message to employers that we look to them to provide for a safe workplace. I just don't want to agree with you that there's been the mischief that I think you're trying to present the passage of the legislation.

Mr WINTER - Given the passage of the legislation, because this is really important, I think you'd agree, will WorkSafe be given dedicated resourcing to educate and inform employers of their responsibilities under that legislation, including in particular with industrial manslaughter coming in?

Mr FERGUSON - With my previous comments now clearly on the record, yes, the team at WorkSafe will be implementing a particular body of work to ensure that the new laws which are a law of our state are understood and given effect in the proper way.

Would it be okay if I asked Ms Pearce to speak to how your team and you are rolling that out?

Ms PEARCE - Thank you, through you, minister. Thank you for the question. There are a range of measures that we're putting in place right now to undertake education. We're updating information on our website to provide information, we are currently planning what we call a better work event to take place in WorkSafe month on 21 October. We will actually arrange a panel session with representatives from the regulator, experts in prosecuting matters of manslaughter or defending them in order to provide information and advice to the community.

We'll be preparing information to go out in our Workplace Issues magazine but also messaging and op-eds, if you like, that we can share with industry so it can go into their magazines, and get it out through our social media. We'll be offering the opportunity for formation sessions through Unions Tasmania as well and also looking at opportunities for specific forums through industry union associations to provide information to them in those environments and particularly through some of our engagements with larger building firms that they have opportunities to arrange get-togethers with their subcontractors as well.

We'll be exploring all of those opportunities to provide information and education on the nature of the offence, both in terms of how it applies, but what are the likely features that you would see in order to potentially be prosecuted for an industrial manslaughter offence because

it is important that we get the message out which was absolutely certainly discussed, but if you're complying with the laws, you've got nothing to be concerned about -

Mr FERGUSON - Quite right.

Ms PEARCE - And if you're substantially complying with the laws, you've probably got nothing to worry about.

Mr FERGUSON - Well said. I couldn't have said a better myself.

Ms BURNET - Thanks, minister. I just turned to the Tasmanian Gender Budget Statement, which is a really good initiative. There are 58 per cent of women in the workforce compared to 63.7 of men and 51 per cent of women work part time compared to 22 per cent of men. It's proportionately the number of women participating in the workplace is worse than the rest of the nation.

I'm interested to know how you're looking to address that inequity, that's the first question.

Mr FERGUSON - I'm sorry, I don't have it immediately to hand, but budget paper no 1 will. I realise the clock is against us.

Budget paper no 1 discusses in some detail where the growth in employment has occurred, including between the genders. We saw the stronger growth during and since the pandemic actually has occurred amongst women and that's been a pleasing outcome. We want to not set and forget like we recognise where the question is coming from and why it's the right ambition to encourage more opportunities and well-paid work for men and women, but especially noting any areas of disadvantage.

If we can improve the participation, employment and well-paid work for women, that is exactly why we've included those kinds of narratives and data sets in the gender budget statement.

CHAIR - The time for estimates of the Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs has expired. We will take a 5-minute break and the committee will commence the examination of Minister for Business, Industry and Resources.

The Committee suspended at 2.30 p.m.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Eric Abetz MP

Tuesday 24 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Tabatha Badger MP
Mr Mark Shelton MP
Ms Janie Finlay MP
Mr Craig Garland MP
Ms Anita Dow MP
Dr Shane Broad MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. ERIC ABETZ MP
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Minister for Transport and Leader of the House

Craig Limkin
Secretary, Department of State Growth

Martin Crane
General Manager Road User Services

Cynthia Heydon
Deputy Secretary Transport

Dr Ryan Wilkinson
Acting Director of Inland Fisheries

Deidre Wilson
Deputy Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Alastair Morton
Director of Mines

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources

The Committee resumed at 2.35 p.m.

CHAIR (Mr Wood) - Good afternoon everyone. Before we commence, I have a letter to read from the Speaker:

> Dear Mr Wood,
>
> In accordance with the provisions of the resolution appointing the Estimates Committee under Membership of Committees, paragraph 6, I hereby nominate Ms Anita Dow as a substantive member of the committee in substitute for Mr Josh Willie on Tuesday, 24 September 2024 from 4.00 p.m. for the remainder of the day.
>
> Yours sincerely,
> Honourable Michelle O'Byrne MP
> Speaker

CHAIR - The time being after 2.30, the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources will commence. Welcome minister. Would you please introduce the persons at the table for the benefit of Hansard?

Mr ABETZ - Starting with Jenna Cairney, acting Deputy Secretary. Craig Limkin, Secretary. Mark Bowles, acting Deputy Secretary. All have fancy titles but do a great job and I am appreciative of the fact that they are at the table with me.

CHAIR - Welcome. The time scheduled for estimates of the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources is four hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question of the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

I remind everyone that the microphones are sensitive, so please be mindful of Hansard when shuffling papers and the like around the table. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I'd ask members to speak one at a time to assist with this.

Would the minister care to make an opening statement?

Mr ABETZ - Chair, it's good to be back before the committee. The Budget underpins the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future designed to create jobs, attract investment and continue positioning Tasmania as a global destination for both business and tourism. The government is maintaining its commitment to a business friendly environment, delivering no new or increased taxes in this Budget.

Business and industry are the lifeblood of our society and economy in providing jobs and self-reliant households. The 2024 Budget delivers funding for key projects that will drive

investment and secure employment for thousands of our fellow Tasmanians. This Budget delivers more than $5 million to supporting CAT's expansion plans with a 50/50 co-contribution to support new training facilities, equipment, production halls, and growth in floor space in Tasmania's first marine recharging facilities.

Furthermore, the Budget provides $600,000 in funding to deliver the Mount Wellington Strategic Review. The purpose of the review is to develop a long-term vision for the mountain which includes the Wellington precinct.

The Resources portfolio encompasses mining, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, key pillars of our economy that underpin the prosperity of every Tasmanian family, especially in our regions. This Budget builds upon the government's steadfast commitment to ensuring that Tasmania continues on its strong trajectory of economic growth and job creation. In forestry, we are continuing our strong support for our sustainable forestry sector. Our goal is to ensure the long-term future of the sector, which brings around $1.2 billion into our economy each year and keeps more than 6600 people in jobs, both through direct employment and through demand generated in regional economies.

The Budget provides around $70 million across the forward Estimates to support and grow our sustainable forestry sector, providing certainty and stability for Tasmanians, keeping our economy strong and creating jobs, particularly in our regional communities.

Importantly, this Budget continues the critical work of our forestry regulator, the Forest Practices Authority, and the current momentum of Private Forests Tasmania facilitating sustainable forestry on private land and increasing the resilience of our agricultural sector through farm forestry.

In mining, our mining sector remains a powerhouse of the economy, supporting thousands of jobs and generating billions in export earnings. In fact, the mining and minerals processing industries employ 6800 people, generating 64 per cent of the state's export value and producing over $2.9 billion worth of product. The 2024 Budget allocates $3 million over the next three years to supercharge the Critical Minerals Strategy. We are also extending the successful Exploration Drilling Grants Initiative (EDGI) by a further four years, committing $1.5 million to co-invest with industry.

Aquaculture and fisheries - fishing is a way of life recreationally and professionally for many Tasmanians. We want to see profitable and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in Tasmania, sectors that create economic growth and opportunities right across our state. The Budget delivers over $8.6 million to support our wild-capture aquaculture and recreational fisheries. In addition to initiatives that support research, stock enhancement and protection of our iconic fisheries, we will be developing a wild-capture seafood strategy in partnership with Seafood Industry Tasmania. The strategy and developmental fishery opportunities like this will guide our sustainable seafood sector into the future.

Funding has also been allocated to support the development of the sardine fishery, an exciting prospect for Tasmanian fisheries. When it comes to aquaculture, this state's salmon industry employs over 5000 Tasmanians, with nine in every 10 of those jobs in our regional communities. We are going to continue to back this important sector, a Tasmanian success story that has grown from nothing to become the highest value seafood sector in Australia in only 40 years.

To best support our agency officials, noticing that the BIR portfolio includes staff from both DSG and NRET, depending on the output, I suggest that we commence with State Growth before moving to NRET, as DSG provides support for mining, forestry, and business and industry, all of which are supported by different parts of the agency. Would the committee be amenable to scrutinising Resources first? Of course, I am in the hands of the committee.

Dr BROAD - That wasn't what we were going to do, but -

Mr ABETZ - I am in the hands of the committee, as I have said.

Ms DOW - I have a few short questions, and then we can move to Resources.

Dr WOODRUFF - We can just ask questions in the order we seek to, can't we?

CHAIR - That's right.

Mr ABETZ - In the general DSG, the marine fisheries is with NRET and so -

Ms DOW - I won't be asking about marine fisheries.

Mr ABETZ - there will be different cohort at the table, that's all.

Ms DOW - Same for us. As minister for industry and business, you will be aware of the importance of the new *Spirit* vessels to business and industry, particularly in north-west Tasmania and for regional economies. Some of those industries include the tourism industry, but there are many others, including horticulture, that rely on the freight task of those new vessels to get their products to market, and are already doing planning around that. Can you guarantee that works at Berth 3 at the Devonport Port will be completed by January 2026 as your government has committed to?

Mr ABETZ - What I can commit to is that for the producers of this state, TT-Line will continue to provide a service to ensure that their product gets to the mainland overnight, as they've been doing for a considerable period of time. In the event the demand increases, TT-Line has already told us that they will be putting on extra sailings. That said, Chair, those sorts of questions should really be either under Transport or, even more correctly, with the government business enterprises scrutiny committees.

Ms DOW - I would have thought that as minister for business and industry that this was in your remit to answer these questions.

Mr ABETZ - The impact of the TT-Line will be undoubtedly beneficial to our economy. There is a number of businesses in Tasmania that will benefit from the local fit out, that will be happening, I assume, later this year on *Spirit IV*.

Ms DOW - You won't confirm that those Berth 3 works will be completed by January 2026, as has been previously committed by your government? It feels like the government's walking away from that date.

Mr ABETZ - No. I invite you to ask questions of the state-owned corporation at the appropriate scrutiny forum, which will be later this year, so you can get the exact details. The government at the moment, as the Premier has already advised, is getting information and advice from Ben Moloney and Peter Gemmell, two experts, to see how that which has occurred can be put behind us, to ensure that we get this moving as quickly as possible. There are some who always want to look into the past. There are those of us who want to get on with the job and look to the future and that is my mindset.

Ms DOW - Minister, we're very much about looking to the future. We're not looking at the past. The six-week time frame where your government was going to provide an update on this project is with us now. Tasmanians don't want to wait till GBEs to be updated about this. They want to know now. They want your government to be honest about the time frames that you set and whether you'll actually meet them.

Mr ABETZ - What you're really saying is, 'Government, ignore the work that experts are doing, come out with some answer today'.

Ms DOW - No, I'm not. I'm saying be upfront with the community.

Mr ABETZ - That is why I've indicated to you that we are waiting for the advice of Ben Moloney and Peter Gemmell, two experts in the field, to help us charter the way forward. If you want an answer now, it would be like going to the doctor saying, 'I want an answer how to fix me' before a diagnosis is made. We need the diagnosis -

Ms DOW - You might be able to answer this one for me, then. Are you 100 per cent -

Mr ABETZ - We then need a prospective treatment.

CHAIR - I'm giving the call to Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - The State of the Environment report that was released just last week shows how terrible the environment has deteriorated under a decade of Liberal policies. One of the greatest threats to the survival of key endemic Tasmanian species is the removal of habitat through native forest logging. Your election policy was to go into an additional 39,000 hectares of future forest reserves. These are high conservation forests that were protected for their outstanding high conservation values. After the State of the Environment report, which was a failure for Tasmania's environment, are you going to reconsider this plan? If you didn't reconsider it, it would be seen as a science-denying policy position on your government's part.

Mr ABETZ - The premise of your question, with respect, Leader of the Greens, is rejected. We do forestry in a way that is the envy of the world. We do forestry in a sustainable manner. In relation to that which we took to the election, might I remind you, was that we would look at opening up what has been described as the 'wood bank' to see what extra harvesting can take place subject to certain conditions. That is what we are doing and are undertaking in a methodical manner.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm not surprised. I'm saddened on behalf of Tasmanians, but they wouldn't expect any less from you. You didn't even attend to the question, which was about the reality of the State of the Environment report and what it said about the impact of native forest

logging on the removal of habitat for species. Given that you're not changing your position, can you please tell us, if you're successful in converting 39,000 hectares of high conservation value FPPF forests, is it your intention to convert them to PTBZ land to be managed by Forestry Tasmania?

Mr ABETZ - What we are doing is going through some proposed areas to consider their suitability in relation to a number of criteria. Any land that is to be converted, if that were to occur, will be subject to the parliamentary procedures. So you, Dr Woodruff, and every other member of the parliament, will be able to have a say in that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. Can you answer the question?

CHAIR - Mr Garland.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, hold on. He's getting information, Chair -

CHAIR - Sorry.

Dr WOODRUFF - and he hasn't answered the question yet, which is, will he be handing them to Forestry Tasmania to manage?

Mr ABETZ - I haven't turned my mind as to whether that would go to Sustainable Timber Tasmania, which is the correct word -

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, can I table a document? I wasted so much precious scrutiny time having to have this fight with the chair of Forestry Tasmania at GBEs last year. I'm very happy to table the document which shows the ASIC name for that company, which is trading as Sustainable Timber Tasmania, but it is indeed registered as Forestry Tasmania, and also to table the agreement from Michael Ferguson, the shareholder minister, in June last year, which is on the common seal of Forestry Tasmania. So, let's dispense with that charade.

Mr ABETZ - Trading as and having a business name is a very common practice, and that is the common usage. That is how people know it. It goes against every instinct of the Greens to have a trading name which actually tells the truth about the organisation, namely that it is sustainable timbers. You can have your affected laughter but it does not change - and there you go again -

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is actually the truth.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is what they are, Forestry Tasmania.

Mr ABETZ - But it does not change the fact that we do timber harvesting in a most sustainable manner. I have many a time challenged and asked, where do they do forestry better than they do it in Tasmania?

Dr WOODRUFF - To the question, will you be handing it to Forestry Tasmania to manage?

Mr ABETZ - I will be handing it to Sustainable Timber Tasmania if we get there.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, so, you don't know that yet? You started the process and you don't know who you're going to give it to?

Mr ABETZ - No, because it's the parliamentary process that will determine whether or not any parcels of land are made available. If the parliament would -

Dr WOODRUFF - So you haven't decided that yet.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - Can I finish one sentence without an interjection?

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm just asking questions along the way.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, you can't ask questions along the way. Please let the minister respond to this particular question.

Mr ABETZ - What we have is a process that is clearly outlined by the legislation. The parliament will have its say. If any allotments are put before the parliament, then it will be up to the parliament to determine. If they so determine that the land should be made available for harvesting, then it would be under the auspices of Sustainable Timber Tasmania.

CHAIR - I take this opportunity to remind committee members that you are not able to table documents during proceedings as the purpose of the proceeding is to elicit information from the minister, not to provide it. A member can provide the minister the information, though, by handing it to them. Thank you, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm very happy to hand that to you, minister, which is about the actual name of Forestry Tasmania.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you, Dr Woodruff.

Mr ABETZ - Trading as Sustainable Timber Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, I know, but only for PR purposes.

Mr GARLAND - Minister, the Legislative Council Finfish Inquiry looked at the value of the salmon industry to Tasmania in great detail. Recommendation 40 was to ensure appropriate returns to the Tasmanian community -

Mr ABETZ - Sorry, this is now fishing. This is the difficulty that we're going to get into that I tried to suggest avoiding at the beginning. I am happy to answer the questions, member for Braddon, but this is the Department of State Growth.

Fishing is with NRET, which is another department. We'll need to bring other officials to the table. I'm happy for that to occur, should that be the wish of the committee, but there will be time wasted by people coming to and from the table. We have a time limit. It's up to the committee to determine how it uses its time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, is it possible to have other departmental members at the table at the same time so that members can ask of either department?

CHAIR - I'm not sure practically there's room to do that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Or at least the secretary.

CHAIR - Mr Garland, would you have a more pointed question to the -

Mr GARLAND - I can let you get through this and when the fisheries people come to the table, I'll come back.

Mr ABETZ - That would be very helpful. Thank you for your forbearance.

Dr BROAD - In other committees, like in Housing yesterday, people were coming and going all the time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, that's right.

Dr BROAD - It's not such a big issue. You just need to call up whoever's going to answer the question.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is going happen when we go back - the other member for the Greens is going come in later to ask questions on mining after I have asked a question on salmon. This is going to happen all afternoon.

CHAIR - Minister, I think the mood of the committee is that we make that available. In this instance could we please get the appropriate people?

Mr GARLAND - The Legislative Council Finfish Inquiry looked at the value of the salmon industry to Tasmania in great detail. Recommendation 40 was to ensure appropriate returns to the Tasmanian community. That recommendation said it should commission an independent review of fee and levy structures for finfish farming, including a number of items.

In your Salmon Industry Plan 2023, priority outcome 3, page 14, the government committed to ensuring an appropriate return to the Tasmanian community from use of our land and marine waters. It was called value capture. In the implementation program for the plan, one of the actions was to consult on an appropriate return from the salmon and aquaculture industry to the Tasmanian community. NRE was to be the lead agency.

Since we are now looking at a huge budget deficit with no money in the Budget for promises like the Northern Heart Centre, my question is, does the government still intend to consult the community on what it considers an appropriate return for the use of the land and water by big salmon? If so, when, and if not, why?

CHAIR - Before you answer that, minister, for the benefit of Hansard could you please introduce the person at the table?

Ms WILSON - I am Deidre Wilson, Deputy Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

Mr ABETZ - The government looked at the Legislative Council's report and was appreciative of the work that was undertaken by it. As I understand it the government provided a detailed formal response in August 2022, before either of us were in this place. We are continuing to deliver in relation to the salmon sector, with the Environmental Protection Agency being an independent environmental regulator for it.

In relation to the value that the people of Tasmania get from the salmon industry, let's start with the very important contribution, and that is literally the thousands of jobs that put food on the tables of many families right around this state. Down the Huon, in the electorate of Franklin, it is a considered that about one in four people are employed courtesy of the salmon sector.

I met a little electrical company with 15 people employed and 5 apprentices. That business that operates out of Ranelagh in Tasmania - 90 plus per cent of its work is the electrical work at Tassal and Huon Aquaculture. The spin-offs and benefits to the Tasmanian community are literally huge. Then you've got Mitchell Plastic Welding down at Castle Forbes Bay that employs people. Then you've got nets at Cairns Bay, I think it is - companies that provide the netting for the pens for the fish farm.

The benefits to the Tasmanian community, Mr Garland, are huge. On top of that, there are the fees that are paid and we have the cost recovery which we announced, and which the salmon sector is paying to ensure the regulatory frameworks that are in place aren't a burden to the taxpayer of Tasmania, but is covered by that sector.

From 1 July 2023, cost recovery levy was established to recover the full costs of managing the salmon industry. I'm advised that the levy revenue was $9.61 million for 2023-24 and we did say, and when you ask about consulting with the Tasmanian community, we believe we did that during the last election by saying no salmon taxes or no new salmon taxes, and the people of Tasmania, rightly or wrongly, backed that in. As a government, we intend to abide by that election promise.

Mrs BESWICK - I understand that royalties that Tasmania collects on resources are a lot lower than in many other states.

Mr ABETZ - Sorry, just so I am clear straight away, this is about mining?

Mrs BESWICK - Mining and resources

Mr ABETZ - Obviously resources has forestry, mining and fishing in it when we talk about levies, et cetera. Anyway, we now know it's mining.

Mrs BESWICK - I am quite curious as to what the term of mining includes in terms of things like Cement Australia or quarries and things. Does that make sense, did you hear me?

Mr ABETZ - Yes.

Mrs BESWICK - In the terms of royalties from our resources that are taken out of our ground, Saul Eslake believes increasing these royalties would help with budget repair. Is there a historic reason as to why they are currently at the low point they are and, in your opinion, would there be a risk to increasing them or have you considered increases to these?

Mr ABETZ - I can let you know that in 2023-24 the Tasmanian mining industry paid $52.2 million in royalties and over $2.2 million in fees and rentals. This is in addition to the payroll tax and stamp duty taxes that mining companies also pay.

I'm aware that the Eslake report, that the then JLN encouraged, recommended to increase royalties. The royalty revenue is already, we believe, quite substantial and in the last 25 years it has contributed $800 million in royalties to the state.

Tasmania operates under a two-tiered system where royalty is paid either as a percentage of net sales and profit, or ad valorem or a specific rate royalty by those who sell the minerals. The ad valorem system operates predominantly on the metallic minerals produced, for example lead, zinc, gold, nickel and tin, whilst the specific rates are applied to the construction and industrial minerals on a per tonne basis.

When you're further away from markets, there is an extra cost of production and getting product to those markets that has to be factored in. So you have to be careful to ensure that, if I can use the expression, you don't kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

In this case, governments of all persuasions over the years, have tried to the best of their ability to get the best return for the Tasmanian community whilst also ensuring that the mines do not become uncompetitive, where the worst thing that could happen for us, if they were to close down, and as a result jobs lost and then there would be absolutely no royalty stream.

Mr SHELTON - As we are on mining, minister, can you please provide an update on the minerals royalty rebate scheme that was announced as part of the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future?

Mr ABETZ - I can indeed. The Tasmanian government is committed to ensuring that our mining sector remains a key contributor to the state's economy, which is why we announced the Minerals Royalty Rebate Scheme as part of our 2030 Strong Plan. The scheme will be designed to incentivise the reprocessing of historic tailings and the recommencement of operations at legacy mine sites particularly where environmental benefits can be demonstrated.

This will be a double win if this is taken up and that is why we thought that a 20 per cent rebate on royalties would be a good incentive. One, we extract more mineral wealth, but we also have an environmental clean-up or dividend from those activities. So, it is a good win-win, thinking outside the square and those that were in the portfolio before I joined this place, thought it would be a good idea as part of the 2030 Strong Plan, and I'm delighted that I've been given the opportunity to try to put that into practice.

Ms DOW - Minister, you won't guarantee that works at Berth 3 will be completed by January 2026. Are you still 100 per cent committed to completing the temporary fix at Berth 1?

Mr ABETZ -These questions should be asked of the appropriate portfolio.

Ms DOW - I would have thought that a fiasco of this extent, that has implications right across Tasmania could be asked across any ministerial area because it should be a whole-of-government focus to get this project up and running.

CHAIR - Ms Dow, please allow the minister to answer your question.

Mr ABETZ - These questions should be either asked at Transport or even more appropriately at the GBE hearings later on this year. We as a government, and I have said this before, the Premier has said it before me during these Estimates as well, we are going to inform ourselves by the experts, Ben Moloney and Peter Gemell, and see what they recommend. As I said before, it would be like having a doctor seeking to suggest a treatment before the diagnosis is even made. What we need is an expert diagnosis that I have confidence Ben Moloney and Peter Gemell will deliver for us, and it will be on that basis that the decisions will be made.

Ms DOW - Will you be withdrawing your ministerial direction around Berth 1?

Mr ABETZ - These are hypothetical questions and that's not on the government's agenda.

Ms DOW - Maybe this is. The HIF proposal at Burnie: I want to draw your attention to the HIF proposal for an e-fuel plant at Hampshire. It's an important project for Burnie and the north-west. What role as Industry minister are you playing in ensuring that this important economic development opportunity for the north-west of Tasmania is not lost?

Mr ABETZ - That is something that is part and parcel of the totality, but can I tell you that SeaRoad gets its LNG via tanker from Westbury?

Ms DOW - That's not the commitment though. The commitment was that there would be infrastructure.

Mr ABETZ - That will enable a local Tasmanian business to be the supplier of fuel if that is the source. Excuse my confusion. I understand this is something that falls in the bailiwick of Mr Duigan.

Ms DOW - As Industry minister, you're not looking at what new prospective industries are prospectively coming to Tasmania. My last question to you is why wouldn't you be across this proposal? It's going to create lots of jobs in a part of Tasmania that's seen a huge reduction in industry over time. It's a great prospective development. Why aren't you across it and why is it Mr Duigan's responsibility when you're the minister for Industry?

Mr ABETZ - That is a hydrogen proposal for which the minister for Energy has direct line responsibility for. As Minister for Industry and Business, do I encourage any potential investment? Of course I do.

Ms DOW - Have you met with HIF?

Mr ABETZ - At the end of the day, these matters fall into the bailiwick or ministerial responsibility of my colleague, minister Duigan. Should you wish to ask questions about that specific project, avail yourself of the expertise of minister Duigan, who has direct line responsibility.

Ms DOW - I'd encourage you to meet with them and get abreast of a really important project.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the 39,000-hectare conversion of high conservation-value public forests, this was in your 100 day plan, this proud additional destruction of our forests. Can you tell me where the process is up to exactly in the conversion? As you mentioned before, there is a stage process under the *Forestry* (*Rebuilding the Forestry Industry) Act*. It has about eight steps to it. Can you please tell the committee where the process is up to there, and can you please provide us with a map or details of the areas that are being investigated?

Mr ABETZ - First of all, I'm delighted that some of the areas that are included in this are described, as the member has, as our regrowth Tasmanian forests - that have been harvested, sown and regrown and are now being described as high conservation-value forests. Does that not tell everybody how well we do forestry? That is something I'm very appreciative of, that that is now on the record.

In relation to the 'wood bank' proposal, we made our announcement during the election as to what we were proposing. We are looking through various allotments of potential production to ascertain whether or not they would be suitable to be made available for harvesting. That process will take some time to determine - whether the areas are suitable.

Work has begun. A forestry round table was held on 26 June 2024 to begin discussions on our government's pro-growth settings for forestry jobs, confidence, investment and wood production, including value adding. The round table was attended by representatives of numerous timber and forest contractors, organisations. That was in our update in the 100 plan delivery document.

Dr WOODRUFF - You walked yourself around answering any of that question. The question was, this is a legislative process. Conversion of our future production forests is a legislative process. It has eight steps. What step are you up to, and do you have any areas that you have identified at all at the moment? Let's put this on the record. This was announced during the election campaign. It seemed like it was a bit of a 'brain fart' of the then-minister. It had no support from anyone in the industry at all. I'm trying to understand, is there any appetite for this, or is this something the Liberals just cooked up as a very divisive thing during an election campaign? Where is it up to exactly, other than one conversation as a round table?

Mr ABETZ - All this wonderful rhetoric. One day we're in the pocket of big business and -

Dr WOODRUFF - Every day.

Mr ABETZ - The next day, as you are now saying, we are ignoring big business.

Dr WOODRUFF - No.

Mr ABETZ - You can't have it both ways.

Dr WOODRUFF - What is going on? Just tell us, please.

Mr ABETZ - I have already told you, we are going through to ascertain if there are any areas that would be suitable for conversion under the legislative process. We said in our 2030 Strong Plan what we would be doing in that regard to ensure that we would not prejudice and may need to be reminded that we wouldn't prejudice our comprehensive and adequate reserves. That we wouldn't be prejudicing Sustainable Timber Tasmania's certification and also the other important criteria that we mentioned such as [inaudible]. Allow me to get out the Strong Plan and I'll try to find exactly what we promised in that regard.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, if the minister can answer the question, which wasn't what he's trying to do at the moment.

CHAIR - Order. I cannot direct the minister to answer the question a particular way.

Mr ABETZ - If I can indicate I said the parcels that would be identified would be subject to and I quote:

> The state's comprehensive, adequate and representative CAR reserve system is not compromised, that there is no negative impact on Sustainable Timber Tasmania's current and future certification and that they maximise carbon carrying capacity, fire protection and recreational opportunities.

They were the caveats that were placed by my predecessor. All those caveats are being considered in relation to particular parcels. Once those determinations have been made, then it will be for me, as I understand the process, to write to the minister for Crown lands, who will then submit something to the parliament for you, Dr Woodruff and your colleagues to vote on.

Dr WOODRUFF - Get the forest round tables. What did they say? Did the industry say that they wanted this conversion to happen?

Mr ABETZ - I'm not going to divulge that which occurs at a round table. Industry tells us what they believe and confidentiality is very important in those sorts of discussions.

Dr WOODRUFF - They were very outspoken in the election campaign in not wanting it to happen.

Mr ABETZ - That is your rhetoric.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, they were on the public record. Don't change reality.

Mr ABETZ - That is your rhetoric. Yes, there was somebody who spoke out against it. There were others who I understand quietly supported it that were not willing, for fear of public demonisation by certain groups within the committee, like the Bob Brown Foundation, to make public commentary.

Like with most proposals, it shouldn't come as a surprise that when there is a proposal there are those who are for it and there are those who are against it. We took a policy to the

election and the people, right, wrong or indifferent, we are in government and we intend to deliver on the policy on the basis of the very important caveats that I've just read out of the 2030 Strong Plan.

Mr GARLAND - In your last response, minister, you talked about the perceived benefits of the salmon industry. Have you accounted for the cost to the environment from the industry? Will you provide this full cost benefit analysis if you have it?

Mr ABETZ - We have an Independent Environmental Protection Agency that will determine these matters. I understand the situation; there is an environmental impact. The question is balancing it and is it sustainable and then consider as well the financial benefits for every single one of those individual workers and the wealth that it creates for our state with the export of the product mainly to the mainland of Australia, to our fellow Australians.

I also add that the medical experts, health experts, tell us that we should be - and I believe I was wrong in parliament the other day when I said one feed of fish a week. I started off with saying a day and a week, but in fact it - and you, Ms Finlay -

Ms FINLAY - You have to eat it every day, minister.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, it should be two or three times a week. This is an affordable product to help sustain the health of the community at large.

As you would know, Mr Garland, from your activities, there is a limit to our wild catch. There is a limit to our wild fisheries. Therefore, if we want to provide the fish, the health food that is so important for our community, we've got to farm it. It's a bit like why we found chickens and sheep and cattle, because there aren't enough of them in the wild to feed us. As humanity developed, we started farming them. That is what we are now doing with the fisheries as well. That is a good environmental benefit in putting less stress on our wild fisheries and ensuring that we provide a good health food.

Are there environmental impacts? Yes. Each and every time you and I drive into Parliament House, there's an environmental impact. You've got to balance it out. Hopefully the people of Braddon say that when you drive down here, there might be an environmental impact, but that is more than offset by the good you do in this Parliament. I'd like to think that people are frank and think the same about myself.

To try to say that we can do things in our community without any environmental impact is to not understand the realities of the world. What we need to do is balance and provide sustainability. I think that is what we're doing. That is why with the Storm Bay development, we are looking at ensuring that the nitrogen levels that Storm Bay can absorb are within a limit to ensure sustainability. That is what is so important from this government's point of view.

Will there be environmental impacts here? Virtually everything we do - when we buy a mobile phone, there's an environmental impact in the way that it was made. We cannot escape that. The question is, can we do it in a sustainable manner and in a manner that the stewardship protects the environment as much as possible?

Mrs BESWICK - I recently toured the proposed site for the ambitious Whaleback Ridge Wind Farm. As you know, it stretches a long way, and from my understanding is close to some

dormant mine sites. Do you have any opposition to the Whaleback Ridge going ahead? In your opinion, are there any mining related reasons that this should not occur?

Mr ABETZ - I have not personally set my mind to that exact issue. I'm not sure whether I've in fact even been briefed on it. That said, I am aware that certain holders of mining leases are a bit twitchy about the installation of these big wind turbines. I would need to take that on notice.

CHAIR - Thank you. Take it on notice.

Mr ABETZ - I've just been provided with some information that tells me that the *Mining (Strategic Prospectivity Zones) Act 1993* demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the minerals industry has continuing access to Crown land that we know is prospective for minerals. Before alienating any Crown land from within a strategic prospectivity zone for the purposes of mineral industry access, the comparative benefit test is applied, and a final decision is focused on what is in the best interest of Tasmania.

That means that this area can potentially host both mining development and, for example, wind power generation by ensuring that the most suitable location for such activities is identified and implemented through careful, considered planning and assessment. I suppose this goes to the fact that what we as a government try to do, rather than make it a binary proposition, that it's either mining or wind farming, can you facilitate so both can coexist? I think that is what that which I read out to you indicates. Thank you for bringing that matter to my attention.

Mr SHELTON - The Greens' dislike for our sustainable forest industry is clear, and they've always had that position**.** Can you advise the committee of the benefits of the native forest and the facts that the Greens conveniently ignore? Coming from the regional area of Bracknell and the Liffey, which have always been forestry areas - and there have always been jobs in the forestry area from my electorate and right round Lyons. It was devastated after the Labor-Greens government moved on the forest industry. There are some substantial benefits for employment in regional areas. Can you explain to the committee the benefits of that?

Mr ABETZ - The forest sector provides employment to many regional areas right around Tasmania. It also provides a product that is genuinely renewable and, if you don't use wood, the question is beckoned, what would you use instead? If you don't have a wooden floor in your house, chances are you've got a concrete floor. How much CO2 was emitted in making that concrete? If you don't have wooden uprights or framing in your house, chances are you use steel or aluminium, and the question then is how much embedded energy is in that and then you have to ask, where does the CO2 go?

The good news with wood products is that they are a carbon sink and it holds the carbon in and so forestry, to be sustainable, which we do in Tasmania, for every tree that is harvested, a new one, usually more than just the one, is planted, and as a result you've got this cycle of renewable production. If we don't do forestry in Tasmania, as the people of Victoria and Western Australia are now finding out, having banned native forest harvesting, they're starting to get their hardwood from South America.

I just ask rhetorically, Mr Shelton, whether we actually believe they do forestry better in South America than we do it in Tasmania. Even if it were equivalent, you would then have to

ask how much bunker fuel is belched out through the chimney of the ships as it's brought to Australia? How on earth, if you're thinking globally, is that a good thing for the environment? So be it that it's a renewable resource, it's a carbon sink. It provides local employment, local wealth, keeps exports out of the country. There are a whole lot of positives for our timber sector and we in Tasmania should be exceptionally pleased with the way that we do forestry, keeping in mind that over 50 per cent of our land mass is locked away in national parks, World Heritage Areas, et cetera. With all these things, it's about getting the balance right. That is what the Tasmanian community has voted for on a regular basis, that they do want the balance and as a government we are providing that balance.

Dr BROAD - During the election campaign on 8 March, Premier Jeremy Rockliff said to people from the forest industry, making the following promise: to provide STT's existing customers long-term supply contracts for plantation sawlogs on commercial terms until the end of 2040. Are you committed to this?

Mr ABETZ - Believe it or not, if the Premier makes a promise, every one of his ministers is going to be committed to it so that's not a difficult question to answer for me, but what I can say to you is that I am in close discussions with Sustainable Timber Tasmania to ensure that there is that certainty of supply that our downstream processors are seeking. That is something that I would encourage you to ask at the government business enterprise scrutiny committees, where the STT will be able to tell you in more detail where they're at.

Dr BROAD - But, minister, it's a policy decision as well, so you should be across it. Also, Premier Rockliff promised to extend long-term native sawlog supply contracts with STT's existing customers until 2040. Are you committed to this?

Mr ABETZ - I am committed to all the Premier's promises.

Dr BROAD - When will those two contracts for plantation sawlogs and for extending native sawlog supply be in place?

Mr ABETZ - That is being worked through as we speak. I'm not going to give you a date.

Dr BROAD - An idea perhaps? At the end of year or a decade from now?

Mr ABETZ - Chances are, not a decade from now. We can narrow it down from there.

Dr BROAD - Narrow it down as best you can.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you for that opportunity to clarify it for you, but I'm not going to be committed to a particular timeline. Suffice it to say that I'm sure you and I would be in heated agreement that the quicker these things can be resolved between STT and those who seek to buy the product, the better because it provides certainty, it provides investment certainty, it provides employment certainty. It's within everybody's interest that these matters be resolved as soon as possible, but I leave that to STT.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the question that you've asked many times who does forestry better than Tasmania, I think one obvious answer to that is any one of the more than 1500 jurisdictions in 83 countries that have managed to achieve Forest Stewardship Certification (FSC). Tasmania has not done that. In fact, Forestry Tasmania has twice tried and failed to get

FSC. The reason for that has been their continued logging of swift parrot habitat. You can laugh, but that was the evidence that was provided from the certifiers at the last attempt of Forestry Tasmania.

You've mentioned our certification and not compromising certifications that Forestry Tasmania has now or would seek to achieve into the future regarding the 39,000 hectares of additional high-conservation value forests you're trying to go into. Can you tell me whether you've had conversations with Forestry Tasmania about the impact? I see from their website that despite having failed twice, they are still working towards FSC certification and they are clear that, in their words, it will give them access to key markets and it will add stakeholder confidence that they're managing forests appropriately. Do you recognise the threat to Forestry Tasmania getting FSC if you went into these additional 39,000 hectares? What has that company told you?

Mr ABETZ - First of all, the countries to which you refer that have gained FSC certification, there have been questions in the past as to how FSC certification has been achieved. I would invite you to ask the question, out of all those countries you mentioned, how many of them have 50 per cent plus of their land mass in reserves and World Heritage areas?

Dr WOODRUFF - Are you changing the goalposts?

Mr ABETZ - No. They're the goalposts that I would encourage you to consider. A certification, if it can be obtained, is clearly something that is on the mind of Sustainable Timber Tasmania. If that wasn't on our mind - let's be clear, I recall it was on page 55 of the Strong Plan on the potential parcels et cetera - that, 'There is no negative impact on Sustainable Timber Tasmania's current and future certification'. That's about as clear as it gets. That is part of the consideration that is in the melting pot.

Dr WOODRUFF - On 29 February, when it was announced via media release that your government was going to do this if it was re-elected, it said that the parcels of land 'have already been selected'. Not, 'We're in conversations and having roundtables talking about which ones we might go into'. They have already been selected. Was that media release incorrect? Or are you being dishonest with the committee in saying that you haven't decided on the areas of land that will be selected, and if you have, then can you tell us which ones they are?

Mr ABETZ - No area has been selected. There were potential areas that are being considered, subject to the caveats that I outlined before. I can read them out to you again, which indicates that the community, inadequate reserves, certification, cultural aspect, all those things are being considered and they will be looked at one by one.

Dr WOODRUFF - It said that you had already done that. You're not being honest now.

Mr ABETZ - I don't reflect on your honesty and integrity -

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm reflecting on your government's in that press release.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - as you are so willing to do to everybody else, and I would just encourage you to watch your language in that regard.

Dr WOODRUFF - I can't help it if we're the ones who are being honest with Tasmanians.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - You can have a civil disagreement without labelling each other as honest or dishonest.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is not a joke.

CHAIR - Order. Mr Garland has the call.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is about public land. Either you've got it or you haven't got it, and you shouldn't change it and be dishonest with Tasmanians.

Mr GARLAND - Minister, you've acknowledged there are environmental impacts from salmon farms. Can you detail what these environmental impacts are? What cost recovery is the government currently undertaking for remediation of those environmental impacts from salmon farms?

Mr ABETZ - The environmental impacts would be the use of plastic for the pens, the fossil fuels used in the barges and boats that service them, getting the fish to market undoubtedly engages in fossil fuels, then you have the fish waste, as the fish are growing, they leave waste behind that then gets diluted in the water and that is why you have to manage that in a sustainable manner. There are a whole host of environmental matters that come into play.

Can I say, my existence and your existence has huge environmental impacts as well. Let's not try to package the salmon sector as somehow being unique in having environmental impacts, be it beef cattle farming, indeed, even when you go out catching calamari, there will undoubtedly be environmental impacts. I don't know if you use lead sinkers or not, or is that passé nowadays? You use something else? I thought as much. But you might use a line or something that isn't made from flax or hemp, that's some sort of nylon or plastic. You may or may not use fossil fuels, I assume you don't row out to the fishing ground.

There are those impacts and the question then is: is it worthwhile? I've got to say, in the endeavours you engage in, you provide a fantastic fresh fish product which is commanding at the moment a good high price in the community because of its value, but there are environmental impacts with a wild fishery, as there is with the aquaculture sector. I would encourage you to see it in a balance that, yes, there are environmental impacts in nearly everything we do. The question is: how sustainable is it? Is the stewardship such that you don't do permanent damage to the environment? That is what I think we need to consider, and as a government, we are agreed that the salmon industry can coexist with the wilder fisheries and whilst maintaining our oceans in a very good state.

Mr GARLAND - More of a comment. I'm not putting the equivalent of a million people's sewage into my fishing environment, which is basically what's happening every year in Macquarie Harbour; the equivalent of a million people's untreated sewage going into that waterway or consider it a major environmental impact. If we're not looking at the damage that is doing and not taking steps to address that, I'd say we're not doing our job properly.

Mr ABETZ - If that were the case, I would agree with you. But in Macquarie Harbour the best of advice was taken as to the potential stock levels. With the benefit of time, that has been reduced and that is what you want - it is adaptive policymaking, so that as more evidence comes to the table, you can either increase stocking or decrease stocking and that is what has happened.

Just today, IMAS has given another report indicating that the Maugean skate in Macquarie Harbour is now at numbers of 2014 levels and that there is a substantial population of junior skates as well. That suggests that they are breeding, which suggests to me that you can have coexistence with salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour and the Maugean skate. Getting that balance is, of course, within everybody's interest and that is what we are seeking to do with the benefit of the science. That is what IMAS is advising us.

Mr SHELTON - Obviously the Greens have their opinion, but can you outline to the committee how forestry is playing a part in the solution to climate change? Particularly, as you have mentioned, where trees and forestry suppress carbon? Certainly, they employ people. I live in a regional area and it's always been part of the economics of regional communities. If you wouldn't mind minister?

Dr WOODRUFF - Demonising climate scientists, cherry picking research. You start every question off talking about the Greens don't you? You're really quite obsessed with us, Mr Shelton.

Mr SHELTON - You just can't sit back and listen to an answer.

Dr WOODRUFF - You did start off talking about us.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - In answer to the Member for Lyons, Mr Shelton, I can say the Tasmanian Government has made a legislative commitment to transition to net zero emissions or lower by 2030 because we recognise the need to contribute to global efforts. Forestry is one of Tasmania's natural advantages in combating excessive levels of CO2 in the atmosphere.

Our sustainable forestry sector is part of the solution. Tasmania's Productive Forest Estate provides the opportunity to sequester carbon in long lived timber products and provide society with low emission construction materials that I was mentioning before. Might I just add as an aside, there have been campaigns in recent times, and we as a government are seeking to assist in that regard to get rid of the one-use plastics that are often associated with takeaway food, plastic straws, et cetera. What are we reverting back to? Paper produced product. Guess what paper is made from? Dare I mention the word 'wood chips'? If you want to rid our rivers and oceans of the plastics that are going into them and choking them, and you want something that is biodegradable, you would go for something like a paper-based product. That is our timber sector, where we use the best possible wood, or the most of the wood, for the best high quality, high value saw, log veneer, et cetera. Then that which is not able to be used in that way, we convert to wood chips and that's made into paper, which is a lot better a product than a lot of the plastics that we are now trying to get rid of from our community.

It is pretty clear that an old growth forest is a carbon sink, and that a brand-new forest or regrowth forest, when it's in the growing phase, that is when it sucks in a lot more carbon. That is why that renewed and recycled forest production is so good for the environment, not only in sequestering carbon, but avoiding all the other products that are made from plastic, from steel, from concrete, which we all know adds to the pollution in the environment. I quote the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land which was released in August 2019:

> Sustainable forest management can prevent deforestation, maintain and enhance carbon sinks and can contribute towards greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. Sustainable forest management generates socioeconomic benefits and provides fibre, timber -

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Chair. There's a time limit to the minister's answers and the minister has been over his time limit on this Dorothy Dixer, this anti-science Dorothy Dixer. I think we've heard enough.

CHAIR - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I do allow a little bit of flexibility to all members with their questions and their answers. Can the minister please -

Dr WOODRUFF - Time limits on minister's answers to Dorothy Dixers, particularly - this is really pretty outrageous.

CHAIR - The minister will continue. Order. Thank you, Dr Woodruff.

Mr ABETZ - Can we please have on record that the IPCC Report is anti-science?

Dr WOODRUFF - Cherry-picked by - yeah, you go right ahead.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - You go right ahead with that one. I was an author of one of those reports.

Mr ABETZ - Because:

> Sustainable forest management generates socioeconomic benefits and provides fibre, timber and biomass to meet society's growing needs. Sustainable forest management can maintain or enhance forest carbon stocks and can maintain forest carbon sinks, including by transferring carbon to wood products.

And that from the IPCC is labelled anti-science. Let that be on the record.

Dr WOODRUFF - Go on, for the record.

Dr BROAD - Speaking of Wood, during the election campaign, Jeremy Rockliff in that letter also committed to rewriting STT's ministerial charter to ensure that Tasmanian wood supports Tasmanian jobs. Has this occurred?

Mr ABETZ - The ministerial charter has been rewritten, it will be made available very soon and just bear with me as to - I'll be able to give you the exact answer, but it is - can I use the term 'imminent'?

Yeah, the final revised ministerial charter will soon be tabled in parliament. I think I've seen the final version of it, but it's a creature of Treasury, isn't it, the ministerial charter? I can let you know I've signed off on it but it's gone into - am I allowed to say this in the absence of the Treasurer? - into the bowels of the Treasury, but I'm sure it will re-emerge in due course and be tabled very shortly.

Dr BROAD - You've also committed to halting STT's expression of interest process for plantation saw logs, has that actually been halted?

Mr ABETZ - Has that been halted? Yes, it has.

Dr BROAD - Is the government or STT considering - sorry, just a bit of background in -

Mr ABETZ - Sorry, just bear with me, Dr Broad. Yeah, so that has been halted. Yes. I was just checking to make sure that I was absolutely correct on that.

Dr BROAD - In 2017, STT sold part of the plantation estate to Reliance Forest Fibre for $60.7 million. Given the Treasurer didn't rule out asset sales, is the government or STT considering selling further plantation timber resources, especially the plantation sawlog resource?

Mr ABETZ - It's not on my agenda, so I don't think any work's been done on that.

Dr BROAD - But would you rule it out?

Mr ABETZ - These games of ruling things in and ruling things out is one of those things that oppositions love to do. And I was there quite a few times -

Dr BROAD - Well, throw us a bone then.

Mr ABETZ - I'm not going to rule anything in or out, but that's not on the agenda.

Dr WOODRUFF - During the election campaign, one or the other of the Liberals election promises to existing Forestry Tasmania customers was that there would be 158,000 cubic metres of saw logs coming to them from Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) land, the new land that you're intending on going into. How did you arrive at such a precise figure if you haven't actually found the land that you are seeking to convert?

Mr ABETZ - That was the estimate made at the time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Based on what?

Mr ABETZ - I wasn't part of the policy-making. I can try to obtain an answer for you as to how that was calculated at the time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Shall I take that on notice?

In the budget papers, it says that there's a fairly unbelievable - it doesn't say that; our words - but there is a fairly unbelievable 90 per cent of timber that your government claims is processed here in Tasmania. The footnotes clarify that this is the proportion -

Mr ABETZ - Which page?

Dr WOODRUFF - I don't have the page number in front of me. This is the proportion of the total volume of timber that undergoes 'some form of processing within the state'. Can you clarify what the different forms of processing are?

Mr ABETZ - To be able to provide an answer, I would really prefer a page number.

Dr WOODRUFF - I think one of your staff might be able to find that. It's a footnote. There can't be that many in the forestry section.

Mr ABETZ - We don't do your homework for you. You need to come prepared for these Estimates.

Dr WOODRUFF - Excuse me, Chair, that's pretty rude. You've got the whole of the Department in front of you, and you've got your secretary there.

Mr ABETZ - That is rude, but calling somebody dishonest isn't? Really?

Dr WOODRUFF - If you aren't able to answer the question, a very simple question about what forms of processing happen in Tasmania, I am shocked that you're the minister and I'll move on. Would processing, for example, include trimming logs down before they're placed on the back of a logging track? Is that what the Liberals call processing of timber in this state? Can you confirm it? Would that be the case?

Mr ABETZ - The processing of the timber, thinking out loud now, would be making veneer paper, making saw logs, framing timber, timber link, pallet-making is another. I'm sure there are other areas.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can the secretary confirm whether trimming logs down before they're placed on the back of a logging truck would be defined as processing by the government? Would that fit under the 90 per cent of timber that's processed in Tasmania? To the secretary, or you can take that on notice if you can't answer it.

CHAIR - Order. It's for the minister to direct to the secretary.

Dr WOODRUFF - Your terminology. Could I take those questions on notice please?

Mr ABETZ - What's the terminology that's ours?

Dr WOODRUFF - The terminology is your words in your budget paper that says, '90 per cent of timber is processed here in Tasmania', and that that is the proportion of the total volume of timber in Tasmania that undergoes 'some form of processing'. I want to know what 'some form of processing' is considered by your government, and separately, whether the

trimming of logs down before they're placed on the back of a logging truck is regarded as a 'form of processing'.

Mr ABETZ - Until we can find the page number that you're referring to, it would be helpful if you could have provided that. We don't have that immediately in front of us, so we'll take that on notice. What I would encourage all members to do. If you want to quote something -

Dr WOODRUFF - Page 343. See, my staff have done it. You've had your whole office and you're not able to do it, but there you go.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - Don't reflect on departmental officials like that, that's very unbecoming.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm just reflecting on the efficiency of the Greens staff.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Volume 2, number 1.

Mr ABETZ - Budget paper number 2?

Dr WOODRUFF - Volume 2, number 1. Page 343, minister.

Mr ABETZ - Page 343 is screen industry development, arts industry development.

Dr WOODRUFF - Maybe you need to go to another paper.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm trying to help him out. I mean, honestly, the whole staff here.

Mr ABETZ - It's in a footnote, is it?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, that is correct, No. 1, Volume 2. Timber processing.

Mr ABETZ - Mr Bowles is assisting us and he'll tell us it's an ABS.

Mr BOWLES - The definition of wood processing is it's an Australian Bureau of Statistics definition, so it involves any transformation to the product. As to specific examples, without referring back to the ABS's guidelines, I couldn't answer that, but it is the ABS definition.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Mr Bowles. You don't know whether it would involve -

CHAIR - Mr Garland has the call.

Mr GARLAND - There's a sardine fishery in the pipeline. They've been building up in numbers in our waters for quite some time now and that's probably mainly due to the pollution

that's gone out of the Bass Strait waters. There's a lot of concern within the recreational fishing community that these sardines, pilchards and what have you out there could possibly be used by the salmon industry as part of their fish mill operations. We have a multitude of small licences in this state. We have 150-odd licences that are not being actively used at the moment.

Will there be a strong focus on utilising the small scale fishes of this state and giving us access to those fish and not allowing them to be trolled up in an industrial way and to be used for fish meal. Blue bait at the moment is $6 a packet. That's for a 500gm packet. Even packaging up those bait fish and selling them for bait, you're going to get $12 per kg, which I believe you would not get if you were using industrial fishing methods in a large scale. They are difficult to handle because of their nature in larger volumes. They are omega-3 rich. There are restaurants that would be looking to use those fish, but more importantly, they're the building blocks for the ocean - and right now what we have going on in the north-west with the bluefin tuna - in my lifetime, I've seen three tuna come through that area until recent years and now we have them there for three to four to five or six months. The return from the recreational fishing community in just targeting and going after tuna would far outweigh any return from any industrial use of those species. They'd be better off left in the water than they would be for going to fish meal. I'm just wondering where you are with that, minister? I know there's been talk about this fishery and I'd like to see where you are.

Mr ABETZ - There's been a lot of talk about this potential fishery. A lot of studies have been undertaken in relation to it. IMAS is still undertaking some final studies in relation to the total biomass, but it seems to be in high proportions, which would suggest that you could get a viable sustainable fishery by taking a relatively small percentage of it to ensure that it's able to be a sustainable fishery. Those that would invest in it and, look, we are now talking hypotheticals, was we have to find out what IMAS tells us and if it is going to be at a certain level that lends itself to commercial fishing - then investment decisions have to be made. I suspect if I were a fisherman I would want the highest possible return from my fishing endeavours. As much as I'm sure you won't be selling your calamari as fish meal because there might be a higher price elsewhere, I would imagine those that fish the sardines' sector, if we get to that stage, and that's always an important caveat - that step by step with this that there's an exciting proposition for a new fishery to be developed, new jobs and a bit of a value add. I'm not going to rule anything in or out at this stage. If we can provide job opportunities and investment opportunities for the benefit of the Tasmanian community, that is what the community expects us to do, on the basis that it's sustainable and does not prejudice other fisheries to the extent that you may have suggested in your question.

Mr GARLAND - There are 100 000 recos in the state - recreational fishers.

Mr ABETZ - It is like with every organisation, there are a lot of recreational fishers. In Tasmania, it's part and parcel of our way of life, and that is why, getting into other areas of my portfolio, MAST is assisting, the government is assisting in providing fish cleaning facilities, boat ramps, jetties et cetera to enable people to enjoy something which we as an island state have a stack of, and that is lots of water and lots of fishing opportunities.

There are also a lot of recreational fishers that say that it is appropriate to have professional fishers such as Mr Garland out there on the water catching calamari, and I dare say there will be recreational fishers as well who say that it's appropriate to have people catching sardines at a level that is sustainable and that doesn't impact unduly on their

recreational activities. With all these things, it's balance, and that is what we as a government seek to achieve.

Mr GARLAND - Might I add that Australia is a very old continent. We rank somewhere in the 50s as far as productive fisheries. We've gone through so many cycles of boom and bust, and I would ask you, minister, absolutely exercise extreme caution with anything in that space with those sardine fisheries.

Mr ABETZ - That I think is a very valid point, and that is why discussions about this fishery have gone for about a decade or more, which is, if I might say, a very cautious approach. I might be wrong on this, but, unlike the Orange Roughy fishery that people jumped on and then virtually destroyed, we will be taking a more cautious approach.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, I'm particularly interested in the on-island processing program that's been mentioned for the forestry sector and what it means to Tasmanian jobs in regional communities. As I mentioned before, forestry has always been part of where I live and you have the Kelly Gang sawmillers up at Mole Creek, you've got Travellers Rest sawmill not far away from home on the way to Launceston, you've got Coppers Inn, Longford, who treat hydro poles out of the native forest sector. It's absolutely important. Can you explain the importance of the on-island processing program and what it means?

Mr ABETZ - I would have thought every Tasmanian would want our timber production as much as possible to be processed on island, and unfortunately there have been campaigns in the past to ensure that that hasn't been able to happen as we may have wanted and, as a result, opportunities have been denied us.

This government does want to see on-island processing and we had made available in 2021 $10 million over five years to the on-island processing program, with a further $5 million committed in this last election campaign. The program is designed to help grow the forest industry with more on-island processing and value adding and will drive industry investments in the sector providing new opportunities, investment and increased value of our local timber processing industry and a lot more jobs in our regional areas. Currently, seven projects are receiving almost $6 million in funding under the first round of the program, which will lead to a direct investment of $23 million from industry and create at least 30 new direct and indirect positions.

The program is not just throwing money, it's going to be a co-investment where the businesses have to have skin in the game as well, but it encourages them and helps their viability in ensuring that our Tasmanian processes remain viable and they're able to grow their range of products and we see change. The projects include, for example, new product lines to convert low-grade and short-length timber into higher value timber products and general improvements in timber recovery.

Further details of the seven successful projects under round 1 can be found on the website of the Department of State Growth. We have now got a second round and it's due to be launched this financial year. We'll see another $9 million made available for co-investment. A great program which hopefully will underpin even further our sustainable timber sector and the jobs that it provides, especially in our regional communities.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, the underpinning of almost every answer today around fisheries has been around science and the importance of science to inform the decision making. We've talked about whether it be recreational fishers, small-scale fishers or large-scale fishers. The one thing that seems to bring everybody together is the science. The Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement (SMRCA) funding - government - you outsource your research and monitoring to IMAS. As I understand it, in any other environment where there's a commercial exchange, you outsource about $4 million worth of work to IMAS to undertake that, but until recently have only been paying them $2.6 million for the pleasure.

I acknowledge that in the election there was a $500,000 addition to that, but that's still a shortfall with no indexation. In my conversations with IMAS, for years, because it's been underfunded, they have been leaning out as much as they can. They've pulled all the rabbits out of the hat and now a consequence of that shortfall of funding is that projects will be limited. Some things might not be delivered. Science might not be as complete as it could be to support our fisheries, which is really important.

I acknowledge that already at the table today, you, as a new minister, have made some changes to some of the positions of the previous government and I'm wondering whether this is an area that you will reflect on how important this science is and increase the funding because it underpins everything.

Mr ABETZ - I hear what you say in relation to that. This area, I think, you can never spend enough. That seems to be the situation, that we as the government are committed and we've had the long-standing partnership and the government has announced its commitment to increase funding of the SMRCA by $2 million over four years, taking the total commitment of core funding to over $28 million over 10 years.

All I would say in the total context of the current Budget, is there are criticisms from certain quarters that the deficit is too great. I understand that line of argument, but then we have to be careful that, on the other hand, we don't ask for more funding in other areas which would see even a higher deficit unless you're willing to, say, cut public transport by so much so you can put it into SMRCA.

That is the balance that we as a government have had to try to come to. As Fisheries minister, would I like to see a lot more being put into SMRCA? Yes, but then you've got a Health minister and other ministers all competing for funds.

Ms FINLAY - Within your own departmental allocation of funds, minister, the foundation piece to all fisheries, whether it be recreational, commercial, or whether it be aquaculture, wild fisheries, is science. We have seen the depletion of species and the additional costs associated with recovering those species - recalling sand flathead - by not putting the investment at the right place, you're causing yourself to spend more money elsewhere. It has been years of underfunding for this research. In the private sector, if you sought work from another entity, and you needed $4 million worth of work and you said that you were going to pay them $2.8 million, you wouldn't get the work.

By outsourcing this funding to IMAS and undercutting them, we are seeing depletions in the fisheries. It doesn't mean that you need to have more in your overall budget allocation, but it means you need to be investing the money at the right place. Are you saying that on taking

up this ministry, reviewing your responsibilities, and understanding the pressure on the fisheries that there is no consideration for further funding to SMRCA?

Mr ABETZ - There is always consideration given, not only to SMRCA. There's funding for the Blue Economy CRC. There is funding provided to various organisations to try to do the very best we can, given limited resources, but I understand.

Ms WILSON - I would like to add that whilst the core grant is $2.65 million, with the additional 500, we're anticipating in 2024 there'll be around $650,000 for costs-recovered salmon-related research. We also put in project specific funding in response to research priorities that emerged during the year. This can come from our special purpose council, from our administered payment.

Last year, I don't have a breakdown of what it was, but we contributed an extra $963,000 into SMRCA.

Ms FINLAY - Is that leveraged funds or direct funds?

Ms WILSON - That was from us. UTAS contributed $1.4 million, and that led to leverage - which is the external funds that were leveraged in - of around $9 million from 1 January to 30 November 2023. We get a good return on investment and the agency -

Ms FINLAY - That's the point. You get a good return on investment.

Ms WILSON - The agency invests for additional research as required. As noted, we have some additional funds going in in 2024 from SAM.

Ms FINLAY - Can I ask specifically, as an example, the depletion of the sand flathead fishery was a direct result of government not taking advice from science. As I understand it, there are concerns that because of this shortfall of ongoing funding, there could be implications, for instance, for the monitoring and the recovery of sand flathead. Can you give an indication from the initial investments in the recovery of sand flathead of what ongoing investments are made and what current responses are being provided in terms of any efforts in the sand flathead fishery?

Mr ABETZ - The government has contributed $250,000 to initiate the Flathead for the Future program to rebuild the fishery through a coordinated range of actions by NRET, IMAS and TARFish. These include actions to fill knowledge gaps, develop the rebuilding process and encourage responsible fishing attitudes and behaviours. Rebuilding actions are described and coordinated through the Sand Flathead Rebuilding Plan, which is currently in draft form. Changes to recreational and commercial fishing rules implemented on 1 November 2023 are the first action to directly reduce fishing mortality. A review of the effectiveness of these changes will take place next year.

Improved stock modelling for the sand flathead fishery is being developed by IMAS through a government-supported Fisheries Research and Development Corporation project, which supports the identification of appropriate rebuilding targets and provides accurate advice on the management settings required to achieve them. The government committed $1 million over two years in the 2023-24 Budget to undertake sand flathead research and management needs and provide targeted fisher stewardship programs in partnership with TARFish.

In our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmanian fisheries, the government committed a further $1.2 million to support sand flathead stock as well as enhancement studies, including the feasibility of enhancing natural stocks of sand flathead. We are taking it seriously. We are doing our best and are always open for further consideration and adapting policy settings to ensure that we rebuild the population.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, I have a couple of questions about the expansion of the smalt hatchery at Whale Point in the Huon. Huon Aquaculture is proposing to intensify their production there from 500 tonnes to 786 tonnes standing biomass at any one time, and they're proposing to increase a maximum standing biomass of 1446 tonnes by adding an extra 660 tonnes of capacity.

Can you please tell me whether the government will be subsidising this expansion and, if so, to what extent, and what the timeline you understand there will be for the expansion of that finfish industry in the Huon?

Mr ABETZ - As far as I'm concerned, no request has been made to government for any support in that area. These proposals have to go through the normal development applications to the local Huon council, et cetera, so it'll be step by step. That said, you can be assured that we are encouraged that there is a growing demand for Tasmanian-grown salmon that has led to this announcement of further investment in the sector. This is based on the confidence that they have in being able to provide this quality seafood in circumstances where demand is there. They're willing to make the investment, and it's a private investment.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the impacts of the salmon industry on native animals and wildlife in Tasmania, can you please tell me how many native birds have been shot by the salmon industry since the beginning of this calendar year? What weapon or implement is used by the industry to shoot native birds?

Can you also tell me whether there have been any conversations between the government and salmon companies about changing their farming practices to prevent further bird shootings and to notify boaters about shooting operations as they occur? This happened recently, for example, at the Coningham lease where 50 cormorants were shot but there was no notice to mariners about that.

Mr ABETZ - Could I invite you to ask that question of Minister Howlett in the appropriate Estimates hearings? That's not within my purview as minister.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is a question about the impacts on the industry.

CHAIR - Mr Garland?

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I ask another question that the minister can answer, since the minister has told me he can't answer that?

CHAIR - I'm sorry, Dr Woodruff. That was your turn.

Mr GARLAND - Minister, in the 2030 Strong Plan, the Premier asserted that the salmon industry employs exactly 5000 Tasmanians when highlighting its economic contribution.

Where did this figure come from? Noting the importance of employment as a justification to keep this industry in business when it has devastating effects on our marine environment, does the government have any data on the number of people directly employed on the fish farms in Macquarie Harbour?

Mr ABETZ - I would disagree with your description of the sector as having devastating impacts, but setting that aside, the figures undoubtedly arise from - I understand it's 395 at Macquarie Harbour - direct and indirect jobs.

Mr GARLAND - Where does that figure come from?

Mr ABETZ - Well, undoubtedly from the companies that employ people there - from the salmon sector, from the three growers that are in Macquarie Harbour.

Mr GARLAND - The ABS figures show forestry, farming and aquaculture in that region as being around 81.

Mr ABETZ - That is interesting that the ABS would suggest that, because I addressed a group of workers at Macquarie Harbour in the shed and I would anticipate that the workers that were there numbered more than 81, and that was just in the shed at the time. I didn't account for those that were on another shift, were on the water or were otherwise gainfully employed.

Mr GARLAND - They might've been mates of the workers there.

Mr ABETZ - It might've been mates, but I think that stretches credulity a little bit too far. When I mixed and mingled with them, they all had a very good and easy account as to what they were doing there, whether they were a mechanic, a fish feeder or a diver. They all immediately told me what their involvement was there at the site. Nobody stumbled and said, 'Oh, I'm here because a mate asked me to come here to make up the numbers'. They all had a very good explanation and rationale as to what their employment was at Macquarie Harbour.

I have no reason to doubt that the body of men and women that I had the privilege of addressing, and then talking to individually, were there on the basis that they were there on their lunch break and were gainfully employed.

Mr GARLAND - The 5000 figure, does that come from industry as well?

Mr ABETZ - I would assume so, but I can take that on notice to get the full details.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, on the environmental issue of pests in our sea, can you update the committee on what the government is doing to combat the destructive *Centrostephanus* long-spined sea urchin. It's certainly a problem on the eastern side of Lyons, on the east coast. It's attacking the kelp forest, and the crayfish industry is also affected.

Mr ABETZ - The *Centrostephanus* long-spined sea urchin is a genuine pest that needs to be controlled. There are divers that collect them and, in the past, we have provided some support. We have made $1 million available to the AIRF for the program of trying to limit the numbers of and get rid of the *Centrostephanus*. We provided $2 million over two years in 2023 and became a party to the National Centrostephanus Task Force established to work in partnership to develop a regional control initiative.

The funding this government has provided has directly supported the commercial dive industry to remove around 3000 tonnes to date, with the ambitious but achievable goal of removing a further 500 tonnes per year. That tells us how much they are reproducing, growing, et cetera. I was at a facility down the Huon just recently that is seeking to process them and provide some sort of commercial value for this pest, which enables us to get rid of them on a more financially sustainable basis.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, the review of the *Living Marine Resources Management Act*, has been critical, like science, in underpinning all the fisheries. It has been underway for some time now and is obviously a large and lengthy process, but I wonder whether you've put your mind to the time frames for that review and the tasks to be completed. Could you please provide an update of your commitments to the timing of delivering that essential piece of work?

Mr ABETZ - That is a matter that the member for Clark, Kristie Johnston, first raised with me during question time. As a new minister, I then turned my mind to that, and I was advised by the department that it was 'a work in progress'. I have been considering the best way forward with that, as has the department. I look forward to some departmental advice in due course, but I can't put a time line on that body of work at this stage because it will be a major piece of work.

As I understand it, the legislation hasn't been renewed for about two decades. No, more. 1995, so three decades. It's well and truly time for an overview of it and to make it more 21st century, if I can use that term.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you, minister. It is important that that work happens as quickly as possible because, as you mentioned in a response to Mr Garland before, our wild fisheries in particular are under pressure. They're continuing to be reduced in terms of the contribution they make, and without the fully invested science, they're also under pressure from a lack of information.

I'm interested in conversations that you might have with the department and your approach to fisheries as a whole. There has been concern in some sectors of our wild fishers in Tasmania around the balance between investment and local jobs, and the scale of fisheries. You mentioned in your introduction how fishing is a way of life and it leads to both the brand and the experience of Tasmania in both tourism and in investment. As minister, will you take the approach where you prioritise local jobs, particularly in regional Tasmania, for the benefits of fishery - you mentioned something similar in your response about sardines - or will your approach as minister be around efficiency?

Mr ABETZ - As minister, I'll take everything into account and come to a balanced decision. In relatively recent times - I reckon it was about four to six weeks ago - I availed myself of talking to, as it happened, mainly rock lobster fishermen at both Dover and then at the Margate wharf and jetty, and I indicated to those people that I think most Tasmanians have a soft spot for the fishing families that are now third or fourth generation rock lobster fishermen. I think they were mainly fishermen, not women, that I spoke with, if not solely. For some of them it is quite difficult to think that the next generation won't be able to take over the rock lobster fishing boat or whatever fishery they're in.

I have said many a time in question time, if not here then up in the other place, that in general terms, big business and big unions are big and ugly enough to look after themselves. I would seek to dedicate myself to look after small businesses and individual workers. That's my mindset, if you like.

Ms FINLAY - That's great to hear, minister. I look forward to holding you -

Mr ABETZ - But I do understand that in some areas, you need the big investments, let's say in the aquaculture sector. I don't seek to demonise big business or indeed foreign investment, because we need that as well, but at the end of the day, there's a huge soft spot in my heart for small businesses and the men and women who mortgage their house for the log truck jinker or for the rock lobster fishing boat.

That's my predisposition, but that said, everything's got to be put into the melting pot.

Ms FINLAY - Having responded in that way, which I find positive -

Mr ABETZ - Glad to have your approval.

Ms FINLAY - It has for some time been a massive concern to those people you would have met at Dover and Margate that there are people who are losing their homes and boats, and losing their entire generational investments, because of the pressure put on by some less-than-reasonable behaviours by some quarters of industry.

Tasmanian Labor absolutely supports investment and foreign investment in our fisheries and in aquaculture, and we 100 per cent see that as an important part of the Tasmanian economy. However, when there is a balance in behaviour in terms of an interplay between the levels in the sector, then that's not okay. I'm sure if they were open with you, you will have had some heartbreaking conversations with some of those people.

Mr ABETZ - There was one very heartbreaking one at Dover.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, can we move to the question before the answer from the minister?

Ms FINLAY - We've spoken around rock lobster a little bit in that, but take your mind to abalone. There are some concerns in the governance and the management, and I said the interplay between behaviours, whether it be between divers, processors or quota holders. Have you had any feedback from divers in terms of some of the contracts they're being asked to enter into from some of the larger operators around which are holding that quota, where they are being asked in some ways to enter into contracts that are not balanced, that could be seen as anti-competitive, as predatory or as having conflicts of interest?

Where this exists in our fishery in Tasmania, it is something that as minister you need to turn your mind to. Is that something that's been brought to your attention or something that would concern you if that's the case?

Mr ABETZ - These matters have been brought to my attention and it is something that would concern most Tasmanians at the end of the day.

Dr WOODRUFF - Predatory behaviour of foreign corporations? Absolutely.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm glad Labor is finally speaking about it.

Ms FINLAY - I didn't use the word -

Dr WOODRUFF - Predatory? You did.

Ms FINLAY - But not of corporations, I didn't. It could be -

Dr WOODRUFF - But then you said foreign companies instead.

Mr ABETZ - That's amazing. When Ms Finlay and I were having a pleasant -

Dr WOODRUFF - Such a cosy little Tassie chat.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - interchange, Dr Woodruff interrupts.

Ms FINLAY - This is to do with the housing and livelihoods of Tasmanians, Dr Woodruff. Could you please allow the minister to respond?

Dr WOODRUFF - We're very concerned.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms FINLAY - Well, then this is important.

Mr ABETZ - Could you please ask the question again?

Ms FINLAY - That behaviour and the interplay between certain sectors, where you have a single-handed fisher in rock lobster or a diver in the abalone industry earning a living to support their family and being put under pressure in a way that is not seen to be appropriate - you have mentioned that it's been brought to your attention. As minister, how would you seek to ensure that fisheries in Tasmania are managed in an appropriate way?

Mr ABETZ - Regrettably, government cannot fix every issue. I have heard from divers that what they are being paid per kilogram or whatever is not what they're used to or what they think they are entitled to. It is one of those great difficulties when it's your way of life, it's not easy just to change jobs because that's what you've done for a considerable period of time.

Ms FINLAY - Many of these fisheries sustain our regional towns and communities.

Mr ABETZ - They do indeed. Sometimes it is like small farms. When a bigger company comes along and buys -

Dr WOODRUFF - A shark comes along and the minnows get eaten up -

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - and there is nothing the government can do.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr ABETZ - Your rudeness knows no bounds.

Dr WOODRUFF - Honestly. What's happening here?

Mr ABETZ - It has allowed some people to retire and get out of the sector with some dignity, with debts paid off and the capacity to then buy a house or restructure themselves financially. That is the great dilemma in this debate and these considerations, and so government seeking to insert itself when there are questions of viability, it becomes very difficult.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms FINLAY - My question was around behaviour as much as it was around viability.

Ms FINLAY - As much as it was about viability.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, I think I've got the next question, it's been three for Labor, at least.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms FINLAY - It was about behaviour within the sectors.

CHAIR - Could we just sum up, very briefly, and then we will go to a break.

Mr ABETZ - In my ideal world, everybody would get on very well with each other and be fair and reasonable to each other. As we know, that unfortunately does not occur at all times. Government cannot insert itself into all these situations. Can I say to you, Ms Finlay, if you think there is a way government can reasonably be involved to make the show fairer, let's have a cup of coffee and discuss it, because I would be interested to ensure fairness and reasonableness within the sector.

CHAIR - Thank you. We will now break for five minutes.

The Committee suspended from 4.36 p.m. to 4.44 p.m.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff has the call.

Dr WOODRUFF - I've got some questions about the $600,000 your department allocated to a strategic review of kunanyi/Mt Wellington in the Budget. I'd like a breakdown of how the $600,000 is planned to be spent and whether you are aware that the Wellington Park Management Trust had made a submission for $300,000 to the Treasury Structured Infrastructure Investment Review process for a business case? Were you aware of that when

you announced your own strategic review? Now we have a $300,000 review for a business case from the Mt Wellington Management Trust and you are undertaking a $600,000 strategic review.

Mr ABETZ - As I understand it, the $600,000 was an allocation for the department that's been tasked with undertaking the review.

Mr LIMKIN - The $600,000 is tasked to the department to undertake the review. The elements that the department are doing in that is working with the Mt Wellington/kunanyi trust, who actually already take up what they've done. For example, they've done a large amount of work in community consultation already.

We've met with the trust. I've met with the trust personally, and we've looked at how to use the work that they've already done on the reserve and management plans to enhance our review going forward. Then what we're doing is looking at the areas of value management, user experience and administration and doing targeted consultation in relation to that, including targeted consultation with the councils and NRE staff to make sure that we consult with workers as well as the community on this.

From that, the government has committed that, in its next 100-day plan, we will release a discussion paper and commence that consultation in October 2024. The intention is to do that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you confirm that, as I understand it, there are three reviews of kunanyi/Mt Wellington that are running concurrently at a significant cost to the state? There's the increased allocation to the Wellington Park Management Trust for the management review, there's $300,000 funding for the business case and $600,000 for the strategic review. Is that right?

Mr LIMKIN - All I can talk about is the $600,000 that has been allocated to the department. I know that the trust has been allocated some funds. They are currently considering whether they are going to continue with their review, pause their review or continue to work with the department so that we are using the appropriate resources and not duplicating effort.

Those conversations are ongoing. I have met with the trust once. I intend to continue to meet with the trust regularly so that, if they do choose to continue to do their requirements under the act of the management reviews, that we are not duplicating effort, to make sure that we do use taxpayers' resources in the most efficient and effective way.

Dr WOODRUFF - Did you advise the Wellington Park Management Trust to stop working on their management plan while you conducted the strategic review?

Mr LIMKIN - We have had conversations with the trust about the pros and cons and I did provide them with an email that indicated it was a choice for them.

Dr WOODRUFF - What does that mean?

Mr LIMKIN - Ultimately, I cannot instruct the trust. What I can do is suggest ways forward. I put options on the table to the trust. I understand the trust has made a decision to continue their review. That was the last discussion that I had, but we are ensuring that we do not duplicate effort to ensure the best value for the community. I also want to say that we don't

want to have community engagement fatigue where we're asking the same questions multiple times. My latest information was the trust was continuing with their elements but we were working together to ensure that we didn't duplicate effort.

Dr WOODRUFF - A final question. Which stakeholders are you consulting with that you just mentioned then? Who are those stakeholders that you have spoken to?

Mr LIMKIN - We have engaged with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, we have engaged with peak government agencies such as Tourism Tasmania, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. We've also talked to councils and other peak bodies as well.

Mr GARLAND - In budget paper 1, page 74, for this financial year, is an allocation of half a million dollars for the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre, which amongst a range of projects, is proposing a 15,000 Atlantic salmon and 15,000 kingfish aquaculture research trial in Commonwealth waters 12 km offshore from the north-west coast in Bass Strait. The Blue Economy CRC partners include Tassal, Huon, Petuna, New Zealand King Salmon and a whole range of universities.

To do the research trial, I've been informed by Angela Williamson, former senior manager for responsible business at Tassal and now Blue Economy CRC director of blue policy and planning, that the trial would be partly implemented and managed by Tassal and Skretting.

Between July 2019 and June 2020, Blue Economy CRC paid Tassal $1 million. Annual reports since then don't highlight which organisations or companies received payment from the Blue Economy CRC. Minister, do you know how much money Blue Economy CRC is paying Tasmanian salmon farm operators services and, if so, how much?

Mr ABETZ - Cooperative research centres are, as I understand it, a federal creature, albeit they partner with industry, states and other organisations, and the management of the Blue CRC, you would really need to ask them how they are managing their funds.

The management of the Blue CRC is not one which I am necessarily able to provide any insight into.

Mr GARLAND - Well, if we don't know, why are we giving them funds, minister?

Mr ABETZ - We're giving them funds because it's a research activity in Commonwealth waters and it's a sensible step to test the economic, environmental and operational feasibility of offshore aquaculture in Commonwealth waters. If that were to be a possibility, then there are substantial potential benefits to Tasmania for Tasmanian jobs and wealth creation.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, I'd like to ask a question around the rock lobster now. To give you a bit of background, around about 14-15 years ago - how old is my daughter? it's about that - she was a student down here at university and came back from Townsville to do her degree in marine biology, and a part of that degree, in the later end of it, she was actually working for IMAS part-time and doing some research into rock lobster translocation.

Ever since that day, I've always been interested in it because it's part of the east coast historic fishery and where it goes. And, so, along those lines, how is the rock lobster

translocation program going? It is substantial benefit to one of our main industries, our fishing industries, on the east coast.

Mr ABETZ - I won't have to tell you that the translocation program is underpinned by science, given the family involvement in it. The government believes it's been highly effective and it's been reliant on the active involvement of the Tasmanian rock lobster industry over the years to catch and relocate rock lobster. I can't believe these figures, but I'm told over 800,000 to the south and west coasts and over 300,000 to the east coast. Are those figures correct?

Ms WILSON - I believe so.

Mr ABETZ - That is a huge number. Since 2019-20, the program has focused on translocation to the east coast. There are no known sustainability risks and the program is beneficial for all east coast fishers. The movement of lobsters from slow growing deep-water areas in the south-west to faster-growth inshore east coast areas has resulted in measurable productivity and biomass gains for the fishery. Recreational catchers and commercial catch rates have increased and commercial catch rates are at a 40-year high.

On the back of this program's success, the Tasmanian government has increased and extended funding in this Budget, with a total additional commitment of 600,000 over the next four years to support the continued rebuild of this important shared fishery. Your family member has made a valuable contribution to this program. Please thank her.

Ms FINLAY - Thanks, minister. I appreciate that in your previous answer to do with the review of the *Living Marine Resources Management Act* that there is some consideration for the time frame of that work. It is critical. Equally, the time frame of developing the harvest strategies is critical.

It did shock me and it continues to concern me that the time frame for delivering the harvest strategies is outlined to be 10 years. In speaking to a number of people that have formally sat on the FACs (Fishery Advisory Committees) and other people in industry, if we are going to manage to the best of our abilities the fisheries that we have, particularly in our wild fisheries, I would hope that you will turn your mind to the fact that we as reasonably as possible can fast track those harvest strategies. Can you indicate what consideration you have made and what discussions you've had with the department around the harvest strategies in order that they are delivered in a more timely manner for Tasmanians?

Mr ABETZ - Thank you for that question and, yes, I have turned my mind to it and I'm just looking to find where.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, and thank you for the question. We are progressing the abalone harvest strategy and the rock lobster harvest strategy. We've focused on those two because they are high-value fisheries, and we already have an abalone harvest strategy, so it is a review of an existing strategy.

The rock lobster strategy is well progressed. We have a working group established and we have just appointed an independent chair, Max Kitchell. In terms of the progression of the harvest strategies, the agency does see them as a priority and is working towards having harvest strategies in place.

It is also sensible to ensure that we are doing this in an orderly fashion in relation to our highest value fisheries. We also have to take into account we're dealing with our constituents and they need to be able to invest their time in ensuring the path strategies are the best product that we can produce. We are progressing those harvest strategies and we'll continue to do so.

Ms FINLAY - Is there some clarification on the target that you're working towards for rock lobster and abalone in terms of a time to complete those two harvest strategies?

Ms WILSON - We plan to deliver and we do allow for the fact when I put this forward, minister, that we have to take into account that sometimes extensions of time happen because of consultation. We plan to deliver the rock lobster harvest strategy by November 2025. I may have to come back to you on abalone because I have to quickly look it up. Once I've got that date, I don't have it in my head.

Ms FINLAY - In responding to that, I appreciate that and it's nice to know that those two are more advanced. You talked about engagement with constituents, the community and fishers. In a recent rapid review of the FACs, the FACs have been, in my language, disbanded. I think there's an interim process at the moment. Having spoken to previous members and chairs of FACs and other people that have got an interest in that, there's a concern that you, as minister, are without the best available advice directly from collections of people working with the fisheries. What's your current commitment to how you will structure your advisory from fishers? Will you reimplement FACs? Are you looking at a different structure? I know in the rapid review, not only did they recommend a more timely response to the harvest strategies, but they recognised the importance of those advisory structures.

Mr ABETZ - In a former manifestation when I was a federal minister for fisheries, amongst other things, I found the equivalent to the FACs very helpful. With no disrespect to our scientists who give very valuable input, no disrespect to our departmental officials who give very good input, I think there's always something to be learned and gleaned from those who are actually on the water doing the fishing, who make observations and understand things that they have practically lived with, for some, for decades on end, often intergenerationally. Getting that input as well is very helpful. That is why I've had preliminary discussions with the department as to how we deal with this. There's a certain gentleman with whom we both sat the other evening who made a very valuable contribution whilst I was federal minister. There are other people as well who I'm sure could and would make valuable contributions. The gentleman of whom I speak is engaged in South Australia as the chair of one of their FACs over there.

Ms FINLAY - On that matter, the rapid review that was conducted in the FACs, neither the members of the FACs nor the chair of the FACs were ever garnished with any feedback from that review, nor provided with the document. There was some concern expressed about that. Would you commit to having that conversation with those people who had invested a lot of time, effort and expertise into those FACs in terms of them understanding where you're at with the process?

Mr ABETZ - I'm always happy to talk to people in any sector. Should you be in contact with the individuals, feel free to let them know to make contact.

Ms FINLAY - I'm interested, that through RTI, I was able to get a copy of the rapid review heavily redacted. The pieces of information that were redacted over the many pages

were in fact the feedback provided. Will you commit to being able to provide an unredacted copy of that rapid review?

Mr ABETZ - I don't do the RTIs, that's a matter for departments and departmental officials.

Ms FINLAY - I'm asking if you are on top of that process now.

Mr ABETZ - I don't know what the rationale was for the redactions, so I'm not going to say at the table that I'll provide you with an unredacted report. There might be very good reasons for it. I'll defer to the deputy secretary.

Ms WILSON - I might go back to the question about the abalone. The target is for the first half of next year, hopefully the first quarter but I'm giving myself a little bit of room.

Ms FINLAY - So abalone, the rock lobster next year?

Ms WILSON - Rock lobster towards the end. It takes around two years to develop a harvest strategy. You can see the rolling program progressing. I met with both chairs of Fishery Advisory Committees relating to that review.

Ms FINLAY - Recently?

Ms WILSON - I'd have to look at the date. What I would say is that at that meeting, it was a general overview of the process. As the minister has indicated, the RTI office has made an independent decision, which is appropriate. The document itself was produced as an internal document for NRE Tasmania so that we could inform advice to the minister. It was a rapid review, with people given advice that it was a rapid review, with the view that they could provide open feedback. I was extremely pleased that the options have been put on the table because that is actually the most important part of the document. It is the fact that's what will inform the debate and the advice, and has informed the debate and advice, around the future of the fisheries advisory committees.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, I want to dig into any communications, if there have been any, between you and the Minister for Tourism. It's in relation to a $15 million major commitment to upgrades of three key reserves across the state, including the Dial Range, which is an icon of the north-west. It is supposed to be about enhancing the visitor experience.

This is a much-loved community area that is highly used for walking and trail bike riding. Forestry Tasmania has scheduled that two coupes in that area will be slated for logging - 45 hectares this year. That's at the same time as the tourism announcement of enhancing the visitor experience and investing in new trails in the Dial Range.

That's expected to boost visitor numbers and the local economy. The amount of harvest log volume to come out of those coupes is very tiny - 200 cubic metres of category-one saw logs. This is chump change for Forestry Tasmania but would make a huge swathe into what is a highly loved and visited area that is slated for tourism investment.

I'm wondering whether the Tourism minister has been in contact with you about this area. What has your response been? Has there been any correspondence at all between your departments about this issue?

Mr ABETZ - To the best of my recollection, the Minister for Tourism has not corresponded with me in relation to this matter. My staff don't recall that either, but I'm more than happy to check the record to see if something has slipped through that I didn't notice. In relation to the Dial Range, I can say that that's an operational matter for Sustainable Timber Tasmania. They've commenced planning and they've notified neighbouring landowners and registered stakeholders as part of the process.

No forest operations, including roading and harvesting, can occur until a Forest Practices Plan has been approved. Importantly, the plan will also outline how the forest will be regenerated and managed following harvesting activity, as sustainable native forestry operations across Tasmania provide the timber and wood products required to build our homes and help support a plastic-free future. They also support many jobs in our regional areas.

Can I also say - and I'm not across all the detail with the Dial Range - that forestry and other activities can coexist. It doesn't have to be black and white. There can be a coexistence, and managing our forests for the benefit of tourism, bike trails and wood products is all part and parcel of what we as a government want to see.

Dr WOODRUFF - I know that's your government's position, but it is directly at odds in this instance in a quite peculiar way, because the coupes that have been chosen, DLO11A and DLO11C, are right in the middle of the Dial Range. They're highly visible from the walking and riding trails that are there. A couple of months ago, or less than that, over 120 people turned up on a Sunday to meet as a community for the first time. They were shocked at this proposal to go right into the middle of this very loved and highly accessed area, one that's just been slated for a boost with financial investment.

Will you have a conversation with the Minister for Tourism, will you understand and learn about the values of the area, and will you consider talking to Forestry Tasmania about reordering their priorities in relation to these two particular coupes?

Mr ABETZ - Sustainable Timber Tasmania is who I might talk to about this, but at the end of the day they are a government business enterprise and they will be making their determinations in relation to the guidelines under which they have to operate, namely forest practices plans, et cetera. I would encourage anybody who's concerned about this to reach out directly to Sustainable Timber Tasmania and have the dialogue to see what can be done to ensure that there can be a coexistence of matters tourism and matters forestry.

Dr WOODRUFF - Ash Bulgarelli will definitely be doing that. He's already been in touch on behalf of the community.

Mr GARLAND - Minister, in relation to Tasmanian aquaculture, what was the total number of individual workers directly employed on finfish marine farms and land-based freshwater hatcheries between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2024? Also, what was the total number of seasonal workers directly employed with either a working visa or a seasonal worker scheme on finfish marine farms and land-based freshwater hatcheries between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2024?

Mr ABETZ - Any self-respecting minister would have that sort of detail in his back pocket. Unfortunately, I don't, Mr Garland. I'm not sure that we necessarily have oversight in relation to the number of workers that are on visas in the various fish farms. I will try to do my best to see what departmental records have to offer in relation to that.

I suspect that will be part of the information that is held by the various fish farms and not something which we would have oversight. I don't know if you were to go to a federal senator or member to ascertain whether the federal Department of Immigration has any figures as to visas granted to people working in the finfish and aquaculture sector. That might be another avenue for you. I'm not sure that I can add any more to that. There is information on the departmental website about employees, but it does not drill down into whether or not they are visa holders.

If I may, Chair, just briefly, I was just reminded that certain people signed off on the coupes that Dr Woodruff has just mentioned, and there was agreement to logging this coupe under the Tasmanian Forest Agreement some time ago. That's an interesting observation, and I thank the person who just fed that information to me.

Dr WOODRUFF - The world has moved on, minister. There is a biodiversity crisis and a climate emergency.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you explain the recently launched Private Forest Tasmania Knowledge Hub and Stems for CO2 program, and what the government is doing to back farm forestry in Tasmania? As you find your information, minister, the other day I was at Austral Bricks at Longford, which gave me a look through their process. They actually used native wood chips to fire their furnace, and they produce local bricks that are carbon neutral. They are one of the only places in Australia to do so, and they produce them here in Tasmania. Mainland bricks are fired by gas in their burners. Austral Bricks take all the sawdust from the local mills in the area and puts it through their burner; they also put native sawdust in their bricks and when it fires it comes up with those black specks through the bricks, so they're very proud.

Mr ABETZ - Is that how they do it? There you go.

Mr SHELTON - At Longford. They're carbon neutral in producing their bricks. They were pleased to promote that to me, and I thought I'd just pass that on to you while I had the opportunity.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you very much for that. If I've got the right place, I think they've got that up in lights, literally, that they produce carbon neutral.

Mr SHELTON - They've been advertising it of late.

Mr ABETZ - With one of those mobile - often we see them on the side of the road telling you there's a detour ahead or something. They were promoting the fact that they had carbon neutral bricks and pavers for sale, et cetera. That is all part and parcel of the ongoing growth,

research and development that is taking place with our renewable forest sector, which is delivering so much.

When people don't want any forestry to occur, who would have thought you'd be denying Austral Bricks the opportunity to do what they're doing. This is another example of where the knowledge hub can be of real assistance in ensuring we get the most value out of every little bit of the tree that we harvest. That's a very good and fine example of it.

Ms FINLAY - I'm interested in your earlier responses to Mr Garland that you have put a line through the returns to community element of the Salmon Plan in terms of no new taxes. I'm interested in exploring the full cost recovery within the Budget. Can you let me know, in the 2022-23 year, what was the full cost of the department's actions? What was the figure then?

In the 2023-24 year, as I remember, it was about $9.6 million that you collected through the full cost recovery. However, this year it's something like $11 million. I am keen to know what the numbers of people working in those areas were in 2022-23 and 2023-24, and the numbers proposed in 2024-25? They seem like significant jumps when you're just seeking to recover the costs that you previously allocated.

Mr ABETZ - That's a departmental matter and I defer.

Ms WILSON - We've produced information on our website around our cost recovery.

Ms FINLAY - Is that on the department's website or the salmon portal?

Ms WILSON - No, on the department's website. If you go looking for it, we have a document that explains the services as at August 2023. It has FTE information. They are estimates; our out years were estimates. We collected $9.6 million in levies.

Ms FINLAY - For my benefit, as I don't have that in front of me, what was the number of FTEs in 2023-24?

Ms WILSON - EPA, 16.5; IFS, 1.7; Business Services, 10.3; Environment, 9.9; Marine Resources, 17.6; Research was 0. That made up 56.5.

Ms FINLAY - So 56.5 overall?

Ms WILSON - Yes.

Ms FINLAY - Do you have the details for the 2022-23 year in front of you, comparing what you used to have, and then you want to fully -

Ms WILSON - Yes, I see. We haven't released the 2022-23 figures because we commenced full cost recovery in 2023-24.

Ms FINLAY - Sorry, for clarification, what I'm seeking to understand is, there was a time where government used to do work and it would cost money. There were allocations in the Budget and it would come to a certain number. You'd have a certain number of people and a certain number of allocations. Then you went to full cost recovery and there was a new number, and now there's another new number. I'm trying to understand the increase in the

full-time equivalents and also in the allocations, because then my follow-up question is going to be, what has changed in the work in order that the number of full-time equivalents and the allocation or the receiving is different?

Ms WILSON - I'm not sure that I quite understand the question, but what I can tell you is that this government has increased, for example, the staffing in the EPA, and that was a Budget announcement. We've introduced a new biosecurity standard, which has required some additional activity. As I say, the information is available on our website as to how we've derived these figures.

Ms FINLAY - But there's no information for what the base that you're working from is - so the 2022-23 year isn't included in the information.

Ms WILSON - The information on the levy that we received is available. We were already collecting a levy from industry, and there was a difference between the existing levy and the new levy.

Ms FINLAY - Do you have the number of full-time equivalents in the 2022-23 year that used to operate to service the salmon industry? What I'm trying to understand is, you would have serviced the salmon industry, whether it be in research, information exchange, whatever. Then you chose to fully recover those costs, and that was the $9.6 million after a full year of cost recovery. Now it's $11 million. I'm trying to understand, in this year, the figure in the 2024-25 year is $11 million -

Ms WILSON - The net cost that we have on our figures here in 2024-25, less public good, was predicted to be $9.6 million, but I'll just make sure I've got that right through my staff.

Ms FINLAY - So you're expecting that you will recover the same amount of cost this year as you did last year?

Ms WILSON - The levy will need to be determined, but that was what we anticipated and put forward as the likely anticipated amount for 2024-25.

Ms FINLAY - Outside of the additional people in biosecurity and the additional people in EPA, are there any other additional full-time equivalents expected to be in the department's service in the salmon industry this year?

Mr ABETZ - Can we take that on notice?

Ms WILSON - Minister, I need the question repeated, to be frank.

Ms FINLAY - In the 2024-25 years, so the year that we're about to enter, or that we're actually thick in, is it estimated that there will be an increase in any full-time equivalents outside what you've already identified, which is biosecurity and the EPA?

Ms WILSON - We have an anticipated FTE in the documentation that we've already released. We will be finalising our 2024-25 FTE allocation, but as has been indicated, the amount that is predicted for 2024-25 is $9.6 million. When you talk about the $11 million, that may take into account our lease amounts. We have -

Ms FINLAY - Okay. I can clarify that. I'll go and have a look at the link.

Dr WOODRUFF - I've been very indulgent with that series of questions, really, Chair.

Ms FINLAY - I've been given everything except for the estimated number of FTEs for 2024-25. Have you got that in front of you?

Ms WILSON - It is estimated at 54.8, but I do not have the actual to hand.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you.

Dr WOODRUFF - I have a question on behalf of the community around Lorinna. There're some plantations growing in the upper reaches of the Lorinna area that are leased to Reliance Forest Fibre, and they are detrimentally depleting the water supply south of Olivers Creek. The trees planted originally were of the wrong species for that location. Adjacent to that coupe is an area that's intentionally being protected to preserve the water catchment and supply. It appears that the designation of the coupe now leased to Reliance Forest Fibre for plantations was simply a mapping error, or so the community believe. Will you work with Reliance Forest Fibre, who have said, I understand, that they'd accept a buyback of the leased area to secure that land and add it to the protected part of the water catchment, for reliability for livestock and domestic supply? Farmers have mentioned the impacts of the depletion on that water supply available for them.

Mr ABETZ - A sad experience has taught me not to fully rely on assertions made by Green MPs. There are a lot of assertions that, by Dr Woodruff's own admissions, she believes that the community understands that certain things were mapped in error, that the wrong species of tree was planted, that it has certain detrimental effects -

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, I find that imputation offensive. I'm speaking on behalf of the community. I'm not there, I'm not standing here giving me these words. This is from an email from the community. I'm reporting it to you, as I understand, because these were the words that people told me. So we should have the respect to treat this as a serious question from the Lorinna community members. I don't need you chiming in, Mr Shelton.

CHAIR - Order. Dr Woodruff, please allow the minister to answer the question.

Mr ABETZ - All I've said is that from a sad experience, I've been burnt from time to time by taking at face value assertions made by the Greens.

Dr WOODRUFF - Let's talk about managed investment schemes and the failure of that. You were the architect of that Ponzi scheme that's been so damaging for northern Tasmanian communities. So, honestly, just treat it with respect.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Give us an answer for the community.

CHAIR - Please, cease interjecting and allow the minister to answer the question how he sees fit.

Mr ABETZ - The person that demands respect shows none. It is really unbelievable.

Dr WOODRUFF - Start by modelling it.

Mr ABETZ - Allow me to repeat that there are lots of assertions in the question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you want to challenge them? Go ahead.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ABETZ - At law school, I learnt a maxim that the person that wants to assert something needs to prove it. It's not for the other person to prove the negative. If Dr Woodruff has certain assertions, then let the evidence be put forward and then we can consider it. But this is, as I understand it, private property, and that is up to the owner of that property to determine what they might want to do with it, within the bounds of the law. If they're willing to sell it to somebody, be it to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) or somebody else, then that is what the open market allows. At this stage, I can't see any need for my involvement in this matter.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the question, will you answer it, please? Will you consider speaking to Alliance Forest Fibre, who've indicated that they are interested in having the lease secured by the government and handed back. Will you have that conversation with them?

Mr ABETZ - They have not approached me about this matter, and if that is what their view is, I will await their approach and consider it on that basis. I'm not going to reach out to them on the basis of the matters that have been raised today.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay. This is my first question and I was incredibly indulgent for all that long series of questions from Labor. Chair, that was one question. That was an attack on me that I had to defend myself about.

CHAIR - Just because you don't like the answer, doesn't mean it wasn't answered. Dr Woodruff -

Dr WOODRUFF - Honestly, that was one question about the Lorinna community and I didn't even get an answer. The second question.

CHAIR - There's time to ask the question again, should you wish.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, I have a right on behalf of the Greens to have two questions. That is the rotation.

CHAIR - You have had two questions.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, I didn't Chair. That is really unreasonable.

CHAIR - Don't argue with me, please Dr Woodruff, or raise your voice to me. Mr Shelton has the call.

Mr SHELTON - Can the government provide an update on its successful Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative (EDGI) and the outcomes of the Auditor-General's desktop review into the program?

Mr ABETZ - The EDGI program has been very successful. It's unfortunate that it has been attacked. The Auditor-General had the program referred to it and has now confirmed that there will be no audit of this highly successful initiative. It's one of those things that elements in our community do breathlessly tell the media that they're referring to the Auditor-General and then, when the Auditor-General declines to engage with it, you don't get the press release saying we were misguided in trying to make these wild claims.

The simple fact is that the EDGI program has consistently delivered results for Tasmania with significant mineral discoveries, like the high-grade tin at north Scamander. The program has been instrumental in growing our state's mining sector and contributing to the vital royalties that we get, which ultimately fund the essential services such as health, education and housing. Rather than suffering the constant attacks on our mining sector and our productive sectors, we as a government sidestep those attacks and continue to work with the productive sectors that provide jobs and wealth for our community.

Just the mining royalties alone, in rough terms, $52 million last year - that funds a lot of nurses, police and teachers. If you close down that sector, there will be very real problems. As is the want with mines, usually they are exhausted and therefore you have to look for more prospects. That is what the EDGI program is all about, to assist and co-invest with mineral explorers to see if there are any other minerals that might be of benefit to our community, and from which we can generate jobs and wealth and, of course, royalties.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you for the details provided in the previous answer. Fifty-five people to manage a sector, it seems like a lot of people. I'm sure it's a reasonable number, and I know that it's been done in conjunction with the industry. I'm interested to know, where we enter into these agreements with sectors, no matter who they are, if there's a way of testing or checking that the value is returned to both - that one is underpaid or over-utilised and also that there's an audit of the impact of that effort, I suppose. How is that process undertaken in terms of auditing the effort of the team? Could you detail a breakdown of the tasks of the team that deliver, in that full-time equivalent number?

Ms WILSON - When the salmon industry cost recovery model was first delivered, it was based on a model which was well tested and had been in place for some time. It is from the Department of Treasury and Finance's Costing Fees and Charges Guidelines for Use by Agencies. It goes through a model around describing the outputs, the methodology, the approach to use, and the cost must be verifiable. When we did the cost recovery, Wise Lord & Ferguson did a piece of work to test against that guideline so that it had rigour. I'm just going to check with my team. I believe it may be on our website, but I'll just have to check.

Ms FINLAY - While you're checking, I'm interested in the model being established and then implemented. I'm interested in ongoing review or auditing of it, whether it continues to keep in line with the expectations of how that model was initially set up. Sometimes, with no intention, there can be creep or a lack of efficiency or not keeping up with the costs. How is that reviewed?

Mr ABETZ - That is departmental management and I defer -

Ms WILSON - We will do a report on the previous financial year, which will indicate at an appropriate level the functions that have been delivered through the cost recovery. There are models for this. If you have the opportunity to look at the DAC website and others, there's a model for how you report. It's not about every, single part of an FTE's workload. If you look at our model, there are people who work and part of their activities relates to salmon, and we will be reporting. There's also the salmon industry working group set up. That is chaired by an independent chair, and we will report appropriately against our cost recovery model.

Ms FINLAY - The salmon industry has been one of our big success stories and full of innovation, but we need to be on top of emerging opportunities as well. In seaweed, there's a good opportunity in Tasmania. Previously, there's been a commitment to doing a plan around emerging industries like seaweed. What is the current position in investing in seaweed development in Tasmania? I understand there was a seaweed investment plan. What is the status of that?

Mr ABETZ - New and emerging marine industries like seaweed aquaculture present significant potential for the state. We are leading national efforts to develop this new industry with research supporting business development such as Sea Forest Limited, which is established land and marine-based seaweed operations on our East Coast. The Tasmanian government has invested $4 million to support a large-scale trial of *Asparagopsis* seaweed feed supplements in beef and dairy cattle through the low emissions livestock grant program. The trial is a collaboration between TasFarmers, Sea Forest, the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Fonterra, Annandale Dairy Farm and Tasmanian feedlot AEON.

The government's investment in emerging marine industries helps to support research and development and enables the development of policy and regulatory frameworks. The Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has various projects that focus on that unpronounceable seaweed and offshore kelp aquaculture. The government's cash and in-kind investment in the Blue Economy CRC supports these activities aligned to the emerging industries.

Ms FINLAY - My interest, minister, is with the seaweed industry plan. Over a year ago it was suggested there'll be one developed. It is an important and critical part of our future mix in terms of our marine resources. What's the status of the development of that plan?

Ms WILSON - The seaweed industry development plan is in draft, and I'll get an estimate for you at the appropriate time frame we're thinking that will be done.

Ms FINLAY - Oh sorry. What is that time frame?

Ms WILSON - I'm seeking that.

Ms FINLAY - Oh, you'll come back to us? Right.

Ms BADGER - Venture Minerals, now trading as Critica Limited, their lease 3M/ 2012 at Livingstone, on the Stanley River, that expired on 1 June 2022 and the lease is now listed on MRT's website as pending renewal. What's the issue that's preventing the renewal of this lease at the moment? Is that in relation to compliance per chance?

Mr ABETZ - Just bear with me. You're right.

Ms BADGER - Sorry to make you come up here.

Mr ABETZ - I'll have the Director of Mines to come to the table to assist.

Mr MORTON - Alastair Morton, Director of Mines. Can you just repeat the last bit of that question?

Ms BADGER - So it's in relation to Venture Minerals, or now Critica Ltd, their lease 3M/ 2012, which is on their Livingstone site on the Stanley River. So, that's expired on 1 June 2022. It's just listed on MRT's website as pending renewal. So, what is preventing the renewal of that lease? Is that in relation to compliance?

Mr MORTON - No. Thanks for the question. Yes, it is pending renewal. The expiration date was the 1 June 2022. Consistent with a section of the *Mineral Resources Development Act*, a lease continues to be enforced if an application for renewal is made but not granted before it ceases to be enforced. So, effectively, whilst it's pending the lease is current. We've been assessing it. It's taken us some time. We've sought some additional information from Venture. We've recently requested final information from them so we can form our position and move forward.

Ms BADGER - Great. So, my second question on that is they have announced their intention to sell that mining lease, which although expired, from what you're saying, under that section of the act, they still have rights to. So, that's perfectly fine and there are no implications for a company marketing rights to Tasmanian land which otherwise, if not leased, is reserve land in the Meredith Ranges Regional Reserve. So, they don't own the land. There's an expired lease and they're able to sell it.

CHAIR - Can the question please be directed through the minister?

Mr MORTON - The key point is it's not an expired lease. It's an active lease that's pending renewal. It's a current lease. And we're working through finalising our position in regards to what happens to that lease and our recommendation, MRT's recommendation. But we'll do that soon. But the key point is it is an active and current lease.

Mr ABETZ - Thanks, Chair. Before Mr Shelton asks the question. can I quickly come back to Miss Finlay? The Seaweed Industry Development Plan is anticipated to be available in the first half of next year for consultation and the Wise, Lord & Ferguson document relating to salmon cost recovery is on the NRET website. Sorry, Mr Shelton.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you explain how Tasmania's framework for sustainable forest management provides for the protection and management of the endangered swift parrot?

Mr ABETZ - Thank you very much for that question. Tasmania has a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system within which half of all Tasmania's forests are protected, including more than a million hectares of old growth forests. This reserve system protects many recognised as important swift parrot breeding, foraging and post-breeding season habitat.

Forest practices in Tasmania are regulated through our forest practices system, and that provides protections that ensure the environmental, social and economic values of our forests are appropriately managed for all Tasmanians.

The Forest Practices Code, issued under the *Forest Practices Act*, requires the management of threatened species, including the swift parrot, to be in accordance with procedures agreed between the independent Forest Practices Authority and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania as the primary regulator of a threatened species and at a forestry coupe level. Forestry operations must comply with a range of specific measures for conservation of the swift parrot, including protection of identified nesting habitat and retention of specific areas of breeding and foraging habitat and the requirement for pre-harvest surveys.

Management prescriptions are incorporated into forest practices plans and they must be certified prior to any on-ground operations commencing, and that is legally enforceable on both public and private land.

To ensure compliance, the Forest Practices Authority proactively audits the forest practices plans and, in instances of non-compliance, the authority can issue a range of penalties under the act. So, as many people are aware, the nature of swift parrots and their recovery is complex due to their life cycle, migration and specific habitat protection, and recovery of the species, therefore, requires coordinated action across multiple sectors on both public and private land on the mainland and here in Tasmania.

The government remains committed to supporting the long-term swift parrot recovery through inter-agency, inter-governmental and cross-sectoral collaboration and has committed $1 million to support the recovery of the species. This funding is implementing a range of conservation activities to assist with a long-term protection of the species.

The forest practices system is informed by science and practical implementation and is subject to continual improvement as new information emerges. A review of swift parrot habitat management under the forest practices system is currently underway. So, lots of work is being undertaken to assist with the support of the swift parrot.

Ms FINLAY - Circling back to some comments that Mr Young made at the very beginning of this session about the sardine fishery. There's a lot of exchange around sardine fishery. I had a particular question on that as well. It has been something that I think for probably for more than a decade has been considered in Tasmania, and I appreciate your comments about seeking to ensure you get the highest and best use of the resource.

I would love to make sure that we land it and process it in Tasmania and we don't lose the opportunity - by taking our time - to South Australia or somewhere else. There has been concerns expressed from people interested in the fishery of that risk. I don't think in any of the exchanges this morning there was actually a time line provided for a decision on the sardine fishery. Wondering if you can enlighten the committee when you expect that there will be a decision around how to manage the sardine fishery?

Mr ABETZ - Would you mind, sorry, repeating the question?

Ms FINLAY - It's a fishery in Commonwealth waters. We obviously want to land the opportunity in Tasmania so we get the value out of the processing and the fishery here. It has been in consideration for some time - 10 years suggested, maybe more - and there are concerns that by not making a decision as quickly as possible we could lose the fishery to somewhere like South Australia, who have been more aggressive and could actually soak up that fishery.

My question is: what is the time frame for a decision on the management of the fishery in Tasmania?

Mr ABETZ - Well, we first of all and, as I said before, it's a step-by-step process. IMAS has to provide us with a last bit of information to tell us about the extent of the biomass and then what is a reasonable take from that biomass to retain sustainability, and the amount of that catch will undoubtedly determine the extent of interest, commercial interest, in this particular fishery.

You can be assured that I will do absolutely everything I can to ensure that the fish that are caught are landed in Tasmania, processed and dealt with in Tasmania. It is in Commonwealth waters. I'm not sure if we've got an agreement with the Commonwealth that we manage that on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Ms WILSON - An offshore constitutional agreement, part of the Bass Strait.

Mr ABETZ - Right. There is an offshore constitutional agreement. I remember getting my head around all that in a previous life, and I am just not sure as to the exact detail of north-west waters.

Ms FINLAY - This being my first question, it's still the same question, but the question is: for many other things asked today, you do have target time frames for delivering outcomes. Yes, IMAS has to do the work; yes, you have to review it; yes, we have to make sure it is sustainable. What is the targeted timeframe for delivering a decision on the sardine fishery?

Mr ABETZ - From my point of view, yesterday, but we do have to get things in place and I think the department is under no illusion as to my interest in seeing this new fishery being made available should the science stack up for the benefit of Tasmanian jobs and wealth creation.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you. To my second question, then. There has been some long-term consideration and shifts in the consideration of the management of the calamari fishery. I was wondering if you could share with the committee your current thinking about management of calamari fishery.

Mr ABETZ - Where is Mr Garland when you need him?

Ms FINLAY - Well, you know, it's probably good that he is not here if he had a conflict of interest.

Mr ABETZ - Mr Garland and I have had discussions, as, might I add, have other calamari fishers from around the state. What I have done thus far is to - and I will get the dates right - close the fishery from the 1 September to the end of October. There are arguments that it should be extended to August-September rather than September-October, et cetera. There are

a lot of competing views on that, and it won't surprise you that many fishers have differing views. I'm putting all that together, and I'm also looking at whether we have a statutory review - is that the term?

Ms WILSON - Yes. Review of the management plan.

Mr ABETZ - Yes. It is called a statutory review, and that then requires under the legislation for there to be consultation, et cetera, before a plan is determined.

Ms FINLAY - On licensing or on the season opening or closing?

Mr ABETZ - On all matters, as I understand it. The season I can do by signature, and I have done that -

Ms FINLAY - But you are reopening consideration of the licensing framework?

Mr ABETZ - Licensing? Would that be -

Ms FINLAY - I would love to know what you are thinking is, minister, because it has been a moveable feast. Obviously, there is deep interest in -

Mr ABETZ - It has been, and the price of calamari is relatively good, Mr Garland tells me. It's a good fishery. We want to keep it sustainable and I am exercising -

Ms FINLAY - I am more interested in the access; there have been ongoing concerns about people either meeting or not meeting the requirements for when the investment decision notice was made and, as I understand it, there has been some change in thinking around that. I was wanting to get an understanding of your current thinking on how you are progressing with consideration of licensing access.

Mr ABETZ - What I can tell you is that a lot of thinking is going on as we speak, but no firm decisions have been made. The one firm decision I have made is the closure of the fishery from 1 September to the end of October to help protect the biomass in the breeding season. Calamari are amazing creatures; they only last for one year, I understand, so they breed and die. The pressure on the fishery is there, especially given the prices, and we want to keep it sustainable.

What is the best way forward? I think for nearly every fisher in the sector, there is a slightly different or nuanced approach, so I am trying to get all of that together with the department, and we will come to -

Ms FINLAY - Thank you, minister.

Ms BADGER - Minister, the contentious coalmine lease for the east coast - that is lease 4M/2012 -

Mr ABETZ - Is that the Cornwall one?

Ms BADGER - Yes, I believe so. Minister, that has been -

Mr SHELTON - Is that where Bob Brown was going to put his power station?

Ms BADGER - I wasn't even born when this proposal happened. I'm not sure, to be honest. I am living in 2024. That has been listed for 14 months as pending renewal. I was just wondering, minister, if you could enlighten us on what's stalling the decision on this matter and when we might expect one.

Mr ABETZ - As I understand it, the lease number you're talking about is for HardRock Coal Mining Pty Ltd.

Ms BADGER - I am.

Mr ABETZ - Which has now called itself Hydrogen Ready Carbon Mining Pty Ltd, is investigating the potential for coal resources for mining lease ML4M/2012 and exploration licence EL16/2010, south of Fingal. The nature of the coal seams in this area means that mining would be from an underground operation. It's currently pending renewal. It has been helpfully suggested that any further questions should be referred to this man here. If you've got further questions, I will defer to the Director of Mines.

Mr MORTON - Regarding that mining lease application, yes, the company applied for a renewal last year in accordance with the requirements of the act. The reason it has taken this length of time is that MRT has been seeking further information from the company. MRT has written to the company seeking any final information they wish to provide so we can finalise our position and move forward.

Ms BADGER - Thank you, so no set timeframe at the moment?

Mr MORTON - Shortly.

Ms BADGER - Shortly?

Mr MORTON - Yes.

Ms BADGER - Sure. Back to you, minister. The proponent of that coal mine wants to use the coal for hydrogen, as you said. The company has previously stated that it has been receiving support from the Rockliff government to find a site for the hydrogen plant component of the project. Can you please explain if the government has been providing any kind of advice or assistance to the company? I believe it also operates under Paladin Hydrogen.

Mr ABETZ - That, I think, would be in the ministerial area of Mr Duigan as the Minister for Energy and Renewables. With hydrogen production, I don't have any ministerial oversight in this area.

Mr SHELTON - Many constituents in my electorate love to drop a line in and catch a feed of fish. Our compatriot, the Attorney-General, often talks about these fishing exploits and it would be lovely to have more time to do some fishing. No doubt you're in the same boat, minister. What's the government doing to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Tasmanian recreational fishing sector?

Mr ABETZ - Would it be fair to say that until I got this gig, I wasn't all that acquainted with the anglers in the state. I can tell you that they are a bunch of wonderful people and I was at a wonderful dinner in New Norfolk the other night, where the local anglers association had their prizegiving. It was a most enjoyable evening and you got to see a wonderful cross-section of our community, all absolutely passionate about trout fishing and angling. It made me realise that Mr Barnett was not one on his own but there are many other people in the Tasmanian community who share his passion.

In recognition of that passion and interest in the Tasmanian community, as a government we have committed to supporting and growing freshwater angling participation in our state. We've, in effect, provided $75,000 to waive junior inland angling fees for a further three years; there's $150,000 made available for a tagged trout promotion over three years; a further $220,000 to Anglers Alliance Tasmania over three years to support junior fishing education programs and management of webcams so that anglers can check the weather conditions for free before heading to the lakes for a fishing trip.

These recent commitments build on previous ongoing commitments of $1 million over four years for improved facilities and improved access to support inland fishing. It is part and parcel of the culture of our state, and it also provides some important tourism dollars to our state where people from around the world come to fish for our trout. It's a wonderful community activity where everybody, irrespective of their socioeconomic situation, can participate.

We also get relatively high-wealth individuals from other parts of Australia and, indeed, other parts of the world partaking in that fishery. It is very important, and whilst I have stewardship of Inland Fisheries, I will be doing my very best to make sure that it's not only maintained but grows.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, we may as well keep with the theme on Inland Fisheries, which is globally recognised and significantly important. Up until recently it had its funding frozen and it was finding it difficult to maintain that quality across a whole range of areas. First, is Inland Fisheries subject to the efficiency in the same way -

Mr ABETZ - Yes, it is. Could I invite the acting director to the table, please?

CHAIR - Would the acting director please state his name?

Dr WILKINSON - Dr Ryan Wilkinson, Acting Director of Inland Fisheries.

Ms FINLAY - I'm just wondering if you can outline the efficiencies plan for Inland Fisheries.

Dr WILKINSON - At this point in time, we've been insulated from the efficiency savings or the commitment there. My role as the Director for Inland Fisheries is to ensure that we have fiscal responsibility and continue to manage our budget efficiently, and as you've alluded to, we've had some challenges in the past in terms of our budget.

My commitment is to continue to ensure that we're delivering our obligations under the *Inland Fisheries Act*, focusing on our commitments to support and maintain the recreational fishery and do important work in terms of pest fish management and native fish conservation. I will make my best endeavours to ensure that we can do that work and meet those obligations

under our existing budget. We're always looking for ways of being as efficient as possible in terms of how we deliver our service.

Ms FINLAY - I understand that you've had to be in recent years. Can I ask a question around Inland Fisheries, but particular to my electorate of Bass? Recently, I've had a large number of people express concern to me around the eels that end up in the Tamar River along the banks of Royal Park and down near the Tailrace Centre that come through the hydro dam. I am just wondering what plan is in place to reduce the number of eels that go through the power station each year? It's confronting, I think, for the community to see that and not good for the eels.

Dr WILKINSON - My understanding of that situation is that Hydro Tasmania invested a significant amount of money - I don't have the exact figure - back in 2020 to build a bypass for the eels. Since that time -

Ms FINLAY - It's not working.

Dr WILKINSON - Whether it's working or not, I'm not 100 per cent sure. I think they've got video evidence to suggest that some eels are coming down. Obviously, a lot of them still go through the turbine.

That matter was referred to the Inland Fisheries Service in March of this year by a private citizen. Under the *Inland Fisheries Act*, the hydro-electric corporation is actually immune - so there's various provisions in the act in terms of fish barriers and passage of fish through those barriers. That doesn't apply to the hydro-electric corporation. I know Biosecurity Tasmania have also looked into that situation as well. It doesn't fit neatly under their legislation, and I believe the EPA and also the water management branch have looked at it as well. But I don't think there's a practical solution to that at this point in time.

One thing that we do as a service is annual monitoring of the yield populations in a couple of locations, but in particular the Tailrace in Riverside. We monitor the returning elvers that come back into that system. We will commence that work in October. That will run through to January. We do a fishing effort over - when you drive past you may see our nets in the system there. We actually take those elvers above the dam, and restock accordingly. That solves the issue of passage backup in the system. The issue of the yields coming down into the turbine is a bit more of a challenging problem.

Ms FINLAY - I wasn't going to raise it. I attempted to come to an understanding on this last year. Since you've raised the elvers, there is some relocation of those up into the dam. Is there also a commercial arrangement where there's funds earned by the sale of the elvers?

Dr WILKINSON - There has been, historically.

Ms FINLAY - It's not continuing?

Dr WILKINSON - It hasn't continued for a while. We did have an inquiry this year to enter into commercial arrangement for the elvers. I think it was an export arrangement. We're not entering into that arrangement this year. That's a resourcing question. It has happened in the past. It hasn't happened recently.

Ms BADGER - In January this year, the former minister approved the renewal of Venture Minerals mine lease at Riley Creek. That's 5M2012. That had been pending renewal for two years. Within days of that lease being renewed, Venture had put that mine lease on the market. Was the Department aware of the company's intention to sell at the time that they renewed the lease?

Mr ABETZ - In the brief I have specifically, there is nothing to tell me that we were advised of the intention. We were only advised of the intention to sell after the election.

Ms BADGER - At the time of that lease renewal, Venture was in financial freefall. They were lurching from capital-raising to capital-raising with only a few months of operating cash that was available, and no clear source of income. How did Venture meet the requirements under the *Mineral Resources Development Act* (MRDA) for applicants to demonstrate their financial capacity to carry out their mining plan?

Mr MORTON - The renewal was approved in January. The decision around the sale was made in in July. At the time, we stepped through our normal process in looking at the requirements of the act. I haven't got the details in front of me. It met the requirements of the act, so we provided a recommendation that it should be approved.

Ms BADGER - Is it normal process for a company that has no ability to demonstrate they have a source of income to undertake that mining program to be renewed? I'm happy to take the details on notice, but I hope that's not normal process.

Mr MORTON - I don't have the specifics in front of me, but they met the requirements of the act when we did the test.

Mr SHELTON - We're talking fishing. There's river fishing. Our property is on the Liffey, and I've had great times with the grandchildren down on the Liffey River. Not too many big fish; they do the fishing. The Central Highlands is where the bulk of the brown trout fishing happens. That's predominantly in Lyons with Ms Badger's electorate and mine. It's a beautiful spot up on the Central Highlands.

Ms BADGER - It is.

Mr SHELTON - It is sort of out of this world, when you get in beside a lake and you look around and there's just nothing else, only the wilderness around you and the water in front of you and that sort of thing. It's a marvellous place to be. Our initiative to encourage new anglers to take up trout fishing must be good for the soul. It also must be good for mental health. There's some positives there. I would like to hear more that initiative, please.

Mr ABETZ - Getting young people involved in an outdoor activity must be of benefit in a whole range of areas, and you've touched on them. Getting young people off these devices and holding something else, namely a fishing line and casting for fish, breathing the fresh, cool air and experiencing the wonderful opportunities that Tasmania has to offer is very important generally for people's mental health. It is also important for the bonding between kids and their parents, where it was a family adventure or venture to go out and go fishing, and that's what impressed me at the dinner I was at in New Norfolk.

It really was something to behold in terms of societal family harmony, mentoring, et cetera. The only time that there were squabbles was who caught the biggest fish, the most fish and all that sort of stuff, but it was all very good humoured. That is why we have said that with junior fishers there is a waiver on the licensing fee for them. That has an estimated cost to the budget of about $75,000, and we think that is a very good investment in the young people who might be interested.

If I recall correctly, at the dinner I was told that the number of junior anglers has increased. For junior anglers aged 18 to 21 there is a half-price fee. What impressed me at the dinner - which you were at as well, acting director - was that Inland Fisheries made a couple of those available for an auction or a raffle prize. The people that won them grabbed them and said, 'We are going to give these to a couple of young people that we know'.

We are trying to do everything we can to encourage people into this wonderful outdoor activity, which includes putting wonderful food on our tables.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, I was grateful for the response from Inland Fisheries in terms of being insulated from efficiencies. I wonder if you can outline the efficiency dividend budget plan for the marine division, and in doing so, whether you could table that, please? I acknowledge that in the past when you've been asked for a complete department that wasn't okay, but just for the Marine Division. I would have thought that was appropriate.

Mr ABETZ - I don't know whether that is able to be dissected.

Ms WILSON - Minister, I think I'd start generally with the fact that the agency has established a budget sustainability project. It's really important that savings are achievable and will not compromise the department's capability or impact on the government's priorities and core services for the Tasmanian community. Importantly, we have a principle that they also not impact the safety and wellbeing of staff, nor will they compromise organisational capability. We are looking to do things like identify duplicate workflows, learning processes and how programs are administered. Our initial focus is on savings from discretionary expenditure on supplies, consumables, travel, consultants, advertising, accommodation and fleet usage. The savings target for 2024-25 for Business, Industry and Resources is $50,000.

Ms FINLAY - That's across your allocation, not across the agency? You opened up by talking about the agency.

Mr ABETZ - That's marine.

Ms WILSON - Yes, for 2024-25.

Ms FINLAY - Do you have that there and able to be tabled?

Mr ABETZ - We'll take it on notice and we'll see. As I understand the ruling from the Chair - sorry, it's the other way round.

Ms FINLAY - If the Chair has previously ruled that you could table that, I would love to see and consider that.

Mr ABETZ - We can, but there may be other elements on the page, so allow us to take that on notice to see if anything needs to be taken off that page to give you the information that you seek.

Dr BROAD - I want to talk about the Avebury mine for a second. Concerns have been raised by some shareholders in the collapsed Mallee Resources about the apparent predatory behaviour of offtake partner and major lender Hartree. Does the minister have any concerns? There was backing sought from the minister to discuss with the federal government the potential for Hartree to take over the mine.

Mr ABETZ - Overall, that's a corporate or a commercial matter for the owners of the mine to deal with, but the government understands that the Australian Government's Foreign Investment Review Board has approved Hartree to take full ownership of the Avebury mine and that the company is working through the change of ownership.

Dr BROAD - You don't have any concerns about Hartree's ownership?

Mr ABETZ - Whether I have or don't have concerns is immaterial to the decision that was made by the federal government's Foreign Investment Review Board.

Dr BROAD - No, but as mines minister you have responsibility for the licences and the leases, et cetera. You don't have any concerns?

Mr ABETZ - The licences and leases are provided under the statutory framework, and if they meet those conditions, and the federal government's Foreign Investment Review Board has approved Hartree, I can have all sorts of concerns, but at the end of the day, if they abide by the statutory requirements, I don't think there's anything that either the Director of Mines or I can do.

Ms BADGER - Minister, I heard your comments earlier that one of the concerns with the Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative (EDGI) scheme is the lack of transparency that is publicly available in terms of who is being awarded the grants and how much for. It's pretty standard practice for similar grant schemes that are regularly rolled out and have been continuing - this one's been going on since 2018 - to have these details periodically updated on a website. Will you implement such a website for the EDGI scheme?

Mr ABETZ - The actual amount of money made available is publicly announced, then the program guidelines are publicly announced. The department makes an assessment of the applications and then the successful applicants are also publicly announced.

Ms BADGER - Where are they publicly announced, sorry, minister?

Mr ABETZ - In a press release that I did. It's on the MRT website.

Ms BADGER - Every time those grants are awarded from the minister, there's a press release announcing who is awarded the money and how much for?

Mr ABETZ - I think it's the third tranche now that we've just opened up, and the first two lots have been -

Mr MORTON - EDGI provides grants of up to 50 per cent for direct drilling capped at $70,000 if they're using helicopters. EDGI's been around, as was noted earlier, since 2018. It's really focused around greenfields. As outlined in the publicly available EDGI guidelines, which are up on our website - we administer the program. Applications are competitive and are assessed by a committee comprising of two staff from MRT, an industry representative and an academic. After a round, they'll sit down and form a view and provide recommendations.

The major feature of the initiative is that we administer it from within existing resources. This ensures that the amount of money available to applicants is maximised. There are requirements we have in terms of the grant conditions.

Ms BADGER - They're very tight conditions and we understand that. Sometimes the company that's awarded a grant puts out a media release, so we know that they've received it. We understand it's a joint grant system, so they're only awarded the money when the work's being done in a specific way, hence the low acquittal rate. Not all of that information is public. The information that we have has been received through multiple RTIs. We are asking for a more public and transparent way moving forward so that any Tasmanian can see exactly who was awarded which grant and for how much.

Mr MORTON - The successful applicants for each round and the final technical reports that the companies provide for each completed grant are made publicly available on MRT's website. We make as much information of publicly available as we can.

Mr ABETZ - That is why there was some consternation on this side of the table with the press release and the referral to the Auditor-General, because there is, as you've just heard from the director, transparency in this area and in this program.

Ms BADGER - We will definitely go and crosscheck everything that is on the website to what came back in the RTI, because there were comments from the office about the lack of such a website, which is standard practice for other grants. I appreciate what you're saying, we'll crosscheck it and no doubt come back to you.

My second question is about the new leaseholder of the Riley mine site, which is Gold Valley. They have quite a chequered financial history. They operate under similar names but with the same CEO and board they've had multiple insolvencies, voluntary windups, et cetera. ASIC has deregistered Gold Valley Iron. How is it that the minister of the department found Gold Valley to be a fit and proper company to hold a mine lease in Tasmania, and, as we've established from a previous question, what is the fit and proper person test?

Mr ABETZ - As I understand it, the sale was a commercial transaction, being a sale of the company and its assets. Therefore, the transfer of the mining lease was not required.

Ms BADGER - Weren't you required as the minister to sign off on the transfer of that lease as one of the assets through the sale?

Mr ABETZ - No.

Mr SHELTON - I appreciate the Greens' interest in mining today. I would have thought the Greens would be supportive of mining that will support a renewable energy future. As we know, renewables and the mining that goes along with solar panels is all part of the renewable

energy future. My question, minister, is can the government provide an update on the Critical Minerals Strategy, and what this important strategy will deliver for the industry?

Mr ABETZ - We are all the beneficiaries of mining activities. Any one of us that's got an iPad, laptop, or mobile phone in front of us, we are the beneficiaries of the mining sector. We rely very heavily on the sector. We need to be encouraging of it because it helps maintain and indeed improve our lifestyle. Constant negativity from certain quarters about our mining sector is quite short-sighted. In relation to critical minerals, which are so important for research, innovation, et cetera, we as a government are determined to update the critical minerals strategy. As part of that we've made $3 million available to supercharge our efforts in this space. These funds will support a range of initiatives including exploration, grants, investment attraction, and collaboration with industry to accelerate critical mineral projects.

I can advise that the strategy will focus on four key objectives: increasing exploration, supporting the development of critical mineral projects, enhancing on-island processing capacity, and growing Tasmania's trade and investment footprint in critical minerals. Critical minerals, including rare earth elements, tin and tungsten are essential for everything from electric vehicles to renewable energy technologies. We as the government are very supportive of that for the innovations that we as a community expect.

In the geopolitical circumstances in which we find ourselves, it is vitally important that the Western world have a supply of some of these critical minerals. Tasmania may potentially have a role to play. That is where elements such as tungsten can become very important. That is why we as a government are seeking to promote the critical minerals sector. Hopefully there will be developments for Tasmania, creating jobs, creating wealth, and also hoping to secure innovation and developments that will improve our lifestyles.

Dr BROAD - I want to talk about Copper Mines of Tasmania in Queenstown. The new owner, Sibanye-Stillwater, identified, as part of their due diligence, some conflict in a couple of acts that were put in place. That would be in the copper mines of Tasmania act 1999 and the Mt Lyell acid drainage remediation act of 2003. These may actually impact their operations and prevent them from managing acid mine drainage in an appropriate manner.

From what I remember, the Mt Lyell acid drainage remediation act was put in place to try and facilitate treatment capture of copper from a $10 million project or something that never went ahead. Is the government going to consider amending these acts or is there another solution that's been identified?

Mr ABETZ - The government has committed to ensuring that the specific legislative framework relevant to Mt Lyell Mine is reviewed and amended to ensure it remains relevant to contemporary operations. Work is commenced on this undertaking with an introduction in parliament of proposed amendments expected once negotiations are finalised. The current environmental liability transfers with the sale of CMT, and the Crown, retains the obligations for the historic environmental issues of the site as per the *Copper Mines of Tasmania Pty. Ltd. (Agreement) Act 1999.*

Dr BROAD - In the past there was also funding promised, I think $25 million, if someone were to restart Copper Mines of Tasmania, to get it out of current care and maintenance. Is that funding still available?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, it is.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, back to fisheries. I'm interested in rates of compliance in our fisheries over the last 12 months, whether it be in our recreational or commercial fishing, with the implementation of some new regulations. Sometimes clients being compliant is confusing when there are borders and landing areas, particularly in different seasons when there are different requirements. Can you outline the number of breaches of fishing regulation laws in Tasmania and if there are any patterns or trends emerging that indicate any organised activity?

Mr ABETZ - We'll be with you shortly.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. Between 5 April 2023 and 10 July 2024, fisheries officers in NRET detected 67 cases involving potential contraventions of commercial fisheries laws that warranted further enquiries. Of those, 13 cases were referred to Tasmania Police for further investigation and inquiries are continuing in relation to four matters. Fisheries officers in the Department served 11 infringements and 36 caution notices in relation to these matters. The remaining matters are being dealt with via other departmental processes, which include ministry sanctions and penalties. There are currently three matters in the initial assessment phase. That's relating to our commercial fisheries.

Ms FINLAY - What about recreationally?

Ms WILSON - I'm not sure that I have any information on that, through you, minister.

Ms FINLAY - From time to time there's concern expressed around some members of the community taking more than the allowable take around shorelines and some areas that are easier to access. There has been concern in the past about some trends emerging around it perhaps being a little bit organised. Is there any comment on that, or current consideration of how best to address that? Given that you've got commercial compliance, I would have thought there would be some recreational compliance numbers as well.

Ms WILSON - We take a compliance approach around education, informing and taking actions at appropriate times. As I said, I don't have information relating to recreational fisheries. As for the issue around patterns of behaviour, we simply monitor that and, if we thought there was some sort of commercial element emerging, we could advise Tasmania Police.

Ms FINLAY - Do we not track the numbers or?

CHAIR - Ms Badger has the call.

Ms BADGER - I am only new to parliament, I wasn't around in the '80s unfortunately, but I note some hostilities around Bob Brown's coalmine and the sentiment around it - we absolutely need new minerals moving forward.

Dr BROAD - Coal power station.

Ms BADGER - Yes, sorry. Same, same, involving coal.

Ms FINLAY - Not quite.

Ms BADGER - We have new minerals. Will you rule out providing any more leases to anyone doing any kind of coal exploration in the state? Be that potential for a power station or mining of any sort.

Mr ABETZ - I doubt that there would be any request for a coalmine or for a power station. As I understand it, we do need coal for the making of cement at Railton. The question is, do we make our cement here in Tasmania, or do we import the clinker and other stuff from Thailand and elsewhere and belch out bunker fuel through the funnels of the ships as they bring it to Australia? This is always the balancing act. If you don't want a wooden floor in your house, you might want one made of concrete. If you want that, you might need cement. Then the question is, where do you get your cement from?

I'm not willing to rule anything in or out, other than I can't see anybody seeking a coalmine for the purposes of a coal-fired power station given that we have such a wonderful history of hydroelectricity generation in this state and the suggestion that a coal-fired power station would be a good idea, has long been rejected.

Ms BADGER - Absolutely. We should probably stop bringing it up now. Minister, what's the average time that we're seeing leases on the site say for the last decade that are pending approval? That, as we understand, are still valid, but that are listed as pending approval and are going through that process?

Mr ABETZ - Is that after exploration and seeking a lease or what sort of?

Ms BADGER - The ones that are listed on MRT's site as pending approval.

Mr ABETZ - Right.

Mr MORTON - There's always a number of tenements that will be pending renewal at any time. It's important to note that companies can continue to operate, as I was saying before, under the act, while the assessment of the renewal is undertaken, they can continue to operate. On average, we take around three to six months for pending renewals. What we always do is prioritise new applications and transfers because the pending renewals, they can continue to operate. But three to six months is on average and we're always looking at what we can do to improve those times.

Mr SHELTON - It's pleasing to see such positivity around the mining industry and we know how critical it is to the economy of Tasmania. I'd also like to express that, as far as jobs go in regional communities, it's absolutely critical.

We regularly hear from some quarters about increasing the royalties that miners pay. Can the government provide an update on the current state of the mining sector and outline the key benefits it delivers to Tasmania? I heard you earlier today saying we don't want to kill the goose with the golden egg, so can you provide the committee with an update on the significant contribution that mining makes to Tasmania?

Mr ABETZ - Apart from the jobs and the support it provides local regional communities, the mining sector provides a substantial stream of royalties for the benefit of Tasmanians. As a result, the mining sector remains one of the key drivers for our economic and social success in employment, investment, and state revenue.

The mining sector is thriving with major players such as MMG's Rosebery mine, the Renison tin mine, and Grange Resources' Savage River iron-ore mine continuing to provide long-term economic stability for the west coast and other regions. Mining is a cornerstone of the Tasmanian economy and, as I mentioned in previous answers, it provided $52 million in royalties. These royalties fund critical public services, including health, education, and infrastructure, benefiting all Tasmanians.

The sector supports over 5000 direct jobs, many of which are on the west coast. Importantly, the mining sector also generates thousands of additional indirect jobs through supply chains and associated industries. In the 12 months to May 2024, mining and minerals processing industries employed 6800 people, generated 65 per cent of the state's export value and produced over $2.9 billion worth of product. The state is a significant global player in the production of minerals such as zinc, copper, tin, and tungsten, with these commodities exported to markets across the world. Mineral exploration in Tasmania remains high with $38.8 million in expenditure in 2023.

In summary, Tasmania's mining sector is integral to our economic future, contributing substantial revenue, jobs, and export value, while continuing to attract significant private sector investments that strengthen our entire state. That is why we, as a government, have written to Tanya Plibersek, the Minister for the Environment, saying that the tailing dam proposed for the west coast is vitally important for the longevity of the mining sector and for the jobs, and the wealth of the royalty stream. We hope a sensible decision will be made and that this important wealth generator and job creator is not prejudiced and indeed closed down by environmentalism generated from those areas of Australia that are most unsustainable. That is, the inner-city suburbs that see so much asphalt and concrete everywhere and hardly any trees. They benefit from the mining sector, but then seek to salve their conscience by voting for those candidates who seek to close down the very sector that they rely on.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, reflecting back on the fisheries question before. With the change in the rules and the significant changes for recreational fisheries, I would have thought we would track any contraventions to the rules. Do we not carry any stats for that? You were able to provide the commercial stats but not the recreational fishing stats. I mean overtake, undersized, boat limits - there are all sorts of changes to the rules. You talk about education, awareness, communication, but knowing how well the Tasmanian fishes are doing, I would have thought would be a good thing.

Ms WILSON - I'm sure we have them.

Mr ABETZ - The marine police do monitor the recreational fishery and they have indicated in the recent department -

Ms FINLAY - Do they not monitor the commercial fishery?

Mr ABETZ - Both. Sorry, I thought you were asking about the recreational fishery.

Ms FINLAY - I am. We have the commercial stats. We don't have the recreational stats. I'm not sure why that would be.

Mr ABETZ - Tasmania Police, undoubtedly, would be able to provide that.

Ms FINLAY - You just provided the commercial stats.

Mr ABETZ - I'm assuming that is where we've got the information from, so we'll ask. I'll take that on notice if you like and see if we can get some information.

Ms FINLAY - I'm happy that you take that on notice. Maybe my final question for the night.

Mr ABETZ - That's a promise. I won't continue answering.

Ms FINLAY - TasWater play a significant role in the impact of some of our fishes both recreational and commercial. There are some sectors of our fishery that are impacted more greatly by TasWater spills, and the operation of their assets. What role you will take as minister to actively advocate on behalf of our fisheries to ensure TasWater's management of their assets has limited impact on our commercial fisheries, aquaculture, and others?

Mr ABETZ - And especially our shellfish.

Ms FINLAY - Yes, without correlating those two things in the public place.

Mr ABETZ - Be assured that as a minister with responsibility in this area, I will do everything I possibly can to ensure that TasWater, and indeed any other government business enterprise, lives up to its responsibility to be part of team Tasmania and not only be concerned about its own discrete area of operation, but fully understand their responsibility to the wider community, and that includes the oyster and mussel growing sectors.

As you may have heard me say the other night, one of the things that endears me to the oyster industry is, not only what they assert oysters do, not that I've ever known that to be the case, but, more importantly, they are largely family run small businesses. For them to try to fight the spillage from TasWater becomes very difficult, so anything I can do to champion the cause you can be assured I will seek to do.

You said that was the final question.

Ms FINLAY - One more question, Chair?

CHAIR - My apologies. The time for estimates of the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources has expired. The Committee will convene tomorrow morning at 9.00 a.m.

Mr ABETZ - Before you stop the recording, I thank all the officials that have assisted me during these hearings.

CHAIR - Thank you very much everyone.

The committee adjourned at 6.44 p.m.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Nick Duigan MP

Wednesday 25 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Craig Garland MP
Ms Rebecca White MP
Mr Mark Shelton MP
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Mrs Miriam Beswick MP
Ms Tabatha Badger MP
Ms Janie Finlay MP
Ms Helen Burnet MP
Mr David O'Byrne MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. NICK DUIGAN MP
Minister for Energy and Renewables, Minister for Parks and Environment

Wes Ford
Chief Executive, Environment Protection Authority

Jason Jacobi
Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment

Jo Crisp
General Manager Environment

Hugh Christie
General Manager, Waste and Resource Recovery NRE Tas/Chief Executive Officer Tasmanian Waste and Recovery Board

Alice Holeywell-Jones
A/General Manager Park Operations and Business Services

Sophie Muller
Deputy Secretary Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service

Penny Stoltz
Strategic Project and Policy Manager

Sarah Russell
Director Climate Change

Mark Bowles
Acting Chief Executive Officer, ReCFIT and Resources

The Committee met at 9 a.m.

CHAIR (Mr Wood) - The time being 9 a.m., the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Parks and Environment will commence. Good morning, minister.

Mr DUIGAN - Good morning, Chair.

CHAIR - Could you please introduce persons at the table?

Mr DUIGAN - Certainly. To my right is Jason Jacobi, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. To his right is Sophie Muller, the Deputy Secretary of Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service. I'm wondering whether the committee would like to -

CHAIR - Have you prepared a brief opening?

Mr DUIGAN - Potentially, given this aspect covers Parks and Environment, whether we'd like to have a set period of time or discuss the two matters in isolation - Parks first and then Environment.

CHAIR - How does that work for everyone?

Dr WOODRUFF - As long as there's only one statement from the minister at the start of hearings, because it eats into scrutiny time and it's usually just one statement. If you want to have one-and-a-half minutes for Environment and another one-and-a-half minutes for Parks, that would probably be fine.

Mr DUIGAN - No problem, happy to do that. I'm happy to split into two parts. By way of opening statement, I would take this opportunity to acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners and custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to Elders. Tasmania's reserve estate continues to be the cornerstone of our visitor economy. In recognising that visitation to our parks and reserves continues to increase, it is vital that we continue to protect our natural and cultural values while investing in our parks and reserves.

As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, this Budget has confirmed significant investment - $145 million into new and ongoing infrastructure funding, as well as $395 million in operating funding over the next four years. This includes key projects that will provide outstanding and unique visitor experiences and ensure that our parks amenities are upgraded to also protect our natural environment. This includes a number of infrastructure projects around the state.

We are continuing to invest our $40 million into the multi-day, hut-based next iconic walk in the Tyndall Range, which I'm pleased to announce is progressing well. We will deliver additional key projects, including enhancing Mount Field as a year-round destination, developing a unique experience in the Dial Range, improving amenities at the Nut Reserve and investment to make our parks more accessible.

Our government recognises the importance of managing the globally significant landscape that is the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This year saw the establishment of the Caring for Country unit within the Parks service, dedicated to supporting

the management and preservation of Aboriginal cultural values across the Parks estate. We also completed the second phase of the project to eradicate deer from the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, recognising the importance of protecting the TWWHA's outstanding universal value. We continue to have highly capable remote firefighters ready for deployment right across the reserve estate, and are continuing to invest in rapid response winch accreditation and aerial incendiary training for fire crews.

Another important function under my portfolio is Lands Tasmania, which is supported with more than $95 million of funding over the forward Estimates. It was also fantastic to be at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens recently with the chair and the director to see construction commence on significant enhancements to visitor amenities, including accessibility improvements.

Chair, this government remains steadfast in our commitment to protecting Tasmania's natural environment while enhancing the visitor experience in our parks and reserves for both visitors and locals alike.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I just get clarification before we start questions? I have other members coming to the table, so I just want to make it clear that if they want to ask questions about Parks when other people are still talking about Environment or vice versa, then different people can come to the table. We're not splitting this session.

Mr DUIGAN -That's my understanding, that we would start with Parks and have a period of time asking questions around the Parks portfolio and then, at a point to everyone's satisfaction, move into Environment.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, the Greens are actually going to ask questions about Environment.

CHAIR - I think it needs to be a bit fluid.

Dr WOODRUFF - They all need to be here and available to answer questions.

Mr DUIGAN - Okay.

Ms WHITE - Minister, you will be unsurprised that I'm keen to understand what the efficiency dividend means for your agency. Are you able to provide details for this committee about the savings strategies that you've agreed upon, given we're already three months into the financial year? Can you table those?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm very happy to talk to our government's efficiency dividend in this Budget. As has been well explored through the parliament and other channels, it is appropriate that our departments spend their money wisely and we are careful and prudent in managing our budgets. In terms of the detail around the particular efficiencies highlighted in the department, I'll pass that question to the Secretary to make some comments there.

Mr JACOBI - The efficiency dividend to be achieved by my department is $1.7 million in 2024-25, $3.4 million in 2025-26 and $5.1 million in 2026-27. Just to be clear, this represents approximately 0.53 per cent of the department's total budget in the first year, increasing to approximately 1.9 per cent in 2026-27. I'd like to say that I believe that the savings

are achievable and will not compromise the department's capability, the priority initiatives that we have been tasked with by the government or the core and essential services that we provide to the Tasmanian community.

We have and will continue to look hard at where we can make savings, as we do every year, to be more sustainable and efficient in our operations. We'll achieve the targets through a variety of measures applied across the whole of the department. All areas of the department will contribute in some way to the targets, but most importantly, my executive team and I will ensure that these measures do not impact the wellbeing of staff, the public or compromise our long-term organisational capability.

Our strategic plan is to deliver a sustainable Tasmania, and these targets will also drive some of our sustainability initiatives and waste-reduction objectives. Our key strategies are ceasing or scaling back on non-core and non-priority activities that are either not the highest strategic priority or have been replaced with new commitments. In the first year, we only have a relatively small target to meet, which provides us with time to introduce more austere measures before 2026-27 when the dividend target increases to $5.1 million.

This year, our focus is on savings that we already make each and every year. Natural attrition and vacancies that occur each and every day across the agency are an important savings tool. Staff transfer or are redeployed to other departments, they may be reassigned to alternative duties, or they may leave or resign for other opportunities elsewhere. The vacancies created by these movements result in savings through natural attrition. We will capture these savings through the monitoring of vacancies - and to be clear, this is not a vacancy control process. It will not result in job loss, nor will it impact on the delivery of government priorities. It is simply capturing any savings that accrue when a position becomes vacant.

It takes time to recruit to a position, particularly in a competitive market, as we are experiencing now. Whether that recruitment takes a week or three months, the vacancy that arises will contribute to our savings target. Naturally, there are positions that provide important frontline services where we cannot afford to have a vacancy, such as our biosecurity inspectors, our detective dog handlers, laboratory testing scientists and visitor services officers at front counters in parks, and all these positions are typically recruited to and/or backfilled as soon as possible.

Other areas where we are looking at making savings include our discretionary expenditure, for example travel, fleet management, accommodation - as in building costs to accommodate our staff - and printing costs, and also reducing advertising and consultants where we can afford to do so. Some of these initiatives will take time to introduce, for example, converting all of our fixed landlines to soft phones, which is an internet-based technology that deliver substantial savings, but we must introduce those new systems and technology to make that change, and that will take some time to do.

This financial year, I'm pleased to report that we're already on track to meet our savings targets for this year, and I will continue to monitor and adjust our approach each year as new opportunities arise or as we identify options that do not compromise community service delivery.

Ms WHITE - Obviously the department's done a bit of work thinking about how you achieve those savings strategies. Is it possible for you to table that work? We've had other ministers in other committees agree to do that.

Mr DUIGAN - I will seek some advice on that. It is probably not possible to table it for the committee now, but I'm happy to take that one on notice.

Ms WHITE - I appreciate that. The question will be to table the savings strategy for your agency, and if you can do that by the financial years that you've got plans in place for that you've shared with the committee already, I would be grateful.

Mr JACOBI - Given that the out years, the forward Estimates, are still fluid and subject to information and opportunities as they arise, I'd prefer just to do it for 2024-25.

Mr DUIGAN - I think that is something we could commit to you.

Ms WHITE - I'll put a question on notice. Thank you, I appreciate that. In your response you spoke about ceasing non-core activities. Can you define what a non-core activity is, please?

Mr DUIGAN - I am happy for the Secretary to talk about that. From a government perspective, we've been pretty clear about frontline services and working to protect and make sure our frontline services and capability remain. There is a conversation to be had within agencies about where that line of delineation is, but I'm happy for the Secretary to provide some more context.

Mr JACOBI - I'll talk very generally. There are some services that have historically been provided by the department for decades. They may be in the fields of pest control on private lands and private properties, for example. We have staff that deliver a pindone program supporting rabbit control. The extent to which we do that and the opportunity for the private sector to merge into that space is something that's worth looking at. That is an example of the sorts of programs that have historically been conducted and that we are exploring to see whether there's an opportunity for the private sector to take on board that work.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, are you the minister responsible for climate change?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, I am, through ReCFIT.

Dr WOODRUFF - What do you mean through ReCFIT? Not through the Department of Environment?

Mr DUIGAN - Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - So in your capacity as the Energy minister?

Mr DUIGAN - No, as minister for climate change.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are not the minister for climate change, because there is no -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - I am the minister responsible for climate change.

Dr WOODRUFF - Right. In your capacity as the Environment minister?

Mr DUIGAN - Climate.

Dr WOODRUFF - But there is no climate minister. Are you responsible for climate in your capacity as the Environment minister?

Mr DUIGAN - No. Energy.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why do you think it's appropriate to have an industrial approach to managing climate change?

Mr DUIGAN - I don't accept that we have an industrial approach to managing the impacts of climate change. I'm the minister with the responsibility to look after Tasmania's response and actions in the climate change space, and I'm very proud to have that responsibility. There is a number of actions that we are undertaking in that space and we'll continue to do so. We understand that climate change is real and with us. Tasmania is not immune to its impacts, and we will continue to address those impacts.

Dr WOODRUFF - So the single approach you're taking is to look at reducing emissions by generating renewable energy, because that's the portfolio you're responsible for. What about the impacts on all the communities around Tasmania who were affected by extreme events in the last couple of weeks? What about the environment which is being devastated by the impacts of climate change? Have you done modelling of the carbon emissions that will come from the 39,000 extra hectares of native forest that your government's planning to log and burn?

Mr DUIGAN - In answer to that question - and I would point to the fact that I'm very happy to explore these issues more wholly this afternoon when we have the climate team in the room -

Dr WOODRUFF - We are here to talk about the environment, and climate change is part of the environment.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - In terms of Tasmanian renewable energy projects, they are a very large aspect of what Tasmania does in response to climate change. We have a commitment and a legislated target of 200 per cent of 2020's level of energy generation by 2040. That will have a massive impact on decarbonisation. Replacing coal-fired generation -

Dr WOODRUFF - Standing order 45, relevance.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - I asked a question about whether you've modelled carbon emissions from the forest that you'll be logging and burning.

CHAIR - You've asked the question. Allow the minister to answer in his way.

Dr WOODRUFF - You've just strayed very widely from that topic.

Mr DUIGAN - You did introduce that line of questioning, so I was just responding to that. I think it is worth highlighting that in several other states, including New South Wales and Western Australia, the Energy minister also holds the Environment portfolio, and in most other jurisdictions, responsibility for climate change.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you answer the question please? Have you done the modelling of carbon emissions? That was the question.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I have it on notice?

Mr DUIGAN - I will answer that this afternoon when we discuss climate.

Dr WOODRUFF - You just said you're the minister responsible for climate.

CHAIR - Order, the minister has given his answer.

Dr WOODRUFF - It says under your media release on Environment Day that you are responsible for the climate change act.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, the call has gone -

Dr WOODRUFF - It says here, 'We are taking actions under the Climate Change Action Plan on Environment Day'. As the Minister for Environment, you put that out.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, the call has gone to Mr Garland.

Dr WOODRUFF - Are you saying you're not responsible for climate?

Mr DUIGAN - I am. I will answer questions this afternoon -

Dr WOODRUFF - But you won't answer questions in this portfolio, because you don’t want to talk about forest emissions.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, that is enough.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, Chair, honestly -

CHAIR - The minister has answered as he sees fit, which is, according to the -

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, false news.

CHAIR - The call has gone to Mr Garland.

Mr GARLAND - In question time last fortnight, you stated that there are areas proposed in the boundary of the proposed REZ area that have relatively uncontested land usage. There is a lot of plantation forestry there, and we see those as opportunities to relieve the level of angst.

Are you aware of the flight paths of wedge-tailed eagles in the Guildford and Hampshire area, and would you agree that, whilst the land use doesn't face a lot of active contest, the above land use is extremely contested by wedge-tailed eagles who use it as habitat for nesting and hunting? Will your department account for any protective measures for the environment and north-west communities relating to the very real risks to bird life posed by wind farms suggested in the north-west region?

Mr DUIGAN - I note that the member's question sits halfway between Energy and environment. The government takes the protection of the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles and white-bellied sea eagles very seriously, and we expect wind farms and wind farm proponents to understand the impacts on wedge-tailed eagles.

There is a lot of work going on in terms of delivering new and innovative technologies to protect eagles from interaction with wind turbines. We continue to support research and citizen science projects to improve our knowledge of eagle population - its size, distribution and behaviour - and quantify threats to its survival. I would point the member to publicly available data in terms of wind farms and eagle deaths. I believe in the course of the last financial year there were two eagle deaths in Tasmania attributable to wind farms.

Obviously our target is zero deaths, and we are working towards that. In reference to REZ zones, I would make the point that a REZ zone doesn't give a project any type of approval. It confirms no rights or covenants over the land, and all proposals need to go through the appropriate level of approval to get up, so the REZ changes nothing in that regard.

Mr GARLAND - With respect to the Cattle Hill Wind Farm and its highly touted eagle detection mechanisms, how many eagles have been killed at Cattle Hill since it's been up and away?

Mr DUIGAN - That's not information that I have in front of me here. I think it's probably a question that the EPA director could provide an answer for, noting that he's in the back of the room. I might call to the table Wes Ford, Director of the EPA, who I think can provide some detail around that question.

Mr FORD - In relation to Cattle Hill Wind Farm, they have a system called IdentiFlight, which is a shutdown system. In the life of its operations, they have identified eight mortalities, but those eight mortalities have been associated with one specific turbine. Once they identified that, they shut down that turbine until they could investigate changed arrangements, and they put in an additional tower to deal with the birds coming out of the forest. Since they put that additional tower in, they have had no mortalities for the past 12 months.

Mr GARLAND - I believe Granville hasn't killed any wedged-tails. Is that right?

Mr FORD - Yes, that's correct. The Granville Harbour Wind Farm is not in eagle habitat.

Mr SHELTON - The iconic walks around Tasmania have been a great thing. They draw tourists annually, and Parks has done a great job along those lines. I'm interested to get an understanding of the next iconic walk. Can you please provide an update on where we are with that?

Mr DUIGAN - We are getting on with the next iconic walk, delivering what will be a game changer for the west coast and Tasmania more broadly. This walk will deliver economic and social benefits to both the region and the state of Tasmania by creating a new walking experience that attracts visitors and encourages them to stay longer and spend more. Importantly, the project is on track -

Ms WHITE - On track? It was due to start in 2021, minister.

Dr WOODRUFF - The Liberal meaning of 'on track'.

Mr DUIGAN - I can't speak to that. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service has engaged a design team to undertake the second stage of the project, which involves completing the planning, design and approvals for the walk. Detailed plans showing the track route and hut designs have also been released recently. Surveys and site investigations to assess the natural, cultural and heritage values of the area and determine any constraints are largely complete.

The track alignment has been finalised following input by various specialists considering the potential impact on natural, cultural and heritage values in the area, along with a consideration of the points of interest and its buildability in the terrain, noting the terrain is fairly challenging. The locations for overnight nodes, on-track shelters and lookouts have now been determined and concept plans for the huts and other on-track infrastructure have been completed. Current project timelines forecast the walk to be completed in late 2028 to early 2029. I would note there have been a range of public consultation sessions held right around the state with over 200 people attending sessions in Queenstown, Ulverstone, Launceston and Hobart.

Those attending also had the chance to meet with the project design team, which included Tasmania Parks and Wildlife staff, Charlie Bravo Design, JAWS Architects and ERA Planning and Environment. We are very proud to be investing $40 million in what will be a significant investment for Tasmania, delivering a fantastic and different walking product, building on the success of Three Capes Track and Overland Track. We know how popular and in demand those walking products are here in Tasmania.

Ms WHITE - Minister, it's nice to see you patting yourself on the back for a project that's taken 10 years to deliver from the time it was announced to the time you finally - hopefully - complete it. Can you tell us when it's due to commence construction?

Mr DUIGAN - My advice, and I don't know what you're basing that assertion on -

Ms WHITE - A 2018 election commitment was made to provide this walk for the west coast.

Mr DUIGAN - My understanding is that it's always been planned for commencement in 2029.

Ms WHITE - No.

Mr DUIGAN - I will pass to the Secretary who may be able to provide some further context.

Ms WHITE - You've had a short career as the minister, but I think in this case you're wrong.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JACOBI - I'm very impressed with the progress on this project. We would all like to see it start quicker, but to get it right requires comprehensive consultation with the community. It means we need to invest the time in making sure all our environmental assessments are absolutely thorough and robust. The team has invested almost two years now in undertaking all of the necessary environmental assessments to lead us to a point where we will be confident that we can build this with all of the environmental impacts mitigated. That includes cultural heritage assessments as well.

The plan is to have all of our environmental assessments ready for public consultation. We do a round of public consultation first, and that is scheduled for early next year. The outcome of that public consultation might mean that we need to refine the design, but our intention is to be ready to start building by the end of 2025. As you'll probably understand, the winter period is extremely difficult to undertake the necessary flight and transport work that we need to deliver materials into the walk area. That normally happens over the summer season, but we're on track to commence late 2025 and early 2026. That construction period will probably extend for approximately three years, and as the minister outlined, we're planning to complete the walk and open it by the end of 2028 or early 2029.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I can't help but feel like you're stringing this out so that you can stretch the budget, such that the money that needs to be expended on this is in the out years and doesn't impact on the Budget bottom line for your agency in the forward Estimates. This is a project that was committed in the 2018 state election. We were told construction on the project would start in the year 2020-21. Here we are and you're telling us it won't start until the end of 2025.

There's been a significant period of time between the time it was announced and the time you plan to construct it. Surely the work could have already been completed. Isn't it true that you're only delaying the commencement of this construction so that you don't have to spend money because your budget is under so much pressure?

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate the question but I reject it entirely. As the Secretary has explained, and as I think you would expect, this is a sensitive part of Tasmania. This is a project that needs to be very carefully considered in terms of what its impacts might be, and I would encourage the department to do all the work that is necessary to be done to make sure, when we deliver this walk, it is the best possible offering that it can be. I understand the premise of your question, but I reject it. I think it is important that we do the work, that we get it right and that we deliver an excellent product.

Ms WHITE - Have you talked to tourism operators on the west coast and the north-west? This has been a priority project for them for a number of years now. It has been promised and promised again by your government that you're going to fund the project and start the project,

and here we are with further information that it won't be completed until potentially 2029, more than 10 years after it was announced. What do you say to them?

Mr DUIGAN - I speak regularly to people on the west coast and in the north-west of the state. I think I could say they are universally excited about what the next iconic walk brings for that region. We're talking about 139 people employed in the construction of this walk. We'd love to see most of that workforce supplied from local west coast communities; I think that would be very important.

We know the impact that this walk will have. There'll be another substantial number of ongoing jobs, and we know the impact of bringing people to the west coast and having them stay or extend their stay in Tasmania, dispersed across the state. That's a hugely important piece of visitor infrastructure for us, and people are excited. I think on balance they understand that it is a complex project that is taking some time to deliver. I think that is clear and pretty obvious, and people are with us on this one.

Ms WHITE - Wouldn't you agree that your government's failure to deliver key infrastructure projects like the *Spirit of Tasmania* and this project on the west coast is having a significant and negative impact on tourism businesses in regional areas?

Mr DUIGAN - Again I will go back to the point I made. Tourism businesses on the west coast are really keen and interested in seeing this -

Ms WHITE - They are frustrated at the continual delays by your government on these key infrastructure projects.

Mr DUIGAN - We have announced it, we have funded it and we will deliver it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the two greatest threats to native forest species in Tasmania and around the world are the clearing of their habitat and climate change. We have many species that are struggling in Tasmania and some are on the brink of extinction. Stopping emissions going into the atmosphere and stopping habitat clearing is so critical. Do you accept that the logging and annual burning of native forests in Tasmania is releasing very large quantities of emissions, and that it's very important for us to do everything we can to not release emissions over the next couple of years and decade because we've already reached 1.5 degrees?

Mr DUIGAN - I note that our emissions profile is in my climate change responsibilities, which I'm happy to discuss this afternoon. In regard to native and regrowth timber harvesting, it's critical that people know and understand that every area of Tasmania, whether it's public or private forest, that may be harvested for timber production, is regenerated back to native timber forest.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I just be clear that I'm asking you, as the minister for Environment -

Mr DUIGAN - We understand that because it is a zero sum game.

Dr WOODRUFF - about the trees that are being logged?

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you accept that logging and burning releases vast quantities of emissions into the atmosphere right now each year, and that it is contributing to the heating of the climate?

Mr DUIGAN - Again, I'm happy to talk about emissions in -

Dr WOODRUFF - No, I'm talking about trees. You're the minister for Environment. This is about trees.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you answer the question?

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr DUIGAN - There is potentially no product which is more important to climate change and climate resilience than timber, because it is the ultimate renewable.

Dr WOODRUFF - I didn't think you were the minister for Business.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - You're the minister for trees. Answer the question. Do they release emissions every year?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, enough. Allow the minister to answer the question. Stop interjecting, please.

Dr WOODRUFF - You shouldn't have to get a note about how to answer this question. It is so basic. It's science.

Mr DUIGAN - I can get a note. Thank you.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, order.

Mr DUIGAN - We are planning to harvest our renewable carbon sequestering resource and then resow and replant for a new crop to further satisfy our wood supply needs and provide job security.

Dr WOODRUFF - So shameful.

Mr DUIGAN - No, absolutely not.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is so shameful for young people watching this today - the future generation.

Mr DUIGAN - Growing a forest is a very powerful carbon sequestering tool -

Dr WOODRUFF - You are responsible for looking after those forests. Other ministers are responsible for chopping them down.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr DUIGAN - It is important that for a eucalyptus forest there are differing age classes throughout the forest - a mosaic of age classes. We know that that's absolutely critical for biodiversity.

Dr WOODRUFF - As minister for crown lands, you're also responsible for having to sign over, if the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources gives you a piece of paper, an extra 39,000 hectares of native forests to be logged and burned each year. Given the climate and biodiversity crisis, it would be a climate crime to sign that, wouldn't it?

Mr DUIGAN - No.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why not?

Mr DUIGAN - Because I think this government has been clear about its support for and intention to rebuild the Tasmanian forestry sector. It's critical.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's all about business all the way for you.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - As I have outlined, timber is a very important part of our climate response. It is a very good -

Dr WOODRUFF - Why don't you give your portfolio to someone who actually cares about the environment?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, order. I ask you to please desist interrupting the proceedings of this committee.

Mr DUIGAN - As I was saying, timber is a central response to Tasmania's climate change actions. It is a product which embodies carbon. It is a product which, when grown and used locally, has a very limited transport emissions footprint, and it is renewable. Any area that is harvested, particularly as it applies to regrowth forest, or native timber as it sometimes called, is resown and regrown, and that is very important to understand. That's true whether it's on public land or on private land. In terms of the potential reallocation of future potential production forest and the 27 parcels of FPPF land totalling 39,000 hectares, Minister Abetz is currently in the phase of obtaining detailed information as required under section 7 of the *Forestry Act.* This will determine the exact heritage and location of the parcels.

So far, this has included meeting with the forest sector as committed. Minister Abetz has not yet written to me, as the crown lands minister specified in section 7 of the act, and I am advised he has no plans to do so until he has worked through all the information in the requirements listed under section 2 of the same act.

Mr GARLAND - Minister, do you support a buffer zone distance of five kilometres between eagle nests and wind turbines, and will you amend the relevant acts to reflect this call from BirdLife experts? Will you ensure such legislation has measures to achieve total compliance on all proposed and newly built wind farms in Tasmania?

Mr DUIGAN - There is already a substantial amount of work and a suite of things that wind farms need to do in order to have their projects approved. There are obviously environmental approval processes that they need to undertake. I would be happy to again invite the Director of the EPA to the table to provide clarity on the current set of circumstances for wind farms and how they interact with known eagle nests.

Mr FORD - Thank you minister. Currently the EPA uses a one-kilometre buffer for wind farms away from eagle nests. That was based on work that was done associated with the forestry industry about two decades ago.

Mr GARLAND - The BirdLife experts are suggesting that a five-kilometre buffer would be more appropriate, and a buffer zone for forestry doesn't really reflect the danger the wind farms present. Bearing that in mind, wouldn't it be prudent to give the protection the experts have called for? I don't know how many eagles we've killed, but I believe right now that we're not replacing what's being taken out by the wind farms.

You're only one step away from another species staring down extinction. This is an iconic species. It's a separate subspecies to what we have on the mainland. I think we should be listening to those BirdLife experts and giving that five-kilometre buffer they say is necessary. I would suggest that we give that a fair bit of thought.

Mr DUIGAN - We have a target of zero eagle deaths attributable to wind farms in Tasmania. We are working towards that target, and I believe the NRM groups are doing a body of work looking at a range of matters that might pertain to eagles and the threats posed to them. I am always happy to take the advice. I think if there are opportunities for us to improve what we're doing - noting that we have made significant strides in protecting eagles from wind farm collisions in recent years, and we are continuing to do that work - we are happy to listen to advice.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, in my patch there are a number of deer shooters, and the politics around the deer industry and the increased population are very much a talking point. You mentioned in your opening address the cull that has been undertaken in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. I'm very interested in finding out some more detail around what success you've had.

Mr DUIGAN - It is a topic that we spend a fair amount of time talking about to various people. We know that wild fallow deer roaming and feeding habits have a negative impact on our sensitive environment, particularly in the TWWHA. We have an obligation to protect the TWWHA, and this important project was all about protecting our high conservation value areas.

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service undertook the second planned aerial cull to reduce the impacts of wild fallow deer in the TWWHA within the Walls of Jerusalem National Park and nearby Central Plateau Conservation Area. The first aerial cull in May last year removed 711 deer from the Walls of Jerusalem and surrounding areas. The secondary cull

supplemented with volunteer shooters removed a further 360. That's a total of 1017 deer removed from those places in 40 days. This was an extraordinary effort by our dedicated parks staff, and I'd like to express my thanks and congratulations to the team for their dedication to deliver this highly successful program.

Importantly, no wounded deer escaped during either of the culls, and we know that aerial culling is the most effective methodology for landscapes that are rugged, mostly trackless and remote. Independent oversight by veterinarians involved in the program was key. Lead-free ammunition was used this year, effectively having less impact on the environment while still meeting animal welfare concerns. I'm proud of the efforts of the Parks department, and it was pleasing to say the Bob Brown Foundation and Tasmanian Greens also endorsed this highly successful program.

We will continue to have discussions with the Australian Government as the state party in relation to strategies, plans and funding to effectively manage the TWWHA. I would encourage all members in their discussions with federal colleagues to raise that as an issue in terms of making an equal contribution to the funding of the TWWHA.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I wanted to go back to the next iconic walk. You revealed that it might not be completed until potentially 2029, which is five years away.

Mr DUIGAN - Potentially 2028.

Ms WHITE - I think your failure-to-deliver record demonstrates that's very unlikely. It's quite hopeful. The budget for it has already doubled. It was originally announced as less than $20 million; it's now a $40 million project. What confidence do you have that you can deliver that walk, as has been consulted on with the current design, for the current budget?

Mr DUIGAN - I would point to this being a really positive project for Tasmania, but more so for the west coast. I note the fact that the cost of delivering the walk is now at $40 million. It's a substantial investment that we're making in that part of the world. That money is budgeted, and we're confident that we have got this right. We're going to do the planning work. We're going to make sure that this is the best that it can be for this really spectacular part of Tasmania, as $40 million is a lot of money to be investing in a walk. It's still in the planning phase, but I am confident that we have announced it, we have funded it and we will deliver it.

Ms WHITE - Are you confident that you can deliver the project for that amount of money?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes.

Ms WHITE - You are? Will you reduce the scope of the project if you find that you're running out of money?

Mr DUIGAN - I think it's important to recognise that the walk is still in its planning phase. We're talking about commencing construction in 2025. We will do the planning and we will deliver the walk, and it will be a great result for the west coast of Tasmania and Tasmania more generally.

Ms WHITE - It'd be a great shame if it wasn't the next iconic walk but was instead known as what could have been the next iconic walk because you had to make it a shorter experience, and it wasn't as good as it could have been because you ran out of money, all because you've taken so long to start the project. How are you going to guarantee that you will deliver for the west coast like you've been promising now for a number of years?

Mr DUIGAN - I am very confident. We will continue to work with the west coast and we'll continue to do the work to make sure the walk fits in the landscape and has a minimal impact on the substantial values that are in that area -

Ms WHITE - What is going to be different now compared to the last five years?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - As I have said, we have funded it with a substantial amount of money and we will deliver it.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the government's committed $2 million a year over four years to threatened species. With 680 threatened species in Tasmania, that works out at just under $3000 a year per species. Reports and recovery plans identify policy decisions that can make a real difference. My question is about policy.

The Swift Parrot Recovery Plan, for example, has an action that is to identify and protect remnants of state-owned land in areas of habitat critical survival for swift parrots. The State of the Environment report that was released just last week had Recommendation 10, which says:

> The Commission recommends the Tasmanian government expand Tasmania's terrestrial reserve system where it is necessary to provide greater protection for underrepresented ecosystems.

The swift parrot is in serious decline thanks to a range of factors, not the least native forest logging on public land. Last week, you talked up the efforts of private land owners to protect their habitat, but it's only you, minister, who can take action to protect habitat on public land.

This question is about you not abrogating your responsibility to do exactly that. What are you doing to identify and protect remnants of critical habitat on public land from logging by Forestry Tasmania?

Mr DUIGAN - I was really pleased to see in the Budget a substantial quantum of funding - $8 million - into our Threatened Species Fund over the next four years -

Mr BAYLEY - Only $3000 a year per species, minister. It's pretty thin.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - A lot of work is already ongoing, particularly in relation to the swift parrot. In 2021, the Tasmanian government committed $250,000 per year over four years to enable the implementation of actions identified in the National Recovery Plan for the swift parrot. Some 29 of the 35 actions identified in the national recovery plan relevant to Tasmania

are being progressed either partially or fully through this project. The funding has leveraged approximately $3.2 million of funding and in-kind support from other organisations.

To the specific nature of your question around land, I was very pleased to join with the private conservancy groups the other day to talk about land that has been set aside permanently on Bruny and surrounding areas, but in in regard to the Tasmanian Planning Commission's recommendations, as I say, we are also investing in private land conservation through the Private Land Conservation Program. Through that program, we administer 959 conservation covenant agreements that protect 4.2 per cent of Tasmania's private and public land in perpetuity. That adds to Tasmania's already extremely substantial reserve estate with more than 50 per cent of our land mass in permanent reserves.

In the 2023-24 financial year, 13 new conservation covenants have been added covering a total of 700 hectares, and many have targeted swift parrot habitat. I'm advised that as of July 2024, there are another 10 individual conservation covenants, four of which are swift parrot habitat being progressed for delivery, which is approximately another 800 hectares of private land. This potential is well in excess of our target performance measures for the year.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I don't disagree that the private sector is doing a really good job when it comes to protecting their land. I don't disagree that Tasmanian Land Conservancy is an excellent organisation that has effectively taken over a responsibility that used to be held by government by managing the Private Land Conservation Fund and program. This is not about private landowners. Private landowners can make decisions, albeit with your support. You've talked up some of them, but it is only you, Minister, who can protect habitat on public land. There are thousands of hectares of critical habitat across the future potential production forests (FPPF), for example, and there are thousands of hectares within the permanent timber production zone that has been identified as critical habitat for swift parrots.

The question is what are you doing? Is there a policy position that's held by the Liberal government to preclude you from progressing action on protecting public land? Is there a barrier there at the policy level?

Mr DUIGAN - There are currently substantial steps right across a range of areas to support swift parrot populations, and this includes management of swift parrot habitat through the forest.

Mr BAYLEY - My question is about your policy, minister. Is the Liberals' anti-science position around reserves a blockage here?

CHAIR - Order. Allow the minister to answer.

Mr DUIGAN - It is important, particularly as it applies to public land managed by STT. That is managed through the forest practices system, and it's a high priority for the government. The forest practices system, established under the *Forest Practices Act*, was designed to ensure the protection of natural values when undertaking forest operations. Under the forest practices system, threatened species are managed according to agreed procedures implemented between NRE -

Mr BAYLEY - The recovery plan says it doesn't work.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - and the FPA. The swift parrot management prescriptions include identifying breeding management, range boundaries, protection of known nests with associated buffers and retention areas of breeding and foraging habitat.

Mr BAYLEY - Why is it the recovery plan -

Mr DUIGAN - The management prescriptions are informed by specialist advice and are updated as required to account for new information to ensure that our threatened species are being appropriately managed. I am straying into the area of minister Abetz, and I -

Mr BAYLEY - How do you explain, minister, that notwithstanding those prescriptions that you will always point to, the recovery plan that has your logo on it is identifying native forest logging, including on public land, as being a key threat to species like the swift parrot, and is recommending that you as minister do more to protect habitat on public land?

How do you explain the inconsistency with your excuse, pointing to the forest practices system, which has long failed species and a whole range of other things including water. How do you explain the inconsistency between that and a recovery plan that says, 'Take action and take it urgently'?

Mr DUIGAN - As a government, there are a number of things that we would point to - reserve estates, the *Forest Practices Act*, all of those things. The Secretary may have some more detail in specifics around that.

Mr JACOBI - I will ask Jo Crisp, our General Manager for Environment, to come to the table, but in the meantime, I thank the member for the question. We have done considerable work with the Forest Practices Authority, particularly in the southern forests, in terms of assessing critical habitat. The amount of conservation and community-based site information that is coming through on a daily basis is incredibly informative, particularly around nesting locations.

That is all being mapped to our to our list map layers, so we have up-to-date, contemporary information about where nesting sites are that's informing not only Forest Practices Authority plans, but STT's practices. We have a significant swift parrot recovery project underway in the department at the moment, and I will call on Jo Crisp to outline some of the specifics around that program.

Ms CRISP - The swift parrot management project has been doing quite a lot of work around modelling, so we have a really good understanding. We've got better mapping than we've ever had before to clearly understand areas that are of importance to the swift parrot, and that's helping us to then target areas for protection. As part of the agreed procedures, the department provides threatened species advice to the Forest Practices Authority, and that is also supported by a range of different planning tools that are used to ensure that we have the swift parrot front and centre when decisions are made. Those are great procedures. They're adaptive, so, as new information comes, such as the National Recovery Plan for the Swift Parrot, that is incorporated into how we manage and provide advice.

Mr BAYLEY - The policy question stands nonetheless.

CHAIR - Mr Garland has the call.

Mr GARLAND - I have three questions. How much funding would be provided by the Commonwealth government if the Ramsar nomination was successfully listed for Robbins Passage in Boullanger Bay? Do you agree that Robbins Passage-Boullanger Bay is a good candidate for Ramsar nomination? If so, why? If not, why not? Minister have you formally received a request from the Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management to commence a Ramsar nomination for part of the Circular Head region? If so, when can they expect to receive the nomination?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. Appreciate the question. It is a spectacular part of the world, no doubt about that. The first part of your question on federal government funding associated with the listing of a Ramsar site is not something I have encountered. Secretary, I'm not sure whether you are able to add any information to that question?

Mr JACOBI - We have received correspondence in the past years around the potential to nominate the wetlands in Robbins Island. There's been no specific progress on that nor have there been discussions at my level with the Commonwealth on that nomination. It's always possible to entertain a nomination for that site, but that is a considerable and lengthy process. To date I'm not aware of a proponent, whether it be council or any other organisation, leading a proposal for that.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, secretary. As I'm sure the member is aware, I've had several discussions with Cradle Coast NRM where they have indicated to me their interest in progressing a Ramsar listing for Boullanger Bay, Robbins Passage. We've always been consistent that the government would require a fairly substantial suite of work to support the nomination, but also in terms of consultation that they would be doing with other landholders in the area and seeking to reach a consensus with them. I haven't received, as far as I'm aware, today a formal representation from Cradle Coast NRM to conduct any of the actions. I think it would be fair to say that should that eventuality arise; the government would be willing to consider such a request.

Mr SHELTON - The Tasmanian devils are a much-loved animal icon of our state. There are devil recovery programs around and I've been with you at Cressy. I'm aware that the Save the Devil program continues to do very important work for the species' conservation. Can you please provide information around the Tasmanian Devil Ambassador program in the species' conservation? While you're thinking about that question, my son has a property in our area, I won't say exactly where because he has a bit of a native cat problem. He's been trapping native cats and over the last month in the northern region there's been two young healthy devils that he's trapped and let go again. He's removing the cats and identified that there are a couple of young, healthy devils.

Mr BAYLEY - Native cats or feral cats?

Mr SHELTON - Feral cats, not native cats. Yes, in the north, in our district.

Mr DUIGAN - I thank the member for the question and, anecdotally, that is something we can do with here, more devils in the landscape.

The Save the Tasmanian Devil program has done a great job since 2003. We know that the emergence of the devil facial tumour disease in the north east and subsequent spread across the state resulted in significant declines in devil numbers. The government has committed $450 000 per year since 2018-19 to continue to Save the Devil program and support the program to transition from an emergency response aimed at guarding species against extinction to more of an adaptive and science-based program. Despite initial fears, extensive research and monitoring shows devils can persist in the wild with the disease and fortunately modelling has shown that there is a low likelihood devils will become extinct in the wild over the next 20 years.

I'm very excited to share with the committee today that two devil ambassadors have been welcomed to their new homes at Auckland Zoo in New Zealand as part of the Tasmanian Devil Ambassador program. The devils known as Krill and Jellyfish, are two-year-old sisters, and as their genes are well represented in the Tasmanian devil insurance population, they were not required for breeding. As a guard against the species' extinction, the pair was transferred to Auckland. It was part of the Tasmanian Devil Ambassador program, joining male devil Nita at the zoo.

The Tasmanian Devil Ambassador program, established in 2013, has an important role in advocacy and education, which complements broader devil conservation efforts. The program involves zoos from New Zealand, Japan, Europe, Singapore, and the United States of America. In June we had eight Tasmanian devils, when I was with you at Cressy, jet-off to the USA. It was great to be there as they were handling the devils, which is not for the faint of heart, and I'm happy that those two devils have made it to Toledo Zoo. The international Tasmanian devil population is currently 54 and we thank and congratulate everyone involved in this successful export and all the best to Krill and Jellyfish in their new home as well.

Ms WHITE - Thank you. Minister, I want to go back to the savings strategies to ask you if you could provide a breakdown of the types of non-core activities that your government plans to cease as a part of your objective in meeting your savings strategies.

Mr DUIGAN - Again, and I think probably as the Secretary has outlined in his answers previously, looking for measures around reducing expenditure on consultancies, expenditure, supplies and consumables, contracting or negotiating more competitive pricing, reducing operating costs through measures such as travel, transport, advertising, property expenses, noting that the scale of the efficiency is around $0.50 in every $100 of expenditure. I also note comments made by the secretary in his previous answer that those savings measures are on track to be found in the course of this year, but I ask him to add any further details he may have.

Mr JACOBI - Thank you, I don't have any more detail. We're still developing our strategies in the forward Estimates. I can't provide you with a specific list of non-core activities, but as the minister pointed out, we're looking closely at fleet combination travel costs, arrangements across the whole department.

Ms WHITE - Thank you. The task this year may have been largely identified, but next year the savings task is much greater and I imagine if you're making efficiencies in the areas you've just described they'll continue to flow through to next year, so your task next year becomes much more challenging. When will you better understand what your saving strategies look for look like for that financial year, including what you define as a non-core activity?

Mr DUIGAN - I recognise that the quantum of savings increases over time and that will require some work to be done. I don't think there's any getting away from that. It is a job of work for the secretary and the department more broadly to identify, find, and realise the savings, but I think it is appropriate in the circumstances that we look to spend our money wisely going forward. The secretary has made some comments about that being a job of work that is not necessarily a long way progressed, but happy for you to add some further detail.

Mr JACOBI - Thank you, minister. There are some great initiatives underway that I think will significantly contribute to the savings. For example, the Parks' online booking system, which brings all of our disparate booking systems together into one place and provides an ability for the public to book campsites and products across the service. I expect that has significantly reduced the administrative requirements of the current teams that are doing a lot of that work. There's also the Fisheries Digital Transition Project, which is digitising most of our fisheries information. All of those different systems and technological improvements will result and translate to better efficiency, better delivery of community services, and it will enable us to put those staff against high priority initiatives that are funded.

Ms WHITE - Minister, you said at the outset that you were going to maintain employment. You didn't plan to have any job cuts, but you also noted that if people leave by attrition, you will reduce the number of staff in the agency with the condition that you protect frontline staff. Can you define who is a frontline worker in your agency?

Mr DUIGAN - Again, this is not about job losses, government is all about protecting our frontline services and I will work with my department and the strategies that they would seek to implement, regarding where there are savings to be found around employment rosters and things of that nature and hiring policies and so on and so forth. We'll look at all those things. Happy if you have anything you'd like to add?

Mr JACOBI - Thank you and through you, minister. I don't like to classify or quarantine a role as a frontline position in our department. We deliver a whole suite of frontline services. They're not classified as frontline. Similarly, to the way teachers or police, for example, are classified, every position needs to be assessed on merit and the importance of that position at the point in time. We do that now and we'll continue to do so over the forward Estimates.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, a cross-section of the community is desperately calling on you to do what's needed to be done for to protect Tasmania's environment. Recently, a group of student societies from UTAS, including the Environment Society, wrote to you and the federal Environment minister expressing concerns about the State of the Environment report and the fate of the Maugean skate. As Minister for the Environment, will you recognise the significant responsibility you have protecting species and will you commit to taking real action to protect the skate by destocking Macquarie Harbour as recommended in the Brook report?

Before anyone questions or points to other bits of the Brook report, let me read into *Hansard*, for the record, Section 4, Recommended Actions, was very clear about improving the water quality in Macquarie Harbour and that it will clearly be essential for the survival of the Maugean skate. It recommended reducing nutrient pollution, implementing appropriate controls on salmon farming practices to minimise nutrient loading, which includes reducing or reallocating fish stock in densities. Are you prepared to do that minister?

Mr DUIGAN - I am happy to put on the record that the government is and I am clear about our commitment to the Maugean skate. We have demonstrated that commitment with a a recovery action plan that is undertaking a number of substantial actions around the continuing viability of the Maugean skate in Macquarie Harbour.

We're also very committed to the protecting the livelihoods of west coast communities and the government and I firmly believe that the Maugean skate and the salmon industry can coexist in Macquarie Harbour and that's why we are continuing to invest into the skate recovery fund, $2.1 million, and continue to work with a number of partners on that piece of work. I note for the record, that there have been a number of positive pieces of information emanating from Macquarie Harbour in recent days and weeks relating to the conditions. Just last week, the EPA released a report showing a trend of improving oxygen levels in the middle and deeper waters of the harbour. They've grown to new heights. In excellent news for the harbour, the EPA found the medium dissolved oxygen levels across Macquarie Harbour are at their highest levels in more than a decade. It showed two-thirds of Macquarie Harbour now has dissolved oxygen levels within the range observed from 1993 to 2010. There is a quote from the EPA director, who we can probably hear from. That is important and pleasing to note. I would also point to a report released yesterday, I think, from IMAS, which show that we're seeing the number of juvenile skates in the harbour at levels not observed since 2014. I will find the -

Mr BAYLEY - They are still well below where they were, though.

Mr DUIGAN - But I think that does go some way to indicating that the Maugean skate is at a viable population level in Macquarie Harbour.

Mr BAYLEY - We've got decades of research that shows the impact of the aquaculture industry on the skate. Your department continues to cherry-pick bits of science to try to spin a better story. The department says oxygen levels in Macquarie Harbour are the best they've been in a decade, but the report from the EPA shows that dissolved oxygen level is at or below the absolute minimum values for the skate's survival in six out of the eight monitoring sites. It is still well down in critical areas.

Yesterday, you talked up the population levels, as you just did again, spruiking the skate's population numbers being back to 2014 levels, but that's a fraction of the story told in the most recent IMAS report. Catch per unit effort was lower overall in 2024 than it was in 2014. It's not as improving as well or as significantly as you are saying. Skate numbers continue to decline in Swan Basin and Table Head-Liberty Point, their most critical habitat. Why are you so keen to keep telling this positive story? It comes back to policy. Why aren't you prepared to take the action that all the scientists, Professor Brook, the Commonwealth scientists, everybody, are recommending, which is destocking and getting salmon out of Macquarie Harbour. That's what's needed to give the skate the best chance of survival.

Mr DUIGAN - We are telling a positive story because it's not the catastrophic story that others would seek to promote.

Mr BAYLEY - We are probably one climate change event away, minister.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - In terms of in terms of oxygenation levels in the harbour, I would ask the EPA director to come to the table because -

Mr BAYLEY - I'm more interested in policy.

CHAIR - Order, please allow the minister to answer

.

Mr DUIGAN - I think, given there has been some conflicting opinions expressed, I would be interested to hear from Mr Ford as to what his results are showing.

Mr FORD - I'd start by, I suppose, reminding the committee that over the course of the last seven years, they have reduced the biomass in Macquarie Harbour by half. As a consequence of that, over the last couple of years we have seen oxygen levels recovering because, fundamentally, oxygen demand generated by the salmon industry has reduced. That has reduced by half.

Because we've had favourable environmental conditions and lower demands of oxygen, we are seeing recovery across the harbour. It's a positive sign. Are we there yet? No. But my view is that, with the current biomass and nitrogen levels, the oxygen will continue to improve and that does demonstrate that the skate will survive. That's certainly been confirmed by the work of IMAS in relation to the presence of juveniles.

Mr BAYLEY - That's not the view of scientists. The Brook report is recommending continuing to destock and the advice to the Commonwealth minister was recommending destocking. That's one of the things in front of her at the moment. Is there anything precluding you recommending or enforcing continued destocking of Macquarie Harbour to improve the results?

Mr DUIGAN - In terms of a policy position, the government is very much of the view -

Mr BAYLEY - Blocking the further destocking?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - of the view that salmon farming and the Maugean skate can continue to coexist quite happily in Macquarie Harbour, as they have done over time, noting that Macquarie Harbour would appear to be the only place where the Maugean skate does persist, if we are taking the science at face value.

Mr GARLAND - The Minister for Natural Resources and Environment is responsible for administering the *Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2008*. The minister is further responsible under this act for developing and coordinating policies related to the regulation of the water and sewerage industry. Minister, you are responsible for issuing licences to salmon hatcheries in this state. You're also responsible for water quality in this state.

I want to ask you about Millybrook's smolt farm and hatchery on the South Esk River, which was recently in the news. According to a scientist familiar with the licences issued to Millybrook, Dr Coughanowr, the licence contained monitoring requirements and no annual reporting required to the EPA or to the public. The current eight-year licence issued in September 2022 for Millybrook farm sets no specific limits on pollutants. Millybrook

undertook its own testing, which showed a substantial increase in nutrient levels between the inlet and outlet from the fish farm, particularly for ammonia, phosphate and total phosphorus. Dr Coughanowr said the highest concentrations were during summer, between January and March, when freshwater systems were most susceptible to impacts such as algal blooms.

In January 2024, Trevallyn Dam was closed due to a blue-green algal bloom. Blue-green algae are microscopic organisms that can produce toxins that are harmful to humans and animals, according to the EPA. This water flows into the Trevallyn Dam, which flows into Launceston's Cataract Gorge, which supplies the drinking water to Launceston and is a major tourist and recreational drawcard in the summer.

Why are you issuing licences to inland salmon farm hatcheries with no specific limits on pollutants and no routine monitoring of water quality downstream of those farms? Will you ask the EPA to commence an investigation into the water quality in the South Esk River, including the impact of pollution from Millybrook farm?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you for that question. I am advised that the EPA is in the process of varying the Millybrook environmental licence for the inclusion of interim water quality limits, including biomass limits, and imposition of several conditions to update the environmental and operational monitoring and reporting requirements. This will include the requirement of monthly and annual reporting to ensure transparency in the provision of information to the Tasmanian public.

The EPA advises that the variation process requires review and analysis of site-specific water quality data to set limits. The licence holder has a right of reply to new conditions and I'm told the director must consider any response before imposing new conditions. I think it's probably a reasonable place to ask the director to talk about Millybrook and any new conditions.

Mr FORD - We are going through a process in relation to the inland hatcheries in terms of bringing them up to contemporary licence standards. The requirements when the hatcheries were transferred to the EPA was that we needed to implement licence conditions as they existed at the time. Many of those smaller hatcheries were regulated by councils with inadequate licence conditions. It has taken some time to go through those and we have prioritised larger hatcheries that have posed a greater risk before the smaller hatcheries. Those hatcheries run and operated by Huon Aquaculture have been operating in accordance with a plan that they already had in place. We've allowed that to continue over the course of the last few years. The licence does not specifically have monitoring requirements. Those monitoring requirements and the data that has been provided is through the Huon Aquaculture Freshwater Action Plan.

Over the course of the next six months, we will have updated licences across all of this, including the Millybrook one.

Mr DUIGAN - Just as a side note, water management, water quality is a Primary Industries and Water responsibility, noting that you did read it out and it did fall to me.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, as we're talking about the EPA, that plays a vital role in Tasmania, of course. I understand more information about the important work that is going on will soon be available more easily to everyone. Can you please tell the committee more about this increase in transparency?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, you are indeed well informed. I am pleased to provide further information about the Release of the Environmental Monitoring Information Project. In fact, a milestone has been reached this week with the launch of an online search portal that allows the public to search for relevant environmental monitoring information and modernises environmental regulation of the state's major industries.

A modern and transparent regulatory system is important to Tasmania's economy and future prosperity and provides assurances for business and the community. Tasmanian industries want certainty about their operating conditions, and the public wants confidence in the EPA's role as an independent regulator and manager of environmental monitoring information.

The member is correct when he asserts the new portal improves transparency and allows public scrutiny of important information about the environmental effects of industries operating in Tasmania's environment. Independent and robust environmental assessment and regulation is an essential part of Tasmania's planning and approval system. The launch follows amendments to the *Environmental Management and Pollution Act* which provides the EPA Director with the discretion to release certain forms of environmental monitoring information.

Relevant information that may be released includes any test or measurement results or analysis reports of environmental condition, photographs or audiovisual recordings required under a licence or permit. I understand the first information to be available is annual environmental reviews and environmental management plans, with additional environmental monitoring information being added to the portal on an ongoing basis. The launch follows the release of the Environmental Monitoring Information Disclosure Policy.

The power to release environmental monitoring information under the act works in parallel with and does not override the obligation to release information under the *Right to Information Act*. Importantly, information not released under the EPA's new system can still be requested, assessed and released under the RTI process.

In addition to the online portal, an existing online search form on the EPA website will remain available for the public to make requests for environmental monitoring information. These important changes are aimed at fostering public confidence in environmental regulation in Tasmania and promoting certainty for proponents.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I wanted to ask about the definition of frontline workers again. With respect to the answer that was provided by the secretary earlier, you said it was hard to define who a frontline worker is, but it's hard to ignore that there are employees across your agency who, I would think, have that responsibility, whether they're in customer-facing roles or in the field doing fire management or rangers. Are you able to define those workers as frontline, as an example?

Mr DUIGAN - I reiterate the government's position that frontline workers will be prioritised. This is not a vacancy control process and will not result in staff job losses, nor will it impact - and I think this is the important aspect - the delivery of government priorities in terms of -

Ms WHITE - How can you confidently say that when you're unable to define a frontline worker? How can you say that those jobs won't be impacted and that those roles will be filled if somebody leaves, if you're not certain about who we're talking about? Surely, you must be able to clearly tell the committee who is a frontline worker and who is not, so that we can trust your answer.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, I appreciate that. Our expectation is that frontline services won't be impacted.

Ms WHITE - But what are they? Who are frontline workers in your agency? You should know that for your agency.

Mr DUIGAN - Those delineations are an area that I will support the Secretary in determining.

Ms WHITE - And is the Secretary able to tell the committee about how he's defined those things? What are the delineations?

Mr DUIGAN I understand that he has made quite a few comments around this issue this morning, but I'd be more than happy if you would like to reiterate -

Ms WHITE - I don't want a reiteration, I want clarity.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms WHITE - For instance, will you replace the role of a firefighter, a field officer, a ranger or a customer service employee if it becomes vacant? Are they frontline workers?

Mr JACOBI - I appreciate the question and I absolutely share your concerns. I'm very alert to the importance of frontline services continuing to be delivered. As I've said before, every position that comes before me that is critical to a frontline service, I have never hesitated to commence recruitment to that position or to expedite the recruitment of that position. Firefighters, rangers who are performing duties in the field, visitor services officers at the front counter who are selling tickets to customers - all of those positions are front of mind in terms of the urgency and the need to make sure that we maintain the right complement of staff to continue to provide that service and, most importantly, to ensure in my department that we are protecting our existing staff. For their own personal and psychological safety, it's important to have the right complement of staff at any point in time. But I reiterate, I reserve the right to consider each and every position on merit at a point in time when it becomes vacant, and I will consider always the safety of our staff above everything else and also the continued delivery of frontline services to the community before I do that.

Mr DUIGAN - I will add to that answer, noting comments that you have made earlier about how the efficiency targets for this year are currently being met. We are finding those efficiencies throughout the operation of the department.

Ms WHITE - Do you think it's appropriate to delegate the responsibility you have to your bureaucrat when there's no transparency? It's essentially Mr Jacobi making decisions on a case-by-case basis. What's the scope or framework for that decision-making?

CHAIR - Order, Ms White.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, on fish mortalities, I am keen to understand some data around fish mortalities related to the finfish industry. I point out up front that these are a serious issue in terms of biosecurity hazards and the like. The data I'm explicitly after - and happy to take this on notice if required - is what's the extent of fish mortalities statewide over the past year, broken down by company and region? Where are they dumped, with the specific sites and the tonnage per site over the last year? Also, what expense is borne by the state to deal with the numbers of salmon mortalities including contractor payments and staffing? What attempts are made to recover these costs from companies involved?

Mr DUIGAN - I think it's probably one that sits more comfortably in the industry.

Mr BAYLEY - Your colleague, Mr Abetz, threw it to you last night. He was asked last night and he said it was an EPA issue.

Mr DUIGAN - Given the EPA is at the table and noting there is a great deal of detail in the question, I would be happy for the director to take that question if he has some of that detail.

Mr FORD - Over the last summer period, we had 66 elevated mortalities reported to the EPA in accordance with the reporting requirements, which are elevated mortalities greater than 0.25 per cent over three consecutive days. Those notifications were distributed across regions and across companies. I will provide the table on notice rather than read it in here.

Mr BAYLEY - Will this give us the exact number of fish mortalities statewide over the past year?

Mr FORD - No.

Mr BAYLEY - Could you provide that?

Mr FORD - No. The current licence conditions do not require the industry to provide notification of numbers or of weight of mortalities. As the conditions applied last summer, the information for last summer is only on notifications of increased mortalities above the licence condition requirement.

Moving into the next summer, now that the environmental standard has passed the parliamentary process and is now certain, we are in the process of implementing the new environmental licence conditions that do require the companies to notify numbers or weight, depending on the circumstance. We have commenced rolling those licences out in the last couple of weeks. Certainly, by the time we get to the summer season, those licence conditions will be on all the new environmental licences.

Mr BAYLEY - Will that be publicly reported as a matter of course going forward?

Mr FORD - That will be publicly reported. The framework on which we reported in terms of the time frame is yet to be determined, but yes, the information will be both publicly reported and publicly accessible.

Mr BAYLEY - What about the sites?

CHAIR - Mr Garland has the call.

Mr GARLAND - I want to ask you about seal control and dispersal by the salmon industry. How many seal crackers were used by the salmon industry over the past financial year to disperse the protected fur seals? How many reported deaths of seals were there by the industry over the same time? How many protected birds were shot by the salmon farms over the past 12 months?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm not sure whether you've had the opportunity to speak to minister Howlett, but seal crackers and that sort of thing is a particular responsibility for Primary Industries. That is a question for them.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, as we know our parks play a vital role in our tourism sector. Can you please provide an update in relation to the visitor statistics of our parks and reserves?

Mr DUIGAN - We know that Tasmania continues to be a much sought-after destination with our natural landscapes a key attraction. The visitor economy supports job creation, especially in regional areas, and promotes the Tasmanian brand as a world class nature-based tourism destination. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) manages over 800 reserves across Tasmania, including 19 national parks. The PWS does not count visitors to every national park or reserve, but produces data for 14 selected sites, called reference sites.

The visitation data for the financial year ending 2023-24 increased to 1.42 million visitors across these 14 sites, which was 4 per cent - approximately 50,000 visitors - higher in comparison with the previous year, 2022-23. Visitation has been steady, with many sites seeing increases and others noting a slight decline. The Three Capes, with 14,000 visitors, and the Overland Track, with 11,000, remain strong, showing our multi-day walks continue to be in high demand. Mount Field National Park attracted 232,000 visitors, which is up 16 per cent over the previous year, while 53,000 people made the journey to Maria Island National Park, an increase of 13 per cent.

This is why we are continuing to invest in those sites to not only enhance the visitor experience but ensure that amenities are contemporary, and that our natural and cultural areas are managed and protected appropriately. This is why we are providing $7.8 million to enhance Mount Field as a year-round destination, including improving accommodation options along with the new arrival concourse. There is also $6.8 million for stage 3 of the Maria Island Rediscovered project, which delivers a new wastewater treatment plant and sewer, electrical connections and increased rainwater storage to ensure reliable supply to Darlington. Our long-term vision for our parks and reserves is to ensure they remain open, accessible and responsibly managed.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I wanted to go back to the savings strategy for your agency. Do you think it's appropriate that the Secretary is unable to explain to the committee what framework will be used to ascertain whose jobs are on the line and whose are not, and that that is essentially just a decision made by the Secretary when a piece of paper comes across their desk? Are you comfortable with that?

Mr DUIGAN - Firstly - and I think it is absolutely critical that I reiterate this - this is not about staff job losses. That's not what it's about.

Ms WHITE -You cannot guarantee that because you can't define a frontline worker.

Mr DUIGAN - It is about the government continuing to deliver its priorities. That's what it's about. The Secretary has been asked to make some efficiencies within the department, and that is a responsibility that I would expect him to perform. He advises me that the efficiencies being asked for this current year are being found and are being delivered, and the efficiency program for the following out years will be considered in the coming months ahead.

Ms WHITE - In the Westminster system of parliament, you're responsible and accountable for the decisions that are taken within your office by your agency. Can you tell me what the framework is that will be used by your agency to decide who is a frontline worker and who's not?

Mr DUIGAN - We will continue to deliver our government services and our priority services.

Ms WHITE - That is not an answer. It is a yes or no answer. Can you tell me what the framework is? Yes or no.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - We will continue to deliver government priorities -

Ms WHITE - That's a rubbish response.

CHAIR - Order. Please allow the minister to answer.

Ms WHITE - It's insulting to your staff, who are the ones who are ultimately going to find out whether or not they keep their jobs. If there's a vacancy, it may not be filled because you might not describe them as 'frontline'.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - I just don't accept the premise of your question. This is not about people losing their jobs. That's not what it's about.

Ms WHITE - You can't answer the question clearly, though. What is the framework for decision-making that you will use to decide whether or not somebody is a frontline worker or not?

Mr DUIGAN - The Secretary has described his thinking around that process, and I will support him.

Ms WHITE - You are accountable as the minister, so why can't you tell the committee and answer that question?

CHAIR - Order, Ms White. The minister has answered the question the way he sees fit.

Ms WHITE - It is very unsatisfactory.

Mr BAYLEY - Just before I ask my question, minister, the EPA director has indicated his willingness to table the evidence of the 66 elevated mortality events. Are you happy for that to happen? He was offering to save the committee time by tabling that.

Mr DUIGAN - Yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you. My second question in that space is to ask where these dead fish are dumped, and to itemise those locations and the tonnage per site. What expense is borne by the state to deal with the numbers of salmon mortalities - that's contractor payments, staffing, dumping fees - and what attempts are made to recover this from the salmon companies?

Mr DUIGAN - I note that the director has made his way back to the table, so I will ask him to provide detail on the answer to that question.

Mr FORD - I take those questions in reverse order. There are no costs to the government for the disposal of the mortalities -

Mr BAYLEY - They're all borne by the companies?

Mr FORD - They are managed and dealt with by the companies. Any regulatory operational process is just part of the ongoing regulatory operational process for the salmon environmental regulators. If there are approvals, they're factored into that process.

In relation to disposals, there are two pathways for disposals of mortalities. Some of the fish make their way through the Tassal rendering facility in Triabunna, and others go through a process called ensilage, which is taking the mortalities, treating them with formic acid, turning them into a liquid and then they're land spread on a number of properties in a number of municipalities, typically under council approval. The EPA does not regulate those activities.

Spectran is the primary contractor that is doing that work with a number of landholders, principally in the southern midlands area, but also some in Clarence and around the Tasman area.

Mr BAYLEY - So none is dumped in landfill, full stop?

Mr FORD - A small component has been placed in landfills depending on the particular supply of the day, because the rendering facility can only take so much on a daily basis and similarly the land spreading activity can only deal with so much on a weekly basis.

Mr BAYLEY - Can you provide those instances and those locations?

Mr FORD - We don't have a direct line of sight to that data because the landfills in Tasmania, both at Dulverton and Copping, have approval to take putrescible waste and to take animal carcasses in terms of fish, so the EPA doesn't have that direct data.

Mr BAYLEY - It is held by the salmon companies? What about other waste that's produced by the industry - potentially native fish that are caught in the nets when they're cleaned, or waste from the net-cleaning operations themselves, including any other sort of hard

materials. What happens to them? Are they dumped in landfill or are they processed in some other way as well?

Mr FORD - In relation to any fish that are removed inadvertently as part of their cleaning operations or as part of their treatment of fish process, it is the same disposal pathway for fish irrespective of whether it be salmon or native species. Clearly the industry doesn't seek to catch native species, but occasionally some mackerel, for example, will end up in the pens.

In relation to material from the pens themselves, these days it's in water cleaning, which means that the material falls to the sea floor and decomposes along with salmon faecal material.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, I am sure everyone is waiting for an exciting update from you on Recycle Rewards.

Mr DUIGAN - To some extent my level of exciting announcement has been a little bit gazumped in regards to announcements made yesterday, but I am happy to report that the Recycle Rewards contracts have been signed.

Yesterday I announced that the contracts had been signed and that TasRecycle is our scheme coordinator with TOMRA Cleanaway as the network operator. The scheme coordinator will run the administration and finance, while the network operator manages the network of refund points across Tasmania, of which I believe there will be 49.

The scheme is expected to begin in mid-2025. I know this is something that a lot of people have been waiting for because it has a great deal of impact on our clubs, charities, scout groups and so on.

Ms BADGER - And the environment.

Mr DUIGAN - And the environment. We know that almost half of the litter on the side of the road is those drink containers that could and should be recycled, so we are very pleased to have this initiative underway. I take the opportunity to thank the staff at NRE who have done a very substantial job in getting the contracts into a position where Tasmania is able to proceed.

It is going to be a fairly substantial change in the way that we approach our waste and recycling task here in the state. We are now not the only jurisdiction in the country that doesn't have a container recycling scheme. It is a job for a few months ahead to mobilise the rollout, but it will be up and going next year.

Mr SHELTON - We're not quite at the fire season yet, but you mentioned in your opening address the preparedness of Park's employees. How prepared is the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service for the upcoming fire season, and what work has been done to date to prepare the parks for what might happen? Hopefully it doesn't.

Mr DUIGAN - It is a huge responsibility that Parks bear, noting the size and scope of our reserve estate. Getting to those fires quickly is very important. I'd like to start by acknowledging every Parks and Wildlife fire crew member who's participated in past fire seasons and those who are preparing for the season ahead.

We know their skills and professionalism continue to be in demand, not only here in Tasmania but also across the world, as we've just welcomed back 15 crew members who were deployed to Canada to assist in managing a significant wildfire event in that country. In addition, I'd like to highlight that Ranger Abbie, who is participating in the ranger exchange program with South Australia, has just participated in South Australia's pre-fire season training. I met Abbie at Cradle Mountain not that long ago.

These opportunities allow our crews firsthand experiences to further develop their own skills and experiences by being immersed in other fire management teams and landscapes. Our Parks staff manage some of the most significant landscapes, in particular the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, which has many irreplaceable natural and cultural values.

Importantly, fighting bushfires is a combined effort from all of our state's fire agencies, who work together to respond to events. Tasmania has the resources required to respond to a typical fire season, along with the systems and escalation arrangements to respond to events that are beyond typical.

The Parks and Wildlife Service has a range of skilled and experienced fire management specialists including fire management officers, fire operations officers, fire crews, winch-capable crews and incident management teams. In addition to our skilled teams, PWS utilises new and emerging technologies to enable the early detection of fires to allow for rapid response, which is an increasingly important aspect I had the opportunity last season to meet with staff in the control room to understand how the modernisation of remote deployable cameras and the use of satellites and laser scanning provides critical intelligence on the heat signatures in the landscape and understanding fuel loads.

I would also like to acknowledge the ingenuity of Parks fire crew, who have developed a high-tech forward command trailer, which can be deployed as a critical management tool to assist our incident management teams and manage the operations closer to the fire ground. During the peak fire season, PWS also has a dedicated winch-capable helicopter to pre-position in areas of great risk and respond to bushfires when required.

The safety and wellbeing of all our staff remains paramount and I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe fire season ahead and thank you in advance for your professionalism and dedication to our reserve in Tasmania more broadly.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I wanted to go back to 2018, which was a great year for the Liberal Party making big promises to the west coast and then failing to deliver. We talked about the next iconic walk. Another significant project was the commitments made to Cradle Mountain. Are you able to provide an update on the status of that project, noting that there are operators up there who are basically despairing about the lack of progress by your government that's leading to investor uncertainty and roads falling to bits while visitation to that iconic destination continues to grow, putting further pressure on the park? What is the status of that project?

Mr DUIGAN - I was happy to head up to Cradle quite recently and speak to operators there to understand some of the issues that might be conversation topics. In terms of how we are seeking to address those and the Cradle Mountain management plan more broadly, it's a piece of work that's being managed by the Office of the Coordinator-General. I would certainly

say that the Tasmanian government remains committed to the delivery of the vision of the Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience Master Plan.

During the recent state election we reaffirmed our commitment to the delivery of the master plan and reiterated our commitment to lobby the Australian Government to recommit to supporting this vital project for the protection and future management of the wilderness world heritage area, region, state and nation. We worked hard to deliver both the new park visitor centre and the Dove Lake viewing shelter, which are key elements of the visitor master plan, and I'm sure those members of the committee who have seen those two pieces of infrastructure would agree that they are great additions to the Cradle offering.

Work continues on the remaining areas, including much-needed staff accommodation, the Gateway Village Precinct development and the key sustainable transport solution in the form of the cableway. The Tasmanian government, through a request for expressions of interest in an ROI process, sought developers and committed up to $5 million to help create a high-quality alpine village for the next stage of the Gateway Village precinct. Negotiations with the proposed developer and the required related infrastructure planning and development at Cradle Valley will progress.

Additional staff accommodation in the Cradle Valley region is an identified priority, and the OCG, as mentioned, is continuing its investigations and assessment of relocatable and purpose-built housing options to address the need. The other key element of the master plan is the improved transport solution between the gateway and Dove Lake, with a cableway being the preferred option. The Tasmanian government remains committed to a sustainable transport solution to connect the gateway precinct and Dove Lake, and continues to work with stakeholders and the Australian Government on the best way forward.

Ms WHITE - That doesn't tell me anything new except that you're still working on something that you promised in 2018 and haven't delivered. How much money have you committed to realise the project? What's in the Budget for the cableway?

Mr DUIGAN - There is a substantial amount of money in the Budget. I'm happy for the department to provide some detail, but there is a substantial quantum of funding in the Budget to progress the delivery of the master plan, and continuing to work on that project. I understand that there may be some roadworks and things of that nature, and iconic buildings that we'd like to build as we work towards that, but I'm happy to pass to the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary to provide some detail around the priorities.

Mr JACOBI - Noting that this is still a project that has been largely delivered by the Office of the Coordinator-General, my understanding is that the full allocation of the $30 million remains available for a co-contribution to a contribution by the Commonwealth Government towards the total project.

Ms WHITE - Would it be right to say that the private sector investment that's been flagged for this region is waiting on the cableway to proceed before they commit their funds?

Mr JACOBI - My understanding is that, subject to a commitment from the Commonwealth Government, the planning work that has already been undertaken will be progressed to an expressions of interest process seeking a third-party operator to participate in running and operating the cableway.

Ms WHITE - Minister, you would recall, presumably, that the Coordinator-General's office failed to submit the business case to the federal government in time to secure the necessary funds. What work are you doing to realise this project's vision? Investor confidence is pretty low at this point in time. They don't really see that your government is doing very much to deliver on this commitment.

Mr DUIGAN - I would have to point you to the responsible minister for a project that is being run out of the Office of the Coordinator-General. I don't have a great deal of visibility around that.

Ms WHITE - Why not?

Mr DUIGAN - We are briefed. We are involved in Cradle Mountain as the Parks and Wildlife Service and are continuing to provide services in that capacity. Your questions around the detail of the master plan delivery are best placed to the Premier.

Ms WHITE - That's disappointing.

Ms BADGER - Minister, a few weeks ago, you met with Greg French, who's the president of Fishers & Walkers Tasmania. He gave you a copy of his book, *Wild Heart of Tasmania*. I hope you've read that book, minister, because it outlines the history of the Lake Malbena saga. Very specifically, it shows that the current proponent of the heli-tourism project was very misleading in his intent for the future of the lease to its previous holder, Liz McQuilkin. He has said that he would still welcome the public to visit the island - that is not true, he is not. And he hasn't paid his debts - Wild Drake is in liquidation.

Minister, how do you justify that this proponent is still a fit and proper person to hold a private lease over a World Heritage island?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. Appreciate the question and I'm indeed a fan of Mr French's books, particularly a recent gift; he did write a book about all the trout lakes or all the lakes in Tasmania. It's very helpful if you're fishing.

Ms WHITE - We know where your heart really is.

Mr DUIGAN - The government is committed to delivering the tourism expression of interest process, and the important role that it does play in facilitating sensitive and appropriate tourism projects within Tasmania's unique parks and reserves. That is important. We want people to be able to responsibly and sustainably access and enjoy our world-class parks and reserves.

In regard to the Halls Island-Lake Malbena proposal, it remains subject to all local, state and Australian Government planning and approval processes. I won't be making any comments around historical disagreements between parties; that is not a matter for me.

As I have previously said, I am aware that the environmental organisations lodged proceedings in the Federal Court of Australia in relation to legal costs to be paid by Wild Drake, and they have made an application to have the company wound up. The ASIC website identifies

that a liquidator has been appointed. This involves a process that is currently being worked through, with no determination as yet made. I am advised -

Ms BADGER - Minister, I can save you commentary on the legal matters, if you'd like.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - I'm advised that the proponent has 21 days from the court order to request that the application be overturned. As previously stated, all lease and licence payments owed to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania have been paid. As a process is underway, I won't be dealing in hypotheticals and I certainly won't be looking to pre-empt outcomes. The proponent has also advised that they are continuing to work with the Australian Government and are committed to progressing the project and I confirm that the lease is still current.

Ms BADGER - Until when? Was it the 30 September?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, and just to another aspect of your question around public access. Importantly, I'm advised that access to Halls Island remains available to members of the public.

Ms BADGER - Just a supplementary from that, I've sought access and I cannot get a response. Am I free to go there legally, above board, minister?

Mr DUIGAN - Anyone.

Ms BADGER - Anyone? Even me?

Mr DUIGAN - Anyone interested in visiting the island should get in contact with the proponent for information, terms and conditions relating to the public access.

Ms BADGER - That's great. I've been trying for three years. So, perhaps there is a process in place for actually getting a response to be able to go there?

Mr DUIGAN - I think that is probably a matter for the proponent.

Ms BADGER - No, it's not because you've leased the island to the proponent. There's no conditions for him to adhere to maintaining public access to the island.

Mr DUIGAN - Do you have any further information on that aspect or are you happy?

Ms BADGER - I'm happy to take it on notice just because it's arisen if that's helpful.

Mr JACOBI - The public access program has been in place for a number of years now. The proponent developed that public access program to ensure that bushwalkers and fishers can continue to have access to the island and the hut, whilst also ensuring that the environment of the island is protected first and foremost. I'm advised that the outcome of the public access program has actually resulted in increased public access, over and above historical levels. All I can suggest is that I'm happy to take your concerns to the proponent through the Parks and Wildlife Service and ask him directly if he would consider an access arrangement for you.

Ms BADGER - Consider it so he could still deny it - is that right?

Mr JACOBI - Ultimately, it's a decision for him, but he has always assured the Parks and Wildlife Service that he's open to any applications for access.

Ms BADGER - If you could follow that up, I would appreciate it. Thank you, Deputy Secretary. My second question.

CHAIR - I think you've had a few.

Ms BADGER - Well, I still didn't get an answer, Chair.

CHAIR - I can't help if you don't like the answers. Mrs Beswick, bearing in mind we will break shortly for a short break.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, given the alarming increase in battery fires, which often occur in our critical waste facilities, there is work being done in NSW to install camera systems and improve the risk management of those as if we do lose a facility, it will take several years to rebuild and we could be sending a lot of recycling to landfill in that time. What are you considering in supporting those businesses in Tasmania?

Mr DUIGAN - It's a substantial body of work that's being considered by the ECMC - Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council - noting that particularly those batteries that are contained within products and aren't necessarily able to be disposed of properly without disposing of the product in and of itself. It is a nationally recognised and problematic circumstance in terms of work that is progressing here in Tasmania.

I think NSW is potentially leading the work that is happening around the country. Dulverton Waste Management Group is developing a whole-of-industry proposal for an education/behaviour change campaign around batteries and other flammable items for consideration by the Waste Resource Recovery Board. There is a little bit of strategic work happening at that level. As part of this, I've have recently written to the board, asking them to outline some key priorities for the year ahead. Some of that work happening at a national level was included in that correspondence. There is some work progressing around this, noting that battery fires potentially posing risk to waste facilities is an emerging issue.

Mrs BESWICK - So, we're hoping that the waste levy will support that?

Mr DUIGAN - That's emerging as our lever in lots of these areas, particularly as new risks and issues emerge. We have that funding source by which to respond.

The Committee suspended at 11.00 a.m. to 11.08 a.m.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, with the announcement of the retirement of Wes Ford next month, is this a good opportunity for a fresh look at the functions and scope of the Environmental Protection Authority to guarantee it's working in the best interests of the state?

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate your question. I'll take this opportunity to put on record the government's thanks and appreciation for the long and storied career of Wes Ford, the director of the EPA. He has had some 39 years in the Tasmanian public service, as I understand it, and

overseen a substantial step change in environmental monitoring and reporting here in the state of Tasmania. I think they will be big shoes to fill.

The government continues to support the functions of the independent EPA through continued funding from the budget, some $85 million this year and going forward. Our investment will continue to support increased staffing levels - noting the increased amount of work and the number of large projects that come to the EPA board for consideration and the increasing amount of work that the state relies on the EPA to provide. That's potentially where I will leave my comments about considering any reform, sweeping or otherwise, to the functions of the EPA. The EPA is functioning well and balances a difficult task of being pragmatic in its decision making, but also making sure that the Tasmanian environment is paramount in its consideration.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you please advise how Land Tasmania's Emergency Services GIS, or geographic information system, unit, supports all hazard emergency response activities for the government, including Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, Mr Shelton. Land Tasmania's Emergency Services GIS unit supports all hazard emergency response activities across government through the provision of critical specialist spatial intelligence, analysis and mapping capability.

Over the past three years, the Emergency Services GIS unit played a critical role in the Tasmanian government's COVID-19 response activities including quarantine compliance, travel assessment, operational planning, and mapping high-risk areas to inform the general public. The team were also involved in the preparation for biosecurity incursions such as Japanese encephalitis, small hive beetle, flood levels, flood events, and search and rescue events through the tracking of resources.

During the recent wild weather and flood events, the team were also deployed to assist with the response efforts, including the provision of real-time spatial data to SES teams. The GIS team who designed, developed and now run the early fire detection and notification system were finalists in the national Locate24 Conference.

The system, which has been operating since 2022, includes real-time satellite as bushfire detection and notification, and combines this with detailed maps containing information about vulnerable flammable vegetation, landscape features, critical infrastructure, soil moisture, and the location of firefighting assets. The team provided geospatial intelligence services mapping and assisted with the integration of data from the state's Specialist Intelligence Gathering helicopter for the various incident management teams. By providing the All Hazards program, the Emergency Services GIS unit supported the Tasmania Fire Service, Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, and Sustainable Timber Tasmania with their fire response activities over the last fire season. As part of the All Hazard Spatial Infrastructure Project a new LISTmap, COP and LIST special web services infrastructure will be delivered over the next two years and this will further enhance Tasmania's capabilities to prepare for, respond to, and assist with recovery activities following, natural disasters. Thank you.

Ms WHITE - Minister, you spoke earlier about no longer providing some services or your Secretary did, to the community, such as pest control on private properties as part of your steps to cut costs in the department, do you plan to privatise any other services?

Mr DUIGAN - As I have said frequently, this is not about job losses. That's not what this is about. The Secretary has said repeatedly that he is managing his budget efficiencies in the department and finding those efficiencies. We're not reducing services or cutting services-

Ms WHITE - Just admit it, you are reducing services. You gave a specific example of a service you're no longer going to provide.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - The Secretary is looking for efficiencies in the department and that is entirely appropriate. For the specifics of the question I am happy to throw to the Secretary.

Mr JACOBI - I will clarify - it wasn't about pest-control services being privatised; that was a specific example that I provided where we're looking at the pindone program and how that might be delivered by the private sector, because the private sector had previously expressed an interest in delivering pindone to residential properties who need rabbit control. It doesn't mean we're reducing our calicivirus controls, our support for landholders, or anything like that. It's just an example that was provided.

Ms WHITE - And my question, minister, is whether you plan to privatise any services across your agency to meet your budget-cut obligations.

Mr DUIGAN - I reiterate, the budget efficiencies for the department are being found in the context of savings in consultants, accommodations, staff travel, and those types of things. As the secretary outlined, privatisation is not being considered, as I understand it, in this course of budget-efficiency measures. As for things that happen in the future, that's all speculation.

Ms WHITE - You might just stop doing things and the private sector will pick those things up.

Mr DUIGAN - That’s absolutely not what I said.

Ms WHITE - That's what your Secretary said.

Mr DUIGAN - He identified one very specific element that had been the nature of - some interest had been shown in by aspects of the private sector. Again, I don't have a great deal of detail - happy to, to for the Secretary to provide some context around that.

Mr JACOBI - I haven't identified any other services at this point in time that would be appropriate to privatise. We enter into contracts and consultancy arrangements with companies for a variety of different services - sometimes that's around the capital program to support the planning and design and documentation of major capital projects, but they're the only examples I can provide for now.

Ms WHITE - Minister, have you given a policy directive to the Secretary that would rule out privatisation of any of the services your agency currently delivers?

Mr DUIGAN - No.

Ms WHITE - You haven't? He has the ability to choose to do that if the Secretary wants? You're not ruling it out?

Mr DUIGAN - It's not something we are contemplating, as has been said frequently and often during today's hearing. Key measures include reducing expenditure on consultancies, reducing expenditure on suppliers and consumables, common contracting or negotiating more competitive prices, reducing operating costs through measures such as travel, transport, advertising and property expenses.

And, again, I point to comments that the Secretary has made about realising those $0.50 in every $100 that is being found in the department through those.

Ms WHITE - Final question, just for clarity, can you rule out privatising services your agency currently [inaudible]

Mr DUIGAN - That is not something we are contemplating.

Ms BADGER - Just on the RAA (Reserve Activity Assessment) reform, the summary report from the consultation paper dropped late last week. Of 800 submissions, honestly, only four of those could be considered positive to the proposals in the consultation paper. The rest were absolutely scathing of the approach that was suggested.

The reference to the legislation reform being tabled at the end of this year, 2024, has been removed from your website. Minister, could you enlighten us about the new time frame for this reform? Given that you're now doing an options paper, it certainly seems like you're taking quite a large step back from what is much-needed legislative reform.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. Appreciate the question. The public consultation period was extended twice to ensure that all interested parties have the opportunity to make a submission. Targeted stakeholder engagement has occurred with key stakeholders, National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC), the State Planning Office, the Tasmanian National Parks Association, Local Government Association, and many others.

You mentioned the number of submissions received, over 800, noting that a very large majority of those were pro forma submissions. The submissions and accompanying submissions report are available to view on the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's website. As to next steps, feedback from the submission process is currently being considered ahead of the Parks and Wildlife Service developing an RAA reforms option paper as you have outlined in your question.

Ms BADGER - There's no time frame for that options paper to be presented or a new deadline for the RAA reform holistically?

Mr DUIGAN - In answer to the question, what was the question?

Ms BADGER - What was the timeframe?

Mr DUIGAN - The timeframe is not known at this stage. It is not defined. We note that it's a complex piece of work. We're considering feedback that has been received. We would

point to the publication of the lease and licence data across the Parks portfolio, which is leading to better transparency -

Ms BADGER - Are you still committed to the reform or are you walking away from it?

CHAIR - Ms Badger, could you speak up?

Ms BADGER - Sorry.

Mr DUIGAN - Considering the feedback-

Ms BADGER - Considering the feedback, so you are -

Mr DUIGAN - Putting out an options paper, having a look at it.

Ms BADGER - Yes. Very un-committal. Thank you, minister. My second question is what are the annual costs for administering, servicing, and maintaining the Three Capes Track product? If you could please - happy to take it on notice or tabled to have that information broken down into the cost of maintaining the walking tracks, maintaining and servicing the public accommodation complexes, the helicopter hire, boat transfers, fees to Port Arthur Historic Site, plus the wages for Parks and Wildlife staff and contractor payments.

Mr DUIGAN - A lot of detail there. While the secretary's addressing his mind to that, I would offer to table the document that relates to salmon moults requested by Mr Bayley. Happy to hand that up. Thank you.

Ms BADGER - Thanks, minister.

Mr DUIGAN - For the question on Three Capes expenditure I pass to the secretary to provide some detail.

Mr JACOBI - We don't have the specific details at hand in relation to Ms Badger's question, but I'm happy to take that on notice and provide that.

Mr DUIGAN - Are you happy with the level of detail required?

Mr JACOBI - I'm comfortable to provide that level of detail if we can.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, I want to talk to you about Flinders Island and the management of wastewater. At the moment there is no infrastructure there to handle the situation with the wastewater and we know that there is a noncompliant tank truck that is collecting from septic tanks and water waste and redistributing onto farmland. Can you explain how the government is making sure that the wastewater from Flinders Island is managed according to environmental laws?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, appreciate the question and understand the nature of the task delivering contemporary wastewater management solutions for some of our remote rural communities. Flinders is, obviously, close to my heart, but I will pass to the director of the EPA to comment on the works or the [inaudible] nature on Flinders Island.

Mr FORD - In general, the management of wastewater will fall between the council and TasWater, depending on whether TasWater is involved or can be involved to when council is. There are also towns and small communities about to be moved from a septic system to a reticulated system. Without having any specific details in front of me, we can provide a follow up in terms of both with ourselves and TasWater if that would be of assistance.

Mrs PENTLAND - You have been there and are aware of the situation there with the septic waste and the wastewater and what's happening on Flinders?

Mr DUIGAN - I am broadly aware of issues that exist with water on Flinders Island. It is, as the director has mentioned, a matter for TasWater in concert with the council. Not something that -

Mrs PENTLAND - Don't you need to govern that being the environmental minister? Isn't that something that you need to make sure is happening in a proper way?

Mr DUIGAN - If there are environmental concerns, I would expect they would be raised with the EPA.

Mrs PENTLAND - And they have been?

Mr FORD - I don't have any detail with me at the moment. Environmental law in Tasmania is split between the role of the EPA and the councils, so if an activity is a level 1 activity, it's the responsibility of council. I'll take it on notice and see if we have any advice from Flinders Island Council about any concern they have raised with EPA.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, you have $1.2 million in the budget for a data rollout of some description in the waste action implementation plan. What specifically are you using that for, what is the goal there? It's over a couple of years, so can you detail what that looks like?

Mr DUIGAN - Our transition into a circular economy is providing a lot of opportunities for employment but also benefits to the environment. Understanding what the task looks like in Tasmania and having good information feeding into that process will be critical. It's important we have good waste streams, and good data will be increasingly important for an overarching strategic vision for what that sector needs to look like going forward and some of the challenges we face.

Recommendation 16, implementation of the waste and resource recovery strategy. Prior to the introduction of the landfill levy, we took action to help kickstart the circular economy in Tasmania with an investment of over $20 million to progress resource recovery initiatives, improve the recycling of plastics, organics, end of life tyres. It goes on to talk about container refund schemes, problematic single-use plastics, but doesn't talk necessarily about data.

Here we go. The Australian Government has allocated $1.5 million over three years to each state and territory through the Digital Environmental Assessment Program, the DEAP initiative, to enhance the capability of the Tasmanian Natural Values Atlas to exchange biodiversity data with the national biodiversity data repository that is being developed. The Natural Values Atlas is a web-based platform managed by NRE Tas that holds and delivers high-quality Tasmanian natural values information relied on for development, assessment and approvals processes. This enhancement will support better environmental assessment and

decision-making through the interjurisdictional environmental data and information oversight committee. We're also engaging with the Australian Government on the establishment of Environmental Information Australia and the development of a national environmental standard on data and information standards. Tasmania also collects reserve estate data feeding into the national Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database.

I can call Hugh Christie of the Waste Resource Recovery Board if he has some more information to add around that data task.

Mr CHRISTIE - The other thing that's occurring with that data task is we also have funds allocated for data readiness grants to assist the facilities meet their obligations under the *Waste and Resource Recovery Act*. We've done a number of rounds with that and we're looking to see how we can continue to invest that money as we go forward to ensure that facilities can easily and readily comply with the regulated obligations.

Mr SHELTON - While we're on waste and resource recovery, I understand that the Waste and Resource Recovery Board is leading the work on our waste strategy. Can you please provide some more details on how they will be using the funds from the landfill levy to achieve our goal of Tasmania as a place where nothing is wasted?

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate the question. The Waste and Resource Recovery Board has been working hard to set the groundwork for, and deliver on the important work of overseeing the reinvestment of landfill levy funds back into the community. This includes the $3.5 million high-priority investment package we announced in recent days. This will see reinvestment of landfill levy funds back into the community, helping our community groups, schools, councils, and other resource recovery and waste-focused organisations to further develop their infrastructure and their capacity for the circular economy.

It is my expectation that the board will lead the state's strategic approach to waste management. As part of this, I've recently written to the board and asked it to outline its key priorities for the year ahead. The first is for the board to provide a plan for the strategic management of industrial waste in northern Tasmania. I expect this to include an assessment of current waste data, predicted future need and the type of waste to be managed effectively in the region. It will assess current availability by waste type and opportunities for future use or investment. This is particularly important to inform government's decision-making, and I have requested this work be completed before the end of 2024.

Secondly, I would like the board to complete a proposal for a statewide education campaign. This should have particular focus for waste and resource recovery, including addressing recycling basics for households. It should look at how best to tackle issues such as contamination of waste streams, particularly when it comes to hazardous items such as batteries, which have been touched on here. I expect this campaign to be developed collaboratively with local government and industry to maximise its impact and ensure consistent messaging across the state.

With the increasing community interest in composting and organics processing facilities, I have also asked the board to undertake a review and assessment of the current and future demand for organics and/or composting facilities. This should include, but not be limited to, kerbside FOGO (Food Organics and Garden Organics). As such, I anticipate it will consider agriculture, aquaculture and other commercial organic waste streams.

I expect the outcomes of these bodies of work, and the board's additional two priorities, will provide a vital guide to future decisions around the use of funds generated by the landfill levy. It will also support a strategic and outcomes-focused approach to waste management here in Tasmania.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I've written to you about the Derwent Valley Men's Shed in the past, and expressed their desire to you to obtain a lease for the building they operate out of, which is on Crown land. You've responded, indicating that the department might look to place that land into the ownership of Homes Tasmania in the future for the development of housing. That's caused a lot of concern for the Derwent Valley Men's Shed. What guarantee can you give them that they'll be able to continue operating from that premises, and for how long?

Mr DUIGAN - I have no appetite for the displacement of valuable community groups such as the Derwent Valley Men's Shed. I make that statement in terms of my feelings around this particular issue, but I would be happy to invite Alice Holeywell-Jones to the table to provide an update as to where that issue is at the moment.

Ms HOLEYWELL-JONES - At this stage, the land remains with the Parks and Wildlife Service, having recently been handed back with council. We're continuing to manage that land, and the Men's Shed remains in the facilities they're in. We've had some issues at the site, which you might be aware of, in relation to some of the facilities and vandalism. That's an ongoing concern for the Parks and Wildlife Service. But, no plans, no transfers or issues in relation to their current lease arrangements and engagement at the site.

Ms WHITE - Do they have a current lease? I think they've had difficulty getting a current lease for a term. What is the status of that?

Ms HOLEYWELL-JONES - I might have to take that one on notice. My understanding is they've some sub-lease arrangements in place.

Mr DUIGAN - Happy to take that on notice and give you an update as to where the lease is at the moment. My memory of dealing with the issue in writing to you is that there are issues around the ongoing maintenance of buildings and things of that nature. There are some complications to this issue, but happy to provide some detail around the lease.

Ms WHITE - Just to clarify, I'll provide a question on notice about the current status of the lease at the Derwent Valley Men's Shed. If you could also indicate to me when it's up for renewal or what the terms are so that they've got some certainty about how long they might be there for.

Mr DUIGAN - Yep, I can do that.

Ms WHITE - Further to that, the Derwent Pony Club and the adult riders on an adjacent piece of land, they previously had a lease with you as well for their club to operate on that site. They've been unable to renew a longer-term lease with you and they have similar fears that the land is going to be disposed of and that their club will be displaced. What guarantee can you give to them that they will get a lease agreement in place so that they can have certainty for their club's future?

Mr DUIGAN - I am happy to reiterate my initial comment of having no appetite to displace important community sporting clubs. The current status of the pony club helps understanding that these two, to some extent, go hand in hand.

Ms HOLEYWELL-JONES - Thank you, minister, through you, my understanding is that we don't have an application in relation to the land relevant to the pony club, because again -

Ms WHITE - What do you mean by an application?

Ms HOLEYWELL-JONES - In relation to the land or transfer, in that there is no impact that I am aware of in relation to current arrangements for the pony club. If the minister's happy again to take the question on notice, we can get the details.

Ms WHITE - The challenge is that they've struggled to get a lease longer than an annual lease arrangement. They previously had a 20-year arrangement with 10 plus 10, but they've been unable to get that agreed to again. I will put a question on notice to you about that.

The final question is: it does raise questions about the resourcing within Property Services to be able to work with these groups to negotiate leases. What is the current staffing profile within Property Services and are they subject to the efficiency dividend?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm happy to pass that to the Secretary to provide the detail.

Mr JACOBI - Thank you, and through you, minister, I thank the member for the question and I might go to the Deputy Secretary of Parks in a minute about that.

We've been funded specifically in Property Services for several years now around the Crown lands transaction turnaround timeframe project that has significantly improved a backlog in applications. It has also significantly improved the time frame with which we can turn around applications for leases or licences. I'm very comfortable with the team doing all that they can to address the multitude of applications that we do get.

It's important, though, to reflect on the fact that just because somebody submits an application for a lease or a licence doesn't mean that they've actually met all the requirements. Often we find ourselves going back to a proponent, club, or organisation to make sure they have professional indemnity or insurances, that they have the capacity to manage the land going forward under the lease terms. Sometimes the to-ing and fro-ing between Property Services and the applicant can take time.

I will go to the Deputy Secretary of Parks if there's some additional information.

Ms MULLER - Through you, minister, as the Secretary has indicated the additional funding of $1.9 million through the Crown land transaction turnaround time initiative has boosted staffing within Property Services by six. Currently there are no vacancies in Property Services that are not being filled so we have a full complement of staff.

Over the years, and in recent times, there has been a significant increase in the demand for the services that are delivered by Property Services. Annually it is around 1400 requests

relating to leases, licences, et cetera. Our responsiveness to those can be dependent on the complexity of the assessments before the team, so the timeframes can vary.

Ms WHITE - And the efficiency dividend? Are Property Services subject to the efficiency dividend?

Mr DUIGAN - That would be my expectation.

Ms WHITE - And what does that look like? Is that consistent with the percentages you shared across the agency that had to bear their commensurate amount?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes. Certainly, that would be my expectation.

Ms BADGER - Minister, I have some questions around the proposed Tyndall Range resort complex. I appreciate that you've been running a series of drop-in sessions for the community. There are a few basic questions that people might expect for such a proposal that we're not quite clear on, so I'm just hoping you can enlighten us a little bit more. They're things like: do the accommodation complexes have hot showers? How is the greywater taken care of? I think most pressingly people want to know if free walkers are still going to be able to go through this region.

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate your question and interest. I've seen preliminary designs for small-scale hydroelectric schemes to deliver electricity to certain hut facilities and so on. It's probably reasonable to consider that there would be drying rooms and things of that nature contained within the huts. I'm not sure of the detail on showers and so on, but happy to pass to the Secretary who, I'm sure, has that level of detail to share.

Mr JACOBI - I attended the public consultation session here in Hobart and it was overwhelmingly positive. There were a couple of people who had questions about the design and the various aspects of the proposal, but once they had a chance to learn from the team about the detail and the intent, a lot of them left the consultations feeling a lot more comfortable about the proposal and, in fact, I think it'd be fair to say that, overwhelmingly, across all of the public consultations, the majority were in favour and support for the next iconic walk.

To your particular question, which was about hot showers, we've made a deliberate decision as a planning team not to have showers in the facility. It's really important that we minimise our environmental footprint with this project. All of the black waste will be airlifted out. We'll be actually capturing that in pods and transporting that off site and because there won't be any showers, that significantly reduces any issues around greywater disposal. That's a really important thing to bear in mind in such a unique and extraordinary environment.

To your question about free walkers, there are absolutely no impacts whatsoever to the existing track by which people access the Tyndall Plateau from the western side near Anthony Road. That track will remain open, as it always has, unimpeded for walkers to access at whatever time they want to. We're actually doing some maintenance trackwork on that section, particularly between the bottom of the ridge and the top of the ridge, which has been identified as being quite heavily worn. We're doing some maintenance works, I believe this year.

In terms of the access to the new track, the new next iconic walk track, that will be a paid experience. Walkers, whether they are coming as part of the hut-based proposal or if we are to

retain a tent-based camping option, they will pay a fee to participate, and the rangers who are employed and living on site will be responsible for providing education, support and guidance to any walkers on the track.

Ms BADGER - Thank you. My second question on that - and please don't read the Facebook comments after the drop-in sessions; they might alter your view on the positivity around the project.

Mr DUIGAN - That's good advice, generally.

Ms BADGER - Generally good advice, thank you, minister. The viewscape over Lake Huntley from Mount Tyndall is renowned. It is one of the most spectacular views in Australia, as I'm sure you would both appreciate as bushwalkers.

Parks has long aligned itself with the seven principles of Leave No Trace. When viewing the development locations for this walk, why is it situated in such a prominent position which is going to leave an enormous visual impact? We don't support privatising other parks and having private huts in different areas, but at least they're discreet. I think the general expectation from the public was that this would be a lot more discreet than it is. Why was the decision made to put the hut in the current position that it is?

Mr DUIGAN - I think it's critically important to recognise that we're in the planning and development phase of the Next Iconic Walk. There is an amount of work still to be done around placements and things of that nature. We would expect it to be done with the greatest degree of sensitivity. I'm sure that's the way the designers will approach it. I am happy for the secretary to make any comments he feels are relevant to that.

Mr JACOBI - Thank you. Lake Huntley and its surroundings is an extraordinary landscape any way you view it, whether it's from the top or from the bottom; it is unique. It's really important that we get the design and the planning around the proposed hut at that location right. We've commissioned a visual impact assessment as part of our environmental impact assessment work. That visual impact assessment is looking very closely at the impacts of the hut locations and also the campground and the track from all contexts, whether it be from the walkers who are on the track, or from people who may be on the Tyndall plateau.

The reason it's located in that site is that it is an extraordinary experience. It is a once-in-a lifetime opportunity to provide members of the public who maybe don't get to experience those places, who don't have the capability to walk to the top of the Tyndall plateau from the western side. It provides them with an opportunity to experience that extraordinary environment, to learn from that and become an advocate about how important our wild landscapes are, particularly that landscape which, as you know, is impacted by mining, hydro and exploration activities. Everywhere you go in that landscape you can see evidence of prior historical industry activities and that's a really important part about the experience. Lake Huntley is just one of those locations which stands out as a place for people to be able to spend the night and enjoy the environment.

Ms BADGER - Can I just clarify, for the hut concepts that are currently out, there is more planning to be done about the exact location of the hut or there's not?

Mr JACOBI - We've done a lot of work to refine the hut locations. We did the Building and Environmental Impact Assessment report based on the two locations, which is Lake Huntley for the first night, and I think it's - correct me if I'm wrong, Danielle - Lake Mark for the for the second night. They are the fixed locations.

What we are doing through the public consultation process is getting people's feedback about the design - the style of the buildings, the colours being used, materials that are proposed, noting that all of the materials are designed specifically to blend into the environment. We're using micro-hydro power to run our energy in the buildings, not just thermal heating but also the cooktop stoves, the cooking apparatus. In every respect, a lot of work has gone into trying to minimise our footprint. The consultation sections have been getting some really good feedback about what people think about the design.

At this point in time, there's no intention to fundamentally change the two locations that are proposed. We will be going out for an environmental impact assessment on the basis of that.

Ms BADGER - Unless, of course, the consultation says they should.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, a few months ago you announced the grant received from Tyrecycle to start to build a facility and be able to recycle tyres within Tasmania. What is the time frame that we can expect that to be started?

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate that, noting that the task of recycling tyres and value-adding to tyres here in Tasmania is a big and pressing task. I think it's one of the ones that a lot of us would like to see up and going and ticked off.

The $3 million Waste Tyre Reprocessing Grant Program was established to help find sustainable uses for end-of-life tyres in Tasmania. We know we need to put more effort into this area of resource recovery. Waste tyres that are illegally dumped or stored can pose a range of risks to our community and environment, and it is a waste of useful resources.

The Tasmanian government has taken a number of actions to address these problems, improving the regulation around stockpiling of tyres, working at a national level to improve the product stewardship for tyres, and the Waste Tyre Reprocessing Grant Program is another part of the solution. As you alluded to, Tyrecycle has been granted $1.27 million from the program to upgrade the Barwick's tyre shredding facility at Bridgewater to add a chipper, which allows end-of-life tyres collected from around Tasmania to be processed using the machine and then manufactured into five-centimetre diameter chips to provide tyre-derived fuel.

The upgraded facility at Bridgewater will create a value-added product that can be used as an alternative fuel for coal in a range of industrial processes such as cement production. We know that the use of tyre-derived fuel instead of coal can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30 per cent, and that is the impetus for this particular grant process. I'm very happy to see it going ahead.

In terms of the remaining quantum of funding, I think we're still in discussions with an industrial proponent in terms of an offtake agreement, but I'm happy to take any further advice if any is being offered.

Mrs BESWICK - When will the chipper be up and running?

Mr DUIGAN - We'll bring Hugh Christie up to the table to give us advice around the chipper and its operations.

Mr CHRISTIE - The grant deed that has recently been signed by both Tyrecycle and Jason specifies mid-August next year for completion of the works. That's the final milestone.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, my next question is around the maintenance of roads and so on around parks. Annually, Parks have a road maintenance program. My interest comes from my local government days where a lot of the local government roads end up as park roads going into national parks, so the maintenance of them and how we manage them is a critical issue for our regional communities.

I know it's difficult to suggest what is going to happen in the forward year as far as the Budget goes, but I am keen to get an understanding of the 2023-24 year and what has been achieved over the last year as far as road maintenance. The road to Liffey Falls in my area is a Parks road. It's often inclement weather up there and it requires a fair bit of maintenance. We also need to keep the roads open for firefighting. Could you give us a highlight of what's been achieved over the past 12 months?

Mr DUIGAN - The National Parks Maintenance Boost and Road Renewal program supports essential asset repairs and maintenance work. The program provides $1 million in annual funding for a range of Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service maintenance projects across the state, along with $4 million as part of the Sustainable Road Renewal and Maintenance program, which is funded through 2024-25. This is in addition to specific road and bridge capital works projects.

I'd like to acknowledge our skilled operational staff such as field officers and rangers who undertake a number of unsung general repairs and maintenance work as part of their day-to-day responsibilities. Prioritised maintenance projects are identified through the PWS Asset Management system following inspections by staff in the field. We understand our road network, being around 1152 kilometres, is critical for locals and visitors to access our natural areas, as well as supporting industries such as nature-based tourism, apiarists and things of that nature.

In 2023-24, some of the key maintenance projects included: the installation of new toilets at the Freycinet National Park Wineglass Bay campsite at Cooks Beach; completion of the Lake Vera toilet works towards replacing the Franklin River picnic area toilets; repairs to the lighting system and electrical distribution repairs at King Solomons Cave; transport of a new utility task vehicle and stabilisation of asbestos roofs on Maatsuyker Island; jetty repairs at Partridge Island; removal of asbestos at Narawntapu National Park; and historic heritage maintenance and repairs, including to the Low Head Lighthouse keepers cottage, electrical upgrades at Entally House, window repairs at Highfield House and guttering repairs at the Ross Female Factory.

Your question spoke about roads: Lighthouse Road, Bruny Island; Waterhouse Road, near Scottsdale; Petal Point Road at Cape Portland; Sunflats Road, Saint Helens; Branch Point Road Corridor, St Helens; Beerbarrel Road, St Helens; Granite Point Road, Bridport area; and Seal Rocks culvert replacement, King Island. Funding of $1.3 million was also provided to

complete the Kanunnah Bridge strengthening project on the Sumac Road addressing structural and capacity issues.

There was also the delivery of a range of road drainage and vegetation clearing works within the Arthur-Pieman Conservation area as part of the government's $10-million commitment to recreation, including works for West Point, Bluff Hill, Airey Drive, Nelson Bay, Sarah Anne Rocks, Couta Rocks and the replacement of the Cassiterite Creek Bridge.

I am happy to provide some insight into what 2024-25 works may include. These are: Goblin Forest walk repairs; Shelley Point viewing platform replacement, funded over two years; Cape Tourville boardwalk repairs; Nelson Falls toilet emergency works; Crater Falls walkway replacement; Frenchmans Cap walking track steps replacement; Mount Rufus walking track maintenance; west coast walking tracks maintenance at Donaghys Hill, Bird River, Tyndall Range; Bernacchi Bridge replacement on Maria Island; Tasman Peninsula footbridge renewal at Stewarts Bay and Canoe Bay; Kangaroo Bluff priority maintenance; strategic peri-urban fire trail maintenance, Maatsuyker Island; and critical safety upgrades at Hartz Mountain Road, Ben Lomond Road, Jacobs Ladder and Rowing Course Road at Lake Barrington.

Ms FINLAY - Bringing it a bit closer to home to an area that both you and the Chair are particularly familiar with, Beauty Point. I am interested in exploring some of the circumstances around the removal of the diving board - 'divo' - there. I am wondering what contemplation there was by the department prior to the removal. Was there any salvaging of the materials, or any consideration of interpretation or documenting that structure to ensure that it remains in the memory of people, or consideration of its historical value to the community?

Mr DUIGAN - I understand and value your continuing interest in the matter. I would certainly extend that to members of the Beauty Point community and the Tamar more generally who have a connection and affiliation with the diving board going back some 80 years. As you would be aware, concerns were raised with council initially about the condition and state of repair of the diving board, which then set in train a course of actions. I think it's important for me to say at the outset that the safety of our kids and people using the diving board -

Ms FINLAY - I am interested in what contemplation there was, prior to its removal, of recording it for history.

Mr DUIGAN - I think I need to put that on the record because it is an important aspect of why certain decisions were made. In terms of the conservation, there was a good deal of community consultation, as you would be aware. I know the Secretary was at Beauty Point on more than one occasion speaking to the community to hear their various concerns and ideas around what should happen going forward. I will pass to the Secretary to talk to the question around preservation or otherwise.

Ms FINLAY - As a former Heritage minister, I would have thought you would consider that important.

Mr JACOBI - I appreciate the significance of that structure to the local community. I personally took a great interest in this because I have had a lot of history in a past life around structures, particularly in water bodies, that have caused deaths and catastrophic injuries to people. I was particularly interested in ascertaining the circumstances under which this

particular divo structure could stay. I conducted three workplace health and safety risk assessments, and those risk assessments dealt with -

Ms FINLAY - You might note that genuinely and quite respectfully, I didn't actually go down that path. My question is about the materials.

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay.

Mr JACOBI - I thought you asked what process was used to arrive at the decision -

Ms FINLAY - No, sorry. I will clarify the question, Chair. Acknowledging that there was a decision for it to be removed, given its at least 80 years of significant history in the community, my question was what consideration was given, prior to demolition, to materials being used in interpretation? What consideration was given to there being a historical record of that significance to the community through the materials?

Mr JACOBI - We had an engineering assessment which deemed the structure inappropriate to be retained. I specifically asked the team in the demolition process to retain and conserve any materials that were able to be reused in any shape or form. We had a discussion at officer level about whether they could be incorporated into an artwork or an interpretive piece or signage. None of the materials were able to be salvaged or were suitable for salvage.

We took photos prior to the removal so that we could demonstrate that, and we have photos available if you need to see those photos again. There was certainly no way in which the materials could be reused in any practical shape or form. However, we have photos, so if somebody wanted to use the photo in an interpretive sign to show what was there then that's absolutely something that could be considered.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you. Given your previous role with Heritage, the number of public art installations that are across the state in Parks' territories and the use of artists to interpret structures and information in history, and as a woodworker myself, I find it very difficult to believe that no elements of that structure were available to be used. I appreciate, and had not heard before, that you gave consideration to interpretation. Are any of those materials now held anywhere? Will the photographs that you've taken be available publicly on a record anywhere for people in the future to look back on that documentation?

Mr JACOBI - My understanding is that none of the materials were able to be salvaged, but I am absolutely open to using the photographs as a method by which to interpret what was there previously.

Ms FINLAY - I'd like to place on the record my disappointment about that. There were clearly physical materials available that could have been used in some way. I will go to my second question. You talked about death or catastrophic injury. I'm wondering if you can provide to the committee any formal records of death or catastrophic injury that resulted from use of the divo over its 80-year history.

Mr DUIGAN - I will pass to the Secretary for detail around that aspect.

Mr JACOBI - Any records of death of catastrophic injury are absolutely irrelevant to my responsibilities as the prescribed body responsible for the safety of the public.

Ms FINLAY - I am just asking if there is any record?

Mr JACOBI - There are no records that I'm aware of. In fact -

Ms FINLAY - There has been no catastrophic injury?

Mr JACOBI - I'm not aware of any records. I couldn't tell you if there has or there hasn't. Regardless of that, my workplace health and safety assessments, as I was about to mention - I did three assessments. I did an assessment of the structure as it was in situ. I did an assessment of a replacement structure, so a brand-new diving platform, and I did an assessment of a swimming pontoon. I can categorically assure you - and I'm happy to share those individual assessments with you, because they follow a documented, contemporary workplace health and safety risk analysis process - that retaining the existing structure was absolutely outside of the realms of reasonable safety. Even with signage, even with documentation and information provided to the community about the safety risks, it was absolutely unsafe.

Similarly, replacing the old structure with a new elevated platform in that location was again completely and utterly unsafe. Whilst the option of a swimming platform could have been contemplated, it requires a certain depth, and the depth that it requires to be safe for somebody who stands on it and dives off it meant that it would be located, I think, 225 metres from the shoreline. A distance of 225 metres is a long way. That puts the swimming platform way out beyond even the reasonable reach of a parent or a guardian. If a child were on that platform playing and got into trouble, it would be almost impossible for the parents or the guardian to reach that child within a reasonable period of time.

All of those workplace health and safety assessments informed my decision that there was no viable option to retain that structure, and I'm very disappointed that that was the outcome. However, I absolutely, hand on heart, believe that was the right outcome in the interests of public safety.

Ms FINLAY - Chair, the offer to table those three documents has been made. Can I ask that those documents be tabled, please? In addition to tabling those, I think it's interesting that there's a perception that the use of the divo was only by young people - perhaps playfully so. As the minister would be aware, many older members of the community continued to use that on a daily basis for their personal health and wellbeing and daily exercise. I would like for those three tables to be documented, I think it's important, but my -

Mr DUIGAN - I am happy to table those three documents, yes.

Ms FINLAY - I'm interested to understand that for the community and for those options reached. I would like you, as minister, to take note that there's now concern in the community that compared to other options for younger and older people of the community, whether it be the trees at the headlands or whether it be the wharf, it's now perceived by the local community that they're a greater risk to the community, and had there been a solution for like-for-like replacement of the existing structure, it is now possible that you put the community at greater risk.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, appreciate the question. I would lean on the secretary's explanation; it is not for the realm of government to be installing diving structures that have no water at the bottom of them at certain states of tide. I think times have changed since the divo was installed and the decisions made. It is a reflection of that and I think we as the government have to take our responsibility to the safety of the community seriously.

I think I can say this very much hand on heart, we also engaged in a process to understand if there were viable options to provide something to that community through the West Tamar Council, with whom we had a lot of engagement through this whole process, and we continue to offer help and support for things that the West Tamar Council might seek to achieve.

Ms FINLAY - Noting that there are many other structures around waterways in Tasmania where there is sand at the bottom of large drop-offs.

CHAIR - Order, please let the minister finish.

Ms FINLAY - Taking you to a different matter, minister, the recently distributed discussion paper on the phasing out of problematic single-use plastics in Tasmania. There's some concern within business around the impacts on expanded polystyrene and the use of fish boxes for our fish sector, and veggie boxes for our farmers, or whether it be waffle pods for building. I've got particular interest in the impact on salmon companies and our vegetable growers. What consideration has there been to exempt expanded polystyrene fish boxes from the phase-out?

Mr DUIGAN - I can say at the outset that salmon boxes or fish boxes are not under consideration as part of the phase-out process. It does not include what is commonly referred to as salmon or fish boxes, which are produced by Polyfoam at its Westbury factory in Tasmania. The proposed approach to phase out single-use plastics is being informed by national and international research.

We are absolutely aware of some of the impacts that this phase-out has in certain aspects. I know there are some medical applications where single-use plastics are not able to be successfully replaced at this time. Certainly, we will have exemptions where exemptions are required, and happy to work with industry and various other community sectors to make sure that this is fit for purpose for Tasmania, noting that plastic drink stirrers and things that have a 30-second useful life in somebody's hand but then spend the next 300 years rotting away in a landfill are probably something we can do without.

This process is ultimately set to address those problematic single-use plastics that do exist that we can take away and we should take out of the Tasmanian [inaudible].

Ms BADGER - Minister, why did it take six years before the department secretary contacted the federal department for the environment to clarify the impact on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC) assessment over the Lake Malbena heli-tourism proposal was having on the urgently required work on Hall's Hut?

Mr DUIGAN - I will seek some advice on this issue. I have an update on Hall's Hut. Whether it's six years or six months, is the question coming back at me.

Ms BADGER - It's been, I'd say, extremely urgent for six months, but we've known about the repairs and the fact that maintenance had to be ongoing on that hut for the full term of the lease, which is six years, if that helps clarify, minister.

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate the clarification. Thank you for that. I have some comments here that I wouldn't mind making. That's around the lease and the hut maintenance. Wild Drake has previously been advised to conduct a self-assessment of any potential impacts to nationally protected matters if they are intending to fly materials in for maintenance on the hut. The proponent has confirmed that he's received this advice from DCCEEW. Following this advice, the Director of National Parks has also written to the proponent requesting that a self-assessment be undertaken in regard to the conservation works required on the hut, as per the certificate of exemption that was provided by Heritage Tasmania in September 2022. This is a matter for the proponent to progress. However, of note, both Mr Greg French's correspondence and a corresponding report from Mr Daniel Hackett regarding the condition of the hut was sent to Heritage Tasmania for review on 6 September 2024. Heritage Tasmania reported that an examination of images from Mr Greg French, March 2024, show little decline from those at the time of heritage listing in 2021, and there were no concerns raised by Heritage Tasmania regarding the hut's condition since its listing in 2021.

Ms BADGER - Thank you for that update, minister.

My second question. In December 2023, you wrote to the people of Lewisham stating some works were going to be undertaken on the foreshore. I appreciate this has been a long-standing issue; there was previously an EPBC act assessment for aspects of that. In the letter you stated you're walking back from it. Parts of this community communication that you had were then reneged one Sunday afternoon quite suddenly. Did you endorse that decision or what went past your desk, minister, for those plans to so suddenly change without the community being communicated with, anything post your letter that you had previously sent in December 2023?

Mr DUIGAN - The Director of National Parks and Wildlife has been managing remediation works at Okines Beach, Lewisham. Following numerous reports, continued consultation with the community, residents and the Lewisham Foreshore Management Association over many years, as you referred to, the director formed the view that the most appropriate management approach for coastal erosion at the site was to undertake targeted remediation works. In advance of any works, the director inspected the site on 11 August 2024 and made a decision that the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service would remove illegal structures that pose a risk to public safety. Remediation works commenced on 19 August 2024. In terms of consultation with the community about the works being proposed and carried out, I believe there was engagement from Parks, letter drops and public consultation, so I would ask the Secretary to speak to that.

Mr JACOBI - I might call on Sophie Muller in a minute to talk to this. There's a lot of different opinions amongst the residents along Lewisham foreshore about what should stay and what should go. Some people want the structures to remain; some people want the structures to go. In the interests of making it not unlike what I did for the divo, I went down on Sunday afternoon, Sophie joined me and we walked up and down that foreshore and we looked closely at each of the structures. There are obvious structures that pose an immediate workplace health and safety risk. They are dilapidated, in very poor condition and unsafe. The determination was made right there and then because works were about to start; we confirmed that those structures

had to go. We also had a conversation around some of the walls. In my view, some of the walls looked, on face value, to be structurally sound enough that they were not posing any harm, they were not posing a threat to public safety or posing an immediate threat to erosion of the bank.

The decision was made at that time to keep those structures, or to keep parts of them. When the contractors started to undertake the works, the works revealed things behind the wall and also revealed the structural integrity of the wall. That led to subsequent decisions that the wall wasn't as sound as originally thought and that it had to be removed. Conversations were held with the property owners immediately behind and adjacent to those structures about their desire to either keep the wall or have the wall removed. In most cases, the people were quite happy to have the wall removed, so the works were undertaken.

I personally inspected the works at the Lewisham foreshore the weekend before last. I did a walk along the new track, and I've got to say that the work is incredibly well done and sensitive. There is still some more work to be done, but in terms of realigning the existing track away from the foredune, which is the intent to prevent people falling off the dune and to remove the risk of further erosion. Pushing the track back, realigning it and doing it the way it has been done has been very successful. It's quite a sensitive, gentle walk along the foreshore and the team's done a good job. Over the coming weeks they'll replace the existing staircases. I might call Sophie, if she has any information.

Ms BADGER - Before we do, I have two questions that arose from that. What date was the letterbox drop that you mentioned as part of consultation done? How was the communication captured when you were doorknocking to ask if people were happy to maintain the wall or not?

Mr JACOBI - I didn't do any doorknocking. My team has been responsible for communication.

Ms BADGER - Your department, not you personally.

Mr JACOBI - I'll call on Sophie for some details.

Ms MULLER - I don't have the specific date of that letterbox drop, but it was shortly before the works commenced. Over the years there has been extensive community engagement that Parks staff have undertaken and that engagement has helped to inform the final decisions that were made right up to and during the works being undertaken. Certainly, as contractors were there doing the works, community members were engaging with Parks staff on the scope of the work that was occurring and providing input and information into that. Given the extent of community feeling associated with that site, some of those views were taken into account where we could accommodate them and adjust the scope of work in response to the community interest.

Ms BADGER - Is it normal for Parks just to rock up on a Sunday afternoon and make decisions about projects? There seems to be a pattern happening here.

Mr JACOBI - I've been involved in Lewisham now for seven years, so this has been a longstanding issue. The whole coastal erosion and the impacts of coastal erosion on those properties has been a significant concern for that community.

Sophie and the team are relatively new to the Lewisham experience. I regularly enjoy going out in the bush and spending time in nature. If I get an opportunity to go and spend a little bit of time down at the beach or in the bush, I'll do that. There was an opportunity to go down and have a look at it with Sophie, look at the works that were proposed to understand the extent of the workplace health and safety risks and to make a determination because, ultimately, as the PCBU of the department, I held responsibility. If somebody injures themselves, I carry that responsibility. Particularly in a case where there are extensive structures that are in deteriorated condition in a public space, I have to take an interest. I don't hold back at all from taking the opportunity to go down there and walk that with Sophie and make a decision.

As Sophie mentioned, residents were coming out and talking with our staff during the construction works. Some of them lobbied to have the wall in front of them removed. I considered each and every case with the PWS team on merit. Our team member was on site every day to take questions from the community.

Ms BADGER - Extraordinary: seven years and we can still change it on a Sunday afternoon.

Mrs BESWICK - In February this year, the EPA ordered Recycal to shut down some of its operations at its Rocherlea site. The latest public information is that the company withdrew its appeal for in June. Are we able to update the committee on how this issue is going, because it has reduced Tasmania's capacity to manage scrap metal on island? And do we have a plan for scrap metal in the future?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, Mrs Beswick, I will provide an update for the committee. The Director of the EPA is at the table with us, so I will make some opening comments and throw to the Director for the most up-to-date status. I'm aware of the situation involving Recycal's scrap metal recycling facility at Rocherlea in the north. It's in my electorate and it is of particular interest to me. I have been on site to visit and see firsthand.

I'm advised by the EPA that Recycal is significantly non-compliant in some aspects of environmental requirements. The EPA is taking action to mitigate the risk, and manage the risk to the environment and the community being posed by the site. These environmental risks relate to excessive stockpiling of combustible material contaminated with metals, hydrocarbons and other hazardous substances; off-site discharge of polluted water, off-site migration of contaminated dust; and unauthorised disposal of a controlled waste. I'm particularly aware of those issues as environment minister. I take those issues seriously. I also weigh those issues against the notion that we would like to see our metal recycling facilities operating to their best possible capacity here in Tasmania.

Mr FORD - In my nine years in the EPA, this is the most complicated and challenging site that I've had to deal with. This is a four-way tension between public health, environmental health, the need to have a recycling facility and a viable business, and all of those things are not necessarily aligned. There is clearly conflict between them.

There are matters before the Supreme Court, both criminal and civil, or there have been civil matters. There are still criminal matters before the Supreme Court. There are matters that have been dealt with by TASCAT. This is very legally complex, it's fraught with some challenging policy in a planning and an environmental sense and then you've got the underlying technical challenge around a level of contamination. Fundamentally for this business to

operate, there has to be a solution to deal with the waste product, not just the saleable product. The challenge we have as a Tasmanian community is at what cost? Who bears that risk? Currently, what has been proposed by the operator transfers all that risk to Launceston City Council and the residents of Launceston. I have to be mindful of that in my decision-making process.

I could go on for three hours about it. I'm happy to brief you again personally out of session, rather than using the committee's time.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. I would add that I'm also working with the minister for industry to ensure the government is kept informed of the process and to support parties working toward a resolution that protects the environment and the local community while backing business here in Tasmania. That is important, but it's also critically important, and my expectation, that our businesses act lawfully.

Mr SHELTON - You've referred to the additional money that the government has provided in this year's Budget to support threatened species. I'm interested in what priority species you'll be focusing on in the next year and how these funds will be used to better protect our unique flora and fauna.

Mr DUIGAN - I am very pleased to tell the committee that our government is taking real action on our threatened species. An example is our establishment of a Tasmanian Threatened Species Fund with $8 million committed over the next four years. The fund will directly support conservation activities for priority species, and this includes Tasmania's unique threatened handfish. During a recent visit to Seahorse World at Beauty Point, I was able to see these unique creatures first-hand, including some very tiny two-day-old baby handfish. Seahorse World houses small numbers of both spotted and red handfish as part of a coordinated captive breeding program for these two endangered species. As part of the important work we're doing for our range of threatened species, I have asked my department to look at ways that we can best support and protect the red handfish in particular. I note that it is found in a very limited area here in Tasmania and it is locally important to the area we were just talking about. We need to look at how we can protect this species against threats which can include introduced predators, pollution, siltation and direct impacts such as boat moorings, anchor chains and coastal development, as well as habitat decline.

Last summer, the department supported scientists at the University of Tasmania's IMAS facility to collect 25 red handfish from the wild and care for them in captivity to protect their fragile population from record-high sea and atmospheric temperatures. Waters have now cooled and the fish have been successfully returned to their natural habitat.

NRE continues to work closely with the Australian Government Research Organisation and relevant stakeholders, including the National Handfish Recovery Team to put in place the most appropriate research and management approaches for this species.

The government is also taking action, of course, on Maugean skate, orange-bellied parrot, swift parrot and, as mentioned previously, our unique Tasmanian devil.

All Tasmanians have a role to play in protecting our native species and the new fund will help address high-priority species, conservation needs, as well as support collaboration through leveraging existing building knowledge and support planning and decision-making.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, minister.

Ms FINLAY - If I can just circle back to the conversation we had about EPS. I acknowledge that you put on the table an exemption for salmon boxes, but EPS is used in a lot of other materials and a lot of other processes, particularly business-to-business.

I just want to seek clarification from you that expanding polystyrene won't be banned in Tasmania for the following purposes:

- business-to-business packaging, including seafood and fresh produce boxes, but also packaging for large pieces of business equipment where the customer product is installed by a professional installer and the packaging is retained by the business,
- specialist packaging used in medical applications like organ transport and pharmaceuticals,
- moulded EPS for transport of precision and fragile consumer goods where there's no demonstrated viable alternative,
- EPS in building and construction, and
- business-to-consumer packaging where there's a demonstrated and effective reuse model in operation like the gelato boxes and bulk cold home-delivered meals.

Are you able to confirm that they will all be exempt?

Mr DUIGAN - It's not something that I want to be doing here at the table but in the case outlined in the examples you mentioned, all would have substantial weight. We wouldn't be going to do anything that would necessarily adversely impact any one of the sectors that you mentioned there, there being no viable alternatives.

Where there is no viable alternative it is not my intention to come out and ban something that cannot be replaced. I think that's counterproductive to what we're seeking to do, which is a much more sensible, balanced approach to taking out of the environment some of those things which don't pass the sniff test anymore.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you. I just want to move on. Recently, you were unable to successfully see the passing of the State Coastal Policy through the Upper House. That's got implications in a number of areas. One, the budget of the EPA. I'm just wanting to understand what the impact of that is on the budget for the EPA.

Mr DUIGAN - In terms of the debate that you referenced, I think we have elected to give more time for that debate to mature and it would be my expectation that we will see the progression of that piece of legislation. In terms of the impact of that and its intersection with the budget of the EPA, I would pass that to the Director to speak to.

Mr FORD - There should be no impact. It's an unrelated issue. Irrespective, in terms of the legislative outcome, there will be no impact on the EPA.

Ms FINLAY - You don't see that there'll be a domino effect of matters raised where the EPA might have to represent in matters and bring on more advice or act? You don't see that there will be any consequences of the delay in the progress of this policy?

Mr DUIGAN - I think what is critical is that we remove the legal ambiguity which surrounds coastal policy as it's currently being interpreted and applied, and I think that is a job for government.

Ms FINLAY - So are you saying that you don't currently understand or imagine that in the future there will be any extra work that the EPA will be called on to do? Any matters that they'll be called on to prosecute as a result of the delay of this coastal policy going through and therefore it will have no budgetary impacts on the EPA?

Mr DUIGAN - I would not expect the progression of the Coastal Validation Bill having a material impact on the budgetary position of the EPA.

Ms BURNET -I just wanted to talk about the Container Deposit Scheme which you announced today. It's been almost eight years since the Leader of the Greens moved a motion in the House pointing out that Tasmania and Victoria were yet to introduce a CDS. Victoria did, and your government has been announcing a Container Deposit Scheme regularly for five years now. It's really quite embarrassing that Tasmania is the last state to be implementing such a scheme when it does occur. Even today on the website, one of the scheme's operators, TOMRA, congratulates minister Jaensch and the Gutwein government on the announcement of CDS rolling out in 2022. Why should anyone believe that we will get this and why has it taken so long? Is the delay partly because it's been sitting with the lawyers of TasRecycle, Coca Cola, Euro Pacific, and Lion?

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate your question and thank you for your interest in the Container Deposit Refund Scheme. I think it's good and we are pleased to be progressing it. I do accept that the contract negotiations have been long and protracted. They have been. I'm relying on my memory here, but I believe there were something in the order of 233 deviations in the contract as it was first proposed, so it has been a substantial job of work. Again, I take the opportunity to thank the people that have progressed the work. There have been lawyers at either end of these contract negotiations and I am happy to pass to the Secretary to provide you with some more detail around this, but I'm pleased that we are here and we do have some firm expectations around commencement in the mobilisation phase.

Mr JACOBI - This is without doubt the most complex contractual arrangement that I've ever experienced. The split nature of the scheme between the Scheme Coordinator and the Network Operator has required significant negotiations. To be honest, it really has boiled down to the contractual arrangements between the state and the Scheme Operator and the contractual agency between the state and the Network Operator and how those two contracts intersect to deliver a seamless Container Refund Scheme. I do, as the minister has already stated, give credit to my team who have done an extraordinary job, spending well over 12 months negotiating the nth detail of every single clause in the contracts to make sure that this state and the public of Tasmania get the very best from this scheme, and that we realise the outcomes that were envisioned from this project.

Ms BURNET - My follow-up question is: since we will be the last state in Australia to introduce the scheme and we have other states, such as New South Wales - I think it's mostly based on New South Wales' model. It's just unbelievable that it takes so long. I hear your frustration. But what have we learnt from other jurisdictions? For instance, there is talk that a

10-cent deposit may not be really getting that 90 per cent return rate. So what have you learnt from other jurisdictions in relation to this?

Mr DUIGAN - Specifically to that, independent reviews of the New South Wales and Queensland schemes show that in the first year, consumer price increases were less than the contribution amount charged by the scheme. So that's good news. I think what we're seeing broadly in other states is container returns in the mid-60 per cent range We're hoping that in Tasmania, certainly in the initial stages, the expectation is that they increase over time.

We have the project manager here in the room, so I'm happy to invite Penny to comment.

Mr JACOBI - Through you, minister - as Penny's coming to the table - I think one of the benefits of being last is that we have been able to learn from the mistakes that have been made. We've gained considerable experience and knowledge from New South Wales and Queensland. Victoria, as you're probably aware, are in the sort of final throes of their implementation and operationalisation of their scheme, and there have been learnings that have come forward the whole way.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. Chair, I introduce to the table Penny Stoltz, Strategic Project and Policy Manager.

Ms STOLTZ - Thank you. There have been a range of learnings that we've taken from all the different jurisdictions where these schemes are currently operating. There are almost too many to go into individually, but we have been very cognisant to try to learn all those lessons as we've been going along. One example is the mobilisation period. That was very contracted in New South Wales, and it caused a few operational issues, so we've tried to choose an appropriate amount of time for our mobilisation to avoid some of those pitfalls.

There are other learnings we've had, just the administrative workings between the different operators in the state for how we process things. Things along those lines. There's been a range of national work done through the HEPA - Heads of EPA - committee about the behavioural interactions with the schemes as well. I think the report on that has just been released in a redacted way on the South Australian EPA website - we can provide you a link for that as well - and that specifically looked at that 10-cent refund and whether or not moving that up to a higher amount would have any impact. It also looked at a whole range of other factors as well that influence -

Ms BURNET - I guess it has to cover costs for the operators, as well. Everybody who's involved. This output of 60 per cent seems very low to me. What's the standard across other jurisdictions?

CHAIR - Can questions please be directed through the minister?

Ms BURNET - Yes, sorry. Minister, to you.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, and I will respectfully pass the question to Penny.

Ms STOLTZ - Thank you. The refund redemption rates in other states tend to be between 63-67 per cent. I guess that's a result of the type of model that's been chosen across Australia. The return-to-retail model that operates in Europe structurally can provide higher redemption

rates. But, that being said, the redemption rates in South Australia are a lot higher, and that's probably a result of the longer term they've been there, that intergenerational thing. So there is potential scope for these schemes to produce higher redemption rates over time.

Mr DUIGAN - It would be my expectation that Tasmania will be pretty good at recycling their cans. I'm sure you've all had representations from various groups about when this is happening and identifying it as a viable revenue stream. I think people are keen to see it up and going.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, considering the EPA currently holds an ultimate authority on a wide range of development projects and the government is looking to make efficiencies, what specific measures are the government contemplating to streamline the assessment processes? What steps is the government taking to make to guarantee that will still maintain these rigorous standards that we have?

Mr DUIGAN - In terms of things that I'm contemplating or delivering notably through the Energy and Renewables portfolio is the renewable energies approvals pathway. It's probably not relevant to be talking to it here under Parks and Environment, but it's one of the key things that we would seek to do to shepherd large scale developments through the potential labyrinth of the approvals pathways that governments require. I note that Tasmania has high standards when it comes to our environmental approvals and that's as it should be. We're not about to start rubber stamping anything. Giving levels of certainty around what is required as you potentially enter the approvals pathways is an important place to start so that the goal posts aren't moving around you as you contemplate that.

A sound environmental protection framework is obviously vital to government's plans for sustainable economic growth. As with all legislation, we're happy to consider issues as they arise and assess them on their merit. We don't consider the act, in principle, as not doing its job, and as such we're not planning a wholesale change to the act.

This budget has increased staffing in key positions in both environmental assessment and the scientific and technical area, which has allowed the EPA to deal with the increasing number of projects submitted to the authority for statutory assessment by the board. There are a number of things government is doing to help move that process along.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, we've all seen the headlines lately about walkers who head out to explore our wonderful landscapes but in very unfavourable weather. What advice would you provide to people to consider before they head out into our marvellous landscape?

Mr DUIGAN - I would encourage them to head out into our magnificent landscape and enjoy all that it has to offer, but I would caution them to be prepared. We obviously want walkers to experience our reserves, but we want them to do it safely. There are hundreds of different types of walks across the state for people to enjoy, from our short walks to multi-day remote wilderness experiences. But before you head out - and this goes almost without saying - you need to check the weather forecast, visit the alerts page on the Parks website for closures and safety advice, and visit TasALERT. Where weather conditions are not favourable, be flexible and change your plans. If this means don't depart at all; that's reasonable if the conditions aren't suitable. We see it time and time again that people, even experienced people get themselves into trouble.

Our alpine areas can change to sub zero temperatures even in summer; the last few weeks would underscore that. We know that Tasmania Police undertake a significant amount of search and rescue operations each winter - on average around 65 of them - even with the most prepared walkers still at risk of getting into trouble. Always carry clothing and equipment suited for all weather. There are a range of other things. Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) are strongly encouraged. Choose a walk that matches your capabilities. Tell someone where you are going and obviously when you intend to be back. If choosing one of our remote back-country walks, please use the online free registration system. That's really important. It ensures walkers have access to additional information including preparedness, so they can make sensible decisions to ensure our incredible emergency services, volunteers and staff are not put in dangerous circumstances unnecessarily.

The recent wild weather and storm conditions meant that a number of national parks and reserves were closed. Closures occurred to keep the public safe. Decisions are based on a range of reasons such as roads being blocked by fallen trees and inundational high winds. There's been significant effort by our staff to clear debris and ensure our parks are accessible wherever possible. I would like to thank our field staff for the work they did keeping parks open wherever it is safe to do so. As stated, it is critical that walkers check the alerts page on the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife website to keep up to date with recent events.

Ms FINLAY - Putting focus back into Bass and the Kate Reed Reserve, there has been, for over the last 10 or more years, desire for local developers to open up housing, what I would call west, I suppose, of Kate Reed Reserve. Those proposals include a roadway from that housing area down to the Bunnings intersection. I know there was not approval for that roadway in recent considerations of that land development. I'm wondering if Parks had a role in that and whether they saw favourably the opportunity that roadway has to open up access to Kate Reed, or if they had concerns around that?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, particularly the South Prospect development, as I believe it's called. The Kate Reed Reserve intersection in that development, and the need to provide suitable traffic access to what would be a large-scale development in that area. It is an area covering - and potential access through Kate Reed has been something that's been ongoing with Parks. I will give the Secretary the opportunity to provide the detail you are seeking on that one.

Mr JACOBI - Yes, I was of the view, and I met with Launceston City Council, that this was a really important strategic urban development area. There are limited opportunities in the Launceston area for significant growth and that site offers potential. The challenges around the actual location of the proposed sub-arterial road connection, as it's currently planned, it does traverse the southern end of Kate Reed Nature Recreation Area. Traversing a reserve is a challenging issue and to provide the approvals for that road to be constructed - and it wasn't just the road, it's also the retention stormwater basins attached to it - in order to provide approvals for that, there's a body of work the council needs to go through. They have to do an environmental assessment and demonstrate that the impacts to the reserve and to the values on that reserve can be mitigated or managed, and if they were to be lost, that they can be offset in some way, shape or form. The conversation with the council was that they needed to prepare information for my department to properly assess the proposal, then we can provide advice about the options available to create the road corridor.

Ms FINLAY - Subject to those commissions being met, Parks as an entity is open to the idea of that roadway opening up access. One of the reasons I raised this was to see where the concerns lie because having access to urban mountain-biking facilities is a positive thing. You often have to drive some way to get there. There's the skills park and the paths there, but there are safety concerns around where people are parking and accessing - kids on bikes right next to the number one highway. I'm wondering if you rest aside that roadway and that opportunity, what planning is being undertaken or what opportunities are there to increase the safety of users for that access point to Kate Reed Reserve?

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate that. I note all of the issues you raise and they are things that have been considered. The OCG, without wishing to -

Ms FINLAY - Bless the OCG.

Mr DUIGAN - The OCG is the coordinating agency for that particular piece of work. I know there's been a number of onsite meetings and issue of safety around accessing Kate Reed raised at all of those meetings, and I've had approaches made to me as well. My overarching comment as the minister for Parks is that I am open to our department playing a role as may be required. Currently, I don't believe we have anything in front of us.

Ms FINLAY - Part of the purpose of asking these questions is there's quite a number of issues in that location. There's access from housing; we need to unlock as much housing as possible. People who move into that development will then open-up housing stock in other areas of Launceston. There is the issue of safety around access for users to Kate Reed. There's also the issue of users of the highway travelling south out of Launceston and the intersection that we're talking about not being able to carry the capacity of the cars that want to turn left into Bunnings.

There are a number of high-level safety issues for our community there. I acknowledge that there was a response made to the Launceston City Council that they would need to demonstrate that they could meet those conditions. However, I wonder, whether as Parks or as the government, there might be a leadership role to be played here into finding a solution for this roadway recreational district that could open up a lot of opportunities for Tasmania. It seems that there are solutions. There are lots of individuals with needs, but someone needs to take the driver's seat on that. Is that something that you're open to doing?

Mr DUIGAN - As it intersects various areas of government, council, proponents, so on and so forth. I'm working and have regular contact with my colleague ministers who are engaged in this area. Council is probably best placed to be the lead proponent in this area.

Ms FINLAY - There are state assets more than council assets; there's roads and the reserve. They're critical and valuable assets to Tasmania and for Tasmanians' lives. Housing, safety, community, the park access, mountain bikers and the roads, that appears to me that the state should be driving it.

Mr DUIGAN - There is a degree of coordination that needs to be brought to focus on this.

Ms FINLAY - Someone needs to get it going.

Mr DUIGAN - It is the Office of the Coordinator-General.

Ms FINLAY - Bless.

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate that they're not here for you to ask. I don't know whether you've had them. As it occurs to me, given the number of intersects that there are in that project, it's probably a good order for the Office of the Coordinator-General.

Ms FINLAY - Would you say it would be useful for the Office of the Coordinator-General to have some advanced powers to bring things like this together?

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay.

Ms BURNET - More questions on the container deposits scheme. The scheme coordinator, TasRecycle, was set up by Coca-Cola and Lion, two of the largest drink producers in the world and they lobbied against the container deposit scheme introduction for years. On what basis were they selected as coordinator of the scheme and what alternatives were considered?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, I believe beverage producers are involved in all schemes across the country as very interested parties. For the processes to select our scheme coordinator, I pass to the Secretary.

Mr JACOBI - I will call Penny Stoltz back to the table. The tender process was subject to the highest levels of scrutiny and probity. We had an independent probity advisor on the panel who provided advice to the procurement team all the way through. That was really important in the context of some of the issues that you've raised. I will pass to Penny.

Ms STOLTZ - For the record, there are three beverage companies that are members of TasRecycle: Lion, Coca-Cola, and Asahi.

Ms BURNET - And Asahi, yes, thank you.

Ms STOLTZ - An open tender process took place in two parts for both the scheme coordinator and network operator. There was initially an expression of interest, followed by a request for tender, then the regular evaluation process took place as part of the procurement process and they were evaluated as being best value for money.

Ms BURNET - A follow-up question. Minister, this is a really important scheme, as we're all aware, to get right. I want to know what sort of management there is of the scheme and their progress, so going back to the outputs or their performance indicators of delivering the best scheme in Australia.

Mr DUIGAN - I guess the design of the scheme coordinator and the network operator being comprised of beverage companies who put containers into the market, noting that every one of those containers that comes into our market - despite a few vagaries around that little - has the scheme contribution amount contained within it. There is a bit of commercial tension for the network operator to get as many containers as it possibly can because it's not exposed to the cost of that. It does work well from that point of view, if we have sufficient deposit points. We are committed to 49, which gives a pretty good spread and covers King and

Flinders Islands and gets us out and about in the regions. It covers the major centres as well. We are well placed to have this being a very well subscribed CRS. I'm looking forward to it. We expect to see good numbers coming back.

Ms BESWICK - While we're talking CRS, what sort of collection points did we land on, vending machines or alternatives?

Mr DUIGAN - At the commencement, there will be no less than 10 refund points in the north and north west - where does it talk about what actually they are? I know we'll be having reverse vending machines and over-the-counter opportunities and things. I might just ask Penny to provide the exact details of how people will go about interacting with the scheme.

Ms STOLTZ - TOMRA Cleanaway offers a technology-led network for Tasmania. The majority of refund points will be the reverse vending machines. They're mostly going to be rolled out in supermarket car parks or something that's convenient for people. They'll also be five automated depots to allow for larger quantities of containers to be returned. I think there's going to be one over-the-counter location currently. The 49 locations are the minimum required under the community access standards for the scheme and it's open to the network operator to exceed that amount if they think that's worth putting the investment in.

Ms BESWICK - Will they be announcing sort of where all those are? Obviously, at some point they're going to tell us, but how quickly do we anticipate that that would be?

Mr DUIGAN - On the broad scale, I can offer 10 refund points for the north and north-east region, 8 refund points for the west and north-west region, and 19 refund points in the southern region, noting that doesn't add up to 49. The first 40 refund points will be operational at scheme commencement, with nine additional refund points coming online over the following few months. That is a relief.

Ms BURNET - When was it that there was a statement?

Ms BESWICK - They said mid - so basically 1 July.

Ms BURNET - 1 July, thank you.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you please provide an update on how the Land Tasmania office is supporting improvements for property dealings?

Mr DUIGAN - I beg your pardon, I might just take this opportunity, while we have some time, to read into the record information in regard to the lease query.

> The pony club current lease holding over since October 2023 in annual holding over currently agreement expired 31 October 2023. An application to renew the lease is still being assessed with consideration of the potential future use of the site.
>
> The Derwent Valley Men's Shed current lease commenced 1 April 2020, expires 31 March 2030, one further option to renew for 10 years to 2040.

Mr SHELTON - My question was about Land Tasmania office and supporting improvements of property dealings.

Mr DUIGAN - I have an update on how Land Tasmania is supporting improvements. The first electronic conveyancing land dealings have been lodged in Tasmania with the national electronic conveyancing system going live last August, which we're pleased about. This was a significant milestone for the Land Titles Office (LTO).

A comprehensive industry consultation and transformation of processes within the LTO to support Tasmania to stand alongside the nation. The system not only makes it easier for property transactions to occur, but also cuts red tape. Our government committed $2 million to see this project introduced and implemented, leading to improvements to government processes and benefits to industry and the wider community. The National Electronic Conveyancing System allows parties to electronically prepare and lodge dealings, exchange funds, and will remove the need for paper documents including paper cheques.

Property Exchange Australia, known as PEXA, were approved to provide and operate the electronic network. I'm advised that there are now 68 subscribers in Tasmania, being financial institutions, with conveyancing firms set to be invited to join the system after further transactions go live early next year. This national platform makes it easier for property transactions to occur within Tasmania but also right across the country. Excitingly, Tasmanian banks were the first financial institutions to lodge land dealings with the Land Titles Office using PEXA. Many of the banking institutions in Tasmania are already using the same system in other states.

This is a seamless integration for those businesses and creates consistency for processes which will result in efficiencies for customers. I'm advised the Commonwealth Bank of Australia completed their first refinancing transaction within the last fortnight, with Westpac and the National Australia Bank intending to also undertake transactions in October.

Mortgages and discharges of mortgages are the first processes for the system in Tasmania before all land transfer transactions come online next year. This reform is underpinned by the regulatory framework for national electronic conveyancing, which has been developed and maintained by all Australian jurisdictions through their participation in the Australian Registrar's National Electronic Conveyancing Council.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of Land Tasmania. Good work, and enjoy the fruits of your labour.

Ms WHITE - Just to follow up on the answer you gave, Minister, you indicated that the lease for Derwent Valley Riding Club expires at the end of next month and that the renegotiation of that is subject to future use of that land. What other uses of that land are you considering?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. I am happy to take that on notice and bring you back some information.

Ms WHITE - I will just make the point the club obviously would like certainty that they can stay where they are.

Ms FINLAY - Just as just as we're wrapping up, I'm wondering whether the documents that were promised to be tabled are available to table.

Mr JACOBI - I have got two of the risk assessments, but I mistakenly didn't email my third risk assessment to my team. If it's alright with you, I'll just provide them as a question on notice.

Ms WHITE - Thank you. In the final minutes, I'm aware that across a number of parks assets, there's a significant collection held of historical items. Whether that be at places like Cradle, at Lions Cottage in Stanley, or the Female Factory as an example. As I understand it, over a number of years there's been a commitment to actually document and compile an understanding of all of those assets and what condition they're in and what historical value they have. Further, I understand that that work is not commenced nor budgeted. Just wondering if there's a commitment to understanding the full quality of the collection held in parks assets? When will that work will start and be completed?

Mr DUIGAN - I would need to pass that one through to the department secretary.

Mr JACOBI - I have got to say, that's news to me.

Ms FINLAY - Okay.

Mr JACOBI - I'm very interested to know where this collection is. I know that we do have various artwork in various locations, but you're talking about a collection?

Ms FINLAY - No, sorry. I mean it being a collection. You have a number of historical assets that are in a lot of different properties or places around Tasmania, but as I understand it, it's not actually comprehensively understood as a collection of parks materials. In other traditional museums and art galleries, you have collections. They're recorded, they're understood, there are management plans, conservation plans and also the auditing of that. As I understand it, there's not a record of all of those items that are held within the different properties. Therefore, unfortunately, if someone were to enter a property, enjoy the look of something and take it with them, we would be none the wiser whether it was missing, because it's not fully recorded.

These days in contemporary practise, those things are digitally captured and then also publicly made available online so people can be aware of their historical artefacts that are held. As I understand it that's not something that happens in Parks at the moment.

Mr JACOBI - It's a very interesting question that you raise There are places like the Ida Bay Historical Society that have a huge collection of historical assets that were on Park Ida Bay Reserve, for example, that are curated and managed by the society. We have examples of that all across the state where historical organisations are curating and displaying and educating the public about assets that have come from parks.

Ms FINLAY - Well, for instance, at a recent visit to Highfield House, you go to the property, it's one of your assets. It's got beautiful items of historic value in there. That's just the first one that I can visually think of, so that is an example, which is one of your assets and the assets within your assets. Across a number of your properties, there are equivalent quality of items. Given the point that there's not a response to the question, it appears to me that there

probably isn't a well understood catalogue of those items where it could be then managed, conserved and known.

Mr JACOBI - We do have an asset register which would contain some of those assets. I can't say that would contain every single asset of every historical nature, but certainly would comprise the most significant assets -

Ms FINLAY - I suppose it is one of the issues, and the Chair would understand this, but it's a bit different to historical-

CHAIR - The time for the Minister for Parks and Environment has expired. The committee will suspend until 2.00 p.m.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you.

The committee suspended from 1.08 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

CHAIR - The time being 2 p.m., the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Energy and Renewables will commence. Welcome, minister. Would you please introduce the people at the table?

Mr DUIGAN - Certainly. With me at the table today we have Craig Limkin, Secretary of the Department of State Growth, to his right, Sarah Russell, Director of Climate Change, to my left, Ilise Bourke, my chief of staff, Mark Bowles, Acting Chief Executive Officer of ReCFIT, and Sean Terry, Executive Director of Energy. I have a short opening statement.

It is a pleasure to be here today to talk through the government's ambitious Energy and Renewables and climate change agendas. Seated with me, as I mentioned, are various departmental officials. ReCFIT is the government's key agency supporting Tasmania to reach its vision for reliable, sustainable and renewable energy development, as well as climate change action.

As you will see from the budget papers, we have two clear outputs under my portfolio, Energy and Renewables and climate change. These two outputs go hand in hand as we go about delivering some very ambitious policy agendas. As a state, we have a great deal to be proud of with our Hydro history, being 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable electricity and already being net zero in carbon emissions for the past nine years.

These globally significant achievements are due to a combination of our long-term renewable energy investments and our managed forest estate, along with ongoing reduction in our waste sector emissions. The Tasmanian government remains committed to seizing the opportunities offered by our world-class renewable energy resources for our climate and for our economy.

We are also committed to delivering the lowest possible energy prices for Tasmanians, but increasing demand means we must continue to invest in new renewable energy generation, storage and transmission. Even here in Tasmania, we face challenges to develop the energy resources we need to respond to demand for growth from electrification of our homes and businesses, the expansion of our existing major industries or new industries investing here.

Millions of dollars are being invested in the upgrade and expansion of Hydro to grow our solar and wind farm capacity and to build the transmission networks we need for the future. Over the next 12 months, ReCFIT will be progressing work on major energy projects such as stage 1 of Marinus, implementing the Renewable Energy Approvals Pathway, progressing the Bell Bay Hydrogen Hub and negotiating our Renewable Energy Transformation Agreement with the federal government.

ReCFIT will also be implementing projects from Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan, delivering sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans and finalising the first statewide climate change risk assessment. The government is not resting on our strong performance. We are continuing to invest in this portfolio.

Ms FINLAY - I'm interested, minister, in your commitment and sense of urgency in terms of meeting your targets. You've set an ambitious 200 per cent target and there's an interim target of 150 per cent.

We're not that far away from needing to get generation underway to meet that. It takes time to put it into the grid. There are only a few projects that are shovel ready. I'm going to start with Port Latta.

We have been asking you in parliament about that process and the extension that they need for their development application. I want to clarify, what do you see as the risks or impediments? Why wouldn't you provide an extension to the Port Latta Wind Farm?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm happy to provide an update around Port Latta. We're continuing to work closely with Port Latta on the development and delivery of its project, noting that, as you say, the DA for that particular project has been extended a couple of times and expires in February 2025. There are a couple of options in front of that project, one of those things being demonstrating substantial commencement of the project, which I think is eminently doable. I am aware that the proponent of that wind farm has contracts in place with civil procurement and civil works dates slated, so that is certainly one of the live options that is in front of Port Latta in terms of reaching in and providing an extension to the DA.

Obviously there is a piece of work required in that. I certainly haven't ruled that out as a course of action, but I would say to the proponent, given the DA has been live for a period of six years and substantial commencement is something that is well within the bounds of the company to engage with, that would be a pathway that I would ask them to consider.

I think it's important to recognise that when you talk to the proponents of that particular wind farm, they would point to the positive interactions they've had with Hydro Tasmania and other players in the energy market in Tasmania since the election and our refocusing of Hydro being an enabler of new generation in the state.

Ms FINLAY - That's curious, minister. Everyone is keen to see Tasmania succeed and to be able to have enough generation for our current needs in electrification, but also to attract future investment. You say that Hydro has been positive about the project; everyone is seeking to get a project. I'm not sure that you were there at the time, but at the recent Energy Development Conference, the entire renewable energy sector just wants to get a project across the line to allow the dominoes to fall. It is perfectly within your capacity to deliver this.

You say that substantial commencement is something that they can deliver. You said that with certainty. There is no certainty for the proponent that they can actually meet substantial commencement. I would be interested in what you would see the company need to deliver to satisfy substantial commencement.

Mr DUIGAN - I'm aware that that's a conversation that the company would be having with the Circular Head Council -

Ms FINLAY - I'm asking you as minister. You said that they can do that. What would you say they would need to deliver to satisfy that?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - As I understand it, they would need to satisfy council of that, not necessarily me.

Ms FINLAY - But you just said in a previous answer to the question that you are confident that they would meet that expectation. They are not. Yes, they've been in the process for six years. In terms of your history and the government being able to bring renewable energy projects across the line - we have projects that are seven, eight, 10 and more years. Within that six years, they've had COVID and they've had the supply chain issues as a result of COVID. They have been working actively towards this, but are not certain about substantial commencement.

It's within your capacity to deliver an extension particular to this project. Why won't you?

Mr DUIGAN - I haven't said that I won't, noting that -

Ms FINLAY - You haven't said that you will, minister.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - it's not a responsibility that lies in my remit. I think I would need to engage - and have done - with the Planning minister around what would be required.

Ms FINLAY - When no-one takes the lead, nothing gets done. That's the problem.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - I understand that, and I also -

Ms FINLAY - You could say yes. You could say that you want to progress this project.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - There are a number of considerations around any project, and I think the commerciality of the project needs to be weighed. It does -

Ms FINLAY - So, is that on your mind -

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay.

Ms FINLAY - My first question, Chair, was exactly this. What impediments or risk do you see to Tasmania of providing an extension to this project? You're starting to outline them now, and I appreciate that. Do you question the commerciality of the project, and could you list the other concerns that you have to providing an extension?

Mr DUIGAN - As I've said, I'm not ruling out providing an extension. However -

Ms FINLAY - Why don't you rule it in and do Tasmania a favour?

CHAIR - Ms Finlay.

Mr DUIGAN - However, I would encourage the company and the proponent to commit to substantial commencement of the wind farm.

Ms FINLAY - I've outlined to you why that's a risk.

CHAIR - Mr Bayley has the call.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, given the cost of large-scale batteries has reduced by a third since Battery of the Nation and Marinus Link was first contemplated and the cost of transmission and cable infrastructure has doubled, we're interested in the government's continued assertion that Marinus Link is a viable investment and that it would reduce power prices for Tasmanians. What's the current projected cost to Tasmania of Marinus Link, for one cable and for two? Also, in relation to the business case that's being prepared and will be publicly released - you've made that commitment - can you confirm it will have social and environmental parameters built into the cost-benefit analysis, or is it a business cost-benefit analysis alone?

Mr DUIGAN - I note there is a reasonable amount of scope in the question. In regard to Marinus Link as opposed to potentially the notion of battery storage, I think battery storage will be and is an important part of electricity delivery going forward, but it is limited in the time of storage that it offers - battery storages are measured in a few hours. What Tasmania has in its hydroelectric system is deep storage that offers renewable energy storage over a much longer duration. That is the opportunity in front of Tasmania: to leverage the highest and best use of those storage opportunities.

I believe that Marinus has and will continue to have absolute relevance, noting that batteries will perform a function in the NEM. In terms of the whole-of-state business case, which will be delivered and made public 30 days before the FID determination for Marinus Cable 1, it's a piece of work that is absolutely ongoing. It's being led by Treasury. In terms of the scope and things that are being considered in that, I would ask the CEO of ReCFIT to make some comments about things that may or may not be included in the whole-of-state business case.

Mr BOWLES - While Treasury is leading the whole-of-state business case, ReCFIT is engaged in terms of being involved on the steering committee. They are looking at a range of factors in terms of costs and benefits. That includes fiscal costs and benefits to the state Budget; economic benefits in terms of support to industry, both in terms of supply of and security of

energy, as well as the stimulus from the jobs that may be created from the rollout; as well as the impact on customer prices, so that's the potential for wholesale price decreases compared to what they'd otherwise be, as well as the transmission cost. All of those factors are in there.

Mr BAYLEY - To confirm, the question around social and environmental cost-benefit as well, is that in there?

Mr BOWLES - In terms of social, social will be included in terms of jobs impact and, to a degree, regional jobs impact. The degree to which it covers environmental impact, I'd have to refer that to Treasury.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, in terms of the final investment decision being pushed back to 2025, what's the reason behind that? Is it the work that's going into this business case?

Mr DUIGAN - The FID plan is a matter for the board of MLPL, and they have requested that the FID decision be moved from December 2024 to May 2025. I think that's mostly around the quality of the information that would feed into the FID plan and having a better understanding of what the numbers are so we can make that determination with more certainty.

Mr BAYLEY - Are there particular areas that are difficult to ascertain? Are you having trouble coming to those numbers?

Mr DUIGAN - Again, it's a matter for the board to determine what they see as the most appropriate time to make an FID determination. I would imagine having recently secured converter stations procurement and also a slot for the cable manufacturer helps to continually firm up what the ultimate cost of the project will look like and what the cost to customers will be as we go.

Mr BAYLEY - The first question, what is the current cost?

CHAIR - Mr O'Byrne has the call.

Mr DUIGAN - I am happy to provide that. The current estimate for Marinus stage one is $3.1 billion to $3.3 billion.

Mr BAYLEY - And stage 2?

Mr DUIGAN - I believe that in totality it takes us to $5.5 billion.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, TasNetworks staff arrived at work this morning and when they were opening up their computers and logging in, they were confronted with an image, a piece of spin - that's the best I can call it - from TasNetworks, which essentially - in relation to their enterprise agreement - says that if they vote no, they won't get a pay increase and virtually, Christmas leave is cancelled. On every screen they opened up, this image was confronting them. It's misleading, it's dishonest, it's Orwellian. Do you support these kinds of tactics?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm going to have to refer you to GBE scrutiny. That's a -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr O'BYRNE - This Budget relies on dividends to fund. You are the minister responsible. This is the first opportunity we've had to raise it with you. It's still within your purview. Do you support these kinds of tactics?

Mr DUIGAN - What I support is TasNetworks staff being well rewarded for the jobs that they do. I support the process that is being used to complete that EA negotiation and I will be happy to explore those matters further with the business.

Mr O'BYRNE - Do you support employees being force-fed misleading information or essentially being threatened with no wage increase, which is not true, and that effectively Christmas and shutdown leave may be cancelled?

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate that that is an operational matter and I will refer you to GBE scrutiny.

Mr GARLAND - Who and how many of the consultants have been engaged by ReCFIT in regards to Marinus Link, the North West Renewable Energy Zone and the North West Transmission Developments?

Mr DUIGAN - Information around consultancies on Marinus, the North West TD and sorry what was the third one?

Mr GARLAND - The REZ.

Mr DUIGAN - The Secretary potentially has some information to add here on that one.

Mr LIMKIN - Through you, minister, and thank you. Mr Garland, first of all, this information is contained in our annual reports. I'm really happy to give it to you now but I just want to be clear, the department actually provides a list of consultants in our annual reports every year.

In relation to the specific ones you've mentioned, we have engaged KPMG Australia to do the Renewable Energy Zone market design for the Marinus interconnector. This was about provision of expert advice on technical and market design options for the North West Renewable Energy Zone under a single Marinus interconnector scenario. We engaged Deloitte Touche Tohmatso on the Tasmanian whole of government state business case assessment for major energy projects. They provided expert advice on a number of scenarios and the criteria we should do to test the projects. KPMG also provided advice on the Renewable Energy Zone framework that the state has been preparing and there are no more consultancies in those areas that you mentioned.

Mr GARLAND - Could we get a breakdown on the costs to engage those consultants?

Mr DUIGAN - Do you have that cost information?

Mr LIMKIN - I do, minister. On the KPMG Australia Renewable Energy Zone market design, it was approximately $93,000. In relation to the Deloitte whole state business case assessment, it was approximately $2.3 million. In relation to the KPMG engagement for the Renewable Energy Zone, it was $50,000.

Mr SHELTON - The government implemented the Energy Saver Loan Scheme as an approach to support households and small businesses to invest in energy efficiency products and reduce the power bills. Has this program delivered its intent?

Mr DUIGAN - It has, thank you very much for the question. The Energy Saver Loans Scheme (ESLS) was launched in October 2022 to provide households and small to medium enterprises with interest-free loans of up to $10,000 to spend on a range of approved energy efficiency products. The scheme has been a huge success with significant demand from the community. As of 9 December 2024, there have been 6069 applications received for the ESLS, with 5137 approved. The scheme has seen Tasmanians invest in energy efficiency, with the most popular products being solar PV, efficient electric heating/cooling systems - heat pumps predominantly, double glazing window replacements, hot water heat pumps and solar, battery storage, solar PV and batteries, and building insulation. The scheme has been adjusted based off feedback to also include energy efficiency appliances, double glazing and EV charging infrastructure.

There have been 125 vendors accredited under the scheme to provide services to applicants, with the average loan value being $8400 per applicant and the total value of energy efficiency investments being more than $44.8 million. Pleasingly, this investment has occurred through Tasmanian small businesses with almost 70 per cent of activity being undertaken by Tasmanian local vendors. This program has been very successful in supporting Tasmanians to invest in energy efficiency and reducing their future energy bills. It's part of the government's suite of initiatives to help households and small businesses reduce the cost of their energy bills.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, if you're not committed or motivated to help get Port Latta across the line, let's turn our focus to Whaleback Ridge. I'm wondering what are the impediments to being able to deliver a staged lease?

Mr DUIGAN - Whaleback Ridge, one of our large gigawatt-scale wind farms, is currently in the major approvals process. There are currently three wind farms in Tasmania that are in the major approvals process. We would seek to deliver a more secure planning arrangement through that process. We are continuing to work with Whaleback Ridge. I have been out to the site a couple of times. I think most people who have been out there agree that it looks like a really prospective site for a wind farm. It's in close proximity to Granville, which is one of Australia's best-performing wind farms.

The proponent has sought a longer-term lease and wants to negotiate the main lease over the larger development area. The lease will be coordinated through the major projects process.

Ms FINLAY - You do understand, with these large-scale developments there are certain things that are critical as you work through a project that you need to secure before taking the next step. By not being able to issue that staged lease at this time, you're holding up their capacity to participate in other programs. For instance, without being able to have a secure agreement over their land tenure, they can't participate in the federal Capacity Investment Scheme. By not executing that, it could be conditional. There are ways that you can deliver that instrument. My question is, what's holding you up from delivering that now? It's actually impacting the proponent.

Mr DUIGAN - In my role as the minister for crown lands, I have issued landowner consent for the project.

Ms FINLAY - I understand that.

Mr DUIGAN - That is an important step in that process.

Ms FINLAY - However, there's a gap between that and executing a formal staged lease for the proponent. You gave landowner consent. Why are you now not executing a staged lease for the proponent?

Mr DUIGAN - We will continue to work with the proponents as they make their way through the approvals processes.

Ms FINLAY - You're holding up the capacity of the project by not being able to deliver that.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms FINLAY - My question specifically is, on what grounds are you not executing the staged lease? What are the impediments?

Mr DUIGAN - My understanding is that the staged lease is conditional on a major approvals process, so it is conditional on the process that they are currently in.

Ms FINLAY - You're saying that you could enter into a staged lease and make it conditional on approval from the major projects. Is that something you can do now, minister? That's how these instruments work. You are holding up the proponent from being able to actually further progress their project in order to deliver new generation for Tasmania. You have this within your capacity. If that is the only impediment then you can have it drafted to make sure that it is conditional on that. Why won't you do it?

Mr DUIGAN - As I say, we continue to work with the proponents including West Coast Renewables -

Ms FINLAY - Minister, while you continue -

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay.

Mr DUIGAN - We are supportive of the project and will continue to work with them when they bring something to me. Happy to look at that.

Ms FINLAY - So, you talk about your support for projects -

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finaly.

Ms FINLAY - I think he's finished, Chair. You talk about your support for projects.

CHAIR - No, you've had your allocation.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, back to Marinus and Tasmania's 17.7 per cent equity stake in that project. The Budget, in budget paper 1, page 22, under risks, notes that 'Tasmania may be

required to contribute additional equity which has not been budgeted for'. What additional equity is contemplated? Is there an upper limit and why do we need to do this?

Mr DUIGAN - It should be known that Tasmania's investment in Marinus Link up to date, in that Marinus Link was, prior to March 2024, a wholly owned subsidiary of TasNetworks that has since passed into a tripartite arrangement with the Commonwealth, Victorian and Tasmanian governments, as part of that process Tasmania's equity expended - so far $103.5 million is being recognised as an equity contribution. We would not expect any further calls on our equity, certainly before the final investment decision date of May 2025. Should the Marinus project progress positively, which we certainly hope it does -

Mr BAYLEY - The Budget contemplates it though.

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, it is certainly something that would need to be taken care of in the Budget. There is the prospect of a further equity call over time -

Mr BAYLEY - What would that be for though? I guess that is the question.

Mr DUIGAN - The way Marinus is constructed is that it's 80 per cent debt-funded through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, concessionally debt-funded at the Commonwealth and the remaining 20 per cent would be met in equity by the project partners along the lines of their amount of ownership. My understanding is, at the current cost, Tasmania's exposure to equity is around $140 million out to 2030 and I believe -

Mr BAYLEY - If costs escalate.

Mr DUIGAN - I've taken that number off the top of my head.

Mr BOWLES - I believe that's around about the number.

Mr BAYLEY - Former premier Mr Gutwein argued that Tasmania should pay no more than 10 per cent of Marinus Link's costs because Tasmania would get no more than 10 per cent of the benefits. What evidence is there that the benefits are greater now for Tasmania? What's underpinned your decision to up our equity stake by that 7.5 per cent or thereabouts?

Mr DUIGAN - The important piece of work that we're doing to firm up all of those numbers is the whole-of-state business case to understand that Marinus continues to stack up for Tasmanians. We've been quite clear in our enthusiasm for the project. We understand that it has a very positive impact on supporting new renewables in Tasmania and supporting our renewable energy target and jobs and industry. But we have also been really clear in the understanding that from the Tasmanian perspective, it should only proceed if it stacks up in the best interests of Tasmanians. So, the whole-of-state business case gives us the opportunity to test the numbers at that time, noting that all project partners need to take a positive bid for the project to commence. I also point to the fact that if the project does commence and at a later time, after commissioning, Tasmania wishes to sell down its stake in Marinus Link then it has the ability to do so.

Mr BAYLEY - But back when there were two cables, Mr Gutwein was -

CHAIR - Mr O'Byrne has the call.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, do you support the use of close to $5.5 million worth of taxpayers' money by TasNetworks to distort an enterprise bargaining outcome?

Mr DUIGAN - Again, Mr O'Byrne, I am sorry, I am going to leave that for GBE scrutiny. We will have the opportunity to fully explore those matters at that time.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, are you aware that if, for example, you started at TasNetworks tomorrow that you would be eligible for that $6000 payment? Do you think that's fair?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, and again, I will refer you to -

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, the Budget is underpinned by evidence from TasNetworks; I believe it's within your purview.

Mr DUIGAN - I just don't think it's appropriate for me to be discussing these matters here at this table, in this forum, discussing IR matters that are a matter for a government owned business.

Mr O'BYRNE - You don't have any responsibility for TasNetworks?

CHAIR - Mr Garland has the call.

Mr GARLAND - The spatial analysis report as undertaken by Aurecon underpins the north west renewable energy zone (REZ). Will you immediately table this report unredacted so that members of parliament and the community can assess the basis for highlighting the current boundaries of the north west REZ?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, I appreciate the question. I don't know that I'll be committing to do anything of that nature, but I would certainly ask the CEO of ReCFIT to provide you with some detail around that project.

Mr BOWLES - Through the minister, following your request, we have reached out to the other agencies that contributed to that work requesting feedback on any sensitive information that would be inappropriate to release and we're just going through that at the moment. Our default position, from ReCFIT's position, is that we would intend to release as much as we can.

Mr SHELTON - The Budget contains an allocation of $1.8 million over four years for the implementation of the Small Business Energy Efficiency Grants Program. Why is this initiative important and how does it complement other initiatives the government has in place?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, Mr Shelton. The government made an election commitment to offer $1000 grants to small businesses to participate in energy efficiency assessments and we're delivering on that commitment with $1.8 million over four years in the Budget. The program has the following features:

- Grants or subsidies up to $1000, person or business, toward the cost of energy efficiency assessments.

- Depending on the findings from the energy audits, further financial support for actioning recommendations could come from the energy scheme which provides, interest-free loans.

- Audits could also provide recommendations to businesses to pursue more competitive tariffs or contracts.

- Improvements identified through an audit could be highly varied, including updating obsolete equipment, installing solar panels and batteries, modernising premises with energy efficiency like energy efficient lighting, insulation or window treatment, and as a government we are focused on keeping downward pressure on electricity prices and our records supports this.

- Small business electricity bills in Tasmania are the least costly and regulated prices have been the lowest in the country. This new measure will increase energy efficiency, saving money and operational costs, as well as helping to reduce emissions and supporting a clean future.

Work is already underway by the department to get the program ready to commence in coming months, including consultation with the Tasmanian Small Business Council and other stakeholders. It is expected the grants will be made available through the DSG Smarty Grants platform which is well understood, so look forward to seeing that program rolling out in the not too distant future allowing businesses to save on their energy.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, just reflecting back on an answer you provided to another member of the committee around Marinus and you use the word, 'if' - if Marinus progresses. Is it your intention to support Marinus to progress or are you uncertain about it?

Only last week or the week before, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer of Tasmania, said he hoped that it got across the line, a bit like your comments on the two projects I've mentioned already, Port Latta and Whaleback Ridge. Your own target to get to 200 per cent; the billions of dollars of investment that are sitting waiting to be realised in Tasmania rely on Marinus. Are you doing everything within your power to deliver Marinus for Tasmanians?

Mr DUIGAN - Let's be very clear, Marinus Link is a key project and initiative of this Liberal government through its term. It is highly ambitious, it is a big project for Tasmania and we are absolutely committed to seeing it through. We understand the benefits that Marinus will bring $1.3 billion in economic activity through its construction with a great many jobs for the state, but also the role it will play in unlocking renewable investment here in Tasmania. That is its reason for being. That is why we have got this project going, but it needs to be recognised that it is a big project. We need to be clear-eyed in the decisions that we make about Tasmania's future and understand them and I think that's the key consideration; to fully understand the implications for Marinus and what it means for the state of Tasmania.

That's why we are doing the work, as you would expect us to do, for any project that is scoped in the billions of dollars, that we do the work and we understand what the potential implications are. As a government we are very committed to it. We have our legislative target - one of the most ambitious anywhere in the world - so, I don't think our ambition can be confused.

Ms FINLAY - That's the concern that Tasmanians have though, minister. When you talk about 'if something's going to happen', saying 'we hope it happens'. Not being able to take action when it's squarely in front of you, not being able to extend the development application for Port Latta, not being able to execute a staged lease for Whaleback Ridge. It feels like you feel very confident talking about things, but when there's an opportunity to take action you don't.

You have a very ambitious target, 200 per cent. There is an interim target of 150 per cent. No action that has been taken will get us there. One of the things that I am interested in is, can you please step me out over the years ahead, year-by-year, how you expect to meet the interim target when there's no action being taken by the government? In a granular level.

Mr DUIGAN - I refute entirely the notion that there has been no action taken by the government. This government has -

Ms FINLAY - You're relying on legacy and history.

-

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - This is an extremely ambitious renewable -

Ms FINLAY - Ambition without action is nothing, minister.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - It is an extremely ambitious renewables agenda and continues to be so. Marinus Link obviously is the centrepiece of that. I think it is important to recognise that there's a financial investment decision to be made in May next year and as we approach that investment decision point, we need to be open and clear-eyed in our thinking about that. Those are my statements there.

In terms of actions by the government, there are a great many actions that we have made including - since the election campaign - redirecting Hydro back to its foundation principles and I'm sure as you speak to renewable proponents around the state, they will say what a positive move that has been.

We are advancing our renewables approvals pathway, another very positive aspect of what we are doing to help stand up new renewables here in Tasmania.

Ms FINLAY - I'm going to re-ask my question, which was my second question. Can you outline for me at a granular level the way that you intend to meet your 150 per cent interim target? It seems to me in talking to others that you're not going to meet it, that there hasn't been enough generation put into action to meet that target. Year-on-year, until that interim target, how are you expecting to meet that?

Mr DUIGAN - I would point to the fact that there have been 7 gigawatts of wind generation identified as prospective here in Tasmania. In our major project approvals pathway, there are currently three projects, two of which are gigawatt-scale projects. Contained in those three projects alone is more than 2300 megawatts of generation slated for Tasmania.

Ms FINLAY - Can you indicate to me year-on-year -

Mr DUIGAN - There is a great deal -

CHAIR - Order, order.

Ms FINLAY - how are you going to meet the 150 per cent target?

Mr DUIGAN - of new generation on the books.

Ms FINLAY - Have you got a year-on-year chart that shows your progress towards that?

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay, please allow the Minister to answer.

Mr DUIGAN - I suspect you probably know the landscape as well as anybody regarding what is out there in the market and where they are in in terms of their approach.

Ms FINLAY - Do you not want to answer the question because you know you won't meet it?

CHAIR - Order. Minister, have you finished your answer?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, what is your projected cost of the use of the Basslink cable to TasNetworks? It is now before the Australian Energy Regulator for a decision. Has there been a provision made for it and how much is that?

Mr DUIGAN - I don't believe there would be a cost to TasNetworks. The Bass Link cable is currently undergoing a process to make it a regulated asset. That's a conversation between Bass Link's owner, APA, and the Australian Economic Regulator (AER). The Tasmanian government supports the move of Bass Link becoming a regulated asset. I have written to the chair of the AER and met with her to highlight the importance of an equitable outcome between Tasmanian and Victorian customers.

Currently, all the costs of Bass Link are born by Tasmanians in one way or another through a services agreement with Hydro Tasmania. We think that it's highly appropriate that Victorian customers pay their share for access and use of the Bass Link interconnector. That's the Tasmanian government's position. The Victorian government has a contrasting view, as you probably appreciate, but in terms of costs to TasNetworks, I'm not aware of there being an attributable cost to TasNetworks in the regulated outcome.

Mr BAYLEY - In terms of conversations with the other shareholder governments in Marinus regarding the cost of the use of that cable, should it ever be laid, what percentage of the cost of the use of the cable would be borne by Tasmanian businesses? How will that be absorbed? Will that be absorbed by customers?

Mr DUIGAN - As a regulated asset, yes, the cost of the cable through the life of the asset would be borne by the customer bases in Victoria and Tasmania. That is the answer.

Mr BAYLEY - With such a massive upfront capital investment in a project like that, how can you say that power bills will come down with an investment such as that, if the costs are going to be passed on?

Mr DUIGAN - Marinus Link will have a profound effect in terms of delivering more megawatts of energy into the Tasmanian market, whether it's supporting the development of new renewables on island or the ability to access other energy. For example, if you look at what the cost of energy is on an average sunny day in Victoria - and it's minus $40 a megawatt hour - our ability to import that into Tasmania at that price when we're getting paid to take it, getting paid to keep water storages in our hydro system, and in the converse opportunity, when prices are higher on the mainland, the opportunity to send some of that saved water back across the -

Mr BAYLEY - If we're paying for the use of that asset hugely, and we're tied to mainland prices, how can you say that it will bring prices down?

Mr DUIGAN - Because, fundamentally, it's a question of supply and demand in the wholesale energy availability in Tasmania. There will be a substantially greater supply of energy.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, when will the next wind farm be built in Tasmania?

Mr DUIGAN - I'd like to see Port Latta wind farm's substantial commencement along the lines of later this year. The substantial commencement of the pouring of a slab.

Mr O'BYRNE - I'm asking when it's up and running?

Mr DUIGAN - When it's up and delivering? I think it's a two-year build, so potentially 2027.

Mr O'BYRNE - Is that your target date? Potentially or actually?

Mr DUIGAN - It's a private project. I don't have control over when it would stand up. We will continue to work with them. What I would point to is seven gigawatts of private wind investment slated for Tasmania.

Mr O'BYRNE - Slated?

Mr DUIGAN - Across the country there are challenges, and these things do not just pop up out of the ground. Typical lead time is around eight years, I'm advised. That's what it is. Across the country last financial year, I believe there were two wind farms. It's a low number. They don't just erupt out of the ground. There is a long lead time on them.

Mr O'BYRNE - Erupt is probably not the best word there. They're not moving. Maybe glacial, at the other end of the spectrum.

Mr DUIGAN - There's a job of work, and rightly so in many instances because we have to make sure that the planning work that goes into them and the approvals that they are given to operate stand up.

Mr O'BYRNE - Apart from Port Latta, is there another one that you might hazard a date on?

Mr DUIGAN - I would point to a number of wind farms that are working through. There's the three in the major approvals process, so we have North East Wind, Whaleback Ridge and also Bell Bay Wind Farm. We have the St Patricks Plains Wind Farm in the central highlands, which has passed through the local planning pathway. It's moving through and has received EPA approval as well. There are a number of these projects, and if, for example, those four get built, we're there. They are big wind farms and they add substantially to the energy mix here in Tasmania.

Mr GARLAND - Minister, the current baseline energy consumed annually in Tasmania is 10,500 gigawatt hours. In gigawatt hours, what is the current total combined potential renewable energy generation of all of the wind and solar projects currently proposed for Tasmania that have either been approved or are currently being formally assessed to achieve approval?

Mr DUIGAN - In gigawatt hours? That's an interesting question. I'm not sure I could do it in gigawatt hours. I'm happy to ask ReCFIT to turn their mind to that. Certainly, as I refer to, there are seven gigawatts worth of renewable energy projects in our investment pipeline. I guess if they run for an hour, they produce seven gigawatt hours, but we're doing some backroom maths to have a look at that. In fact, I think our total baseline usage is closer to 11,000 gigawatt hours these days; there has been some growth in our economy. That's the 2020 number, I believe, the 10,500, which we need to double by 2040.

Mr GARLAND - If Whaleback Ridge Wind Farm was approved and developed to its full capacity of three gigawatts, would this double Tasmania's energy generation capacity from 10,500 gigawatts hours to 21,000 gigawatt hours and meet the legislated target of 200 per cent energy renewables?

Mr DUIGAN - As I understand it, Tasmania's generation and import capacity is around about 1700 megawatts - 1.7 gigawatts - or thereabouts. A wind farm in that part of the world would have a capacity factor of around about 45 to 50, potentially, so a three-gigawatt wind farm would have an output of 1.5. It would be getting close.

Mr GARLAND - Getting close to that 200 per cent?

Mr DUIGAN - Getting close to 200 per cent.

Mr GARLAND - To the target in one place.

Mr DUIGAN - If you build it out to that scale.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, we've heard already today there are issues out there around approval pathways for renewable energy developments. Can you provide comment on what the government is doing to address these concerns and how the Renewable Energy Approval Pathway initiative will help accelerate new energy projects?

Mr DUIGAN - I have no doubt that the renewable energies pathways which we have spoken about and lightly touched on will have the effect of making renewable energy projects

more deliverable here in Tasmania because it seeks to take those largescale renewable energy projects through the major approvals process. We know that one of the main hurdles behind any development can be the complexities which are centred around the approvals pathway and migrating through the loop assistant and so on.

REAP also brings more resources to agencies to improve the process and support proponents to navigate the approvals pathway. REAP was identified as an outcome of the renewable energy assessment process review and an action of the government's renewable energy coordination frameworks.

Components of the REAP include the establishment of a major renewable energy project and case management function in state government, comprised of a dedicated case management officer for each project and a cross-agency team to facilitate a more integrated and coordinated pre-assessment process; development of sector-specific renewable energy information requirement guidelines for the major projects process; more resourcing for regulatory agencies, including the Tasmania Planning Commission, the EPA and Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, because we know those are potential bottlenecks; and a coordinated pre-assessment process, including assisting proponents to navigate landowner consents such as reserve activity assessment processes ahead of formal entry into the major projects process.

None of this, importantly, will seek to reduce or dilute or remove any of the robust assessments of land use, Aboriginal heritage, environment, threatened species or related infrastructure, but will simply seek to make it an easier path through those approvals processes.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, I want to go back to Tasmania being able to meet this interim target, and the question from Mr O'Byrne before about the next wind farm that you see being up, operating and generating energy into the network. You mentioned Port Latta as maybe operating by 2027-28, but that has a very small number of megawatts, so it's not going to meet your target. What other projects do you see will be generating renewable energy into the grid before 2030?

Mr DUIGAN - What I'd say generally -

Ms FINLAY - Not generally.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - I would reiterate that a message I hear often from proponents that I talk to is their desire for their projects not to be used as footballs and be unduly brought into the public realm as they continue to do work behind the scenes.

Ms FINLAY - This is a positive conversation, minister. Or it could be.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - I appreciate that, but I want to acknowledge the fact that I have been asked on several occasions not to be too prescriptive in naming up certain projects in political conversations. Generally, there are a number of prospective solar generation opportunities which are emerging as being potentially shorter in their lead time to deliver and quite

prospective here in Tasmania. We have three of those that I would point to as being likely candidates for being up and generating inside the 2030 interim target window.

Ms FINLAY - With significant megawatts to meet the target?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, with significant megawatts. All of those projects are in that niche of the 228 solar megawatt scale.

Ms FINLAY - I acknowledge that nobody wants to be used as a political football, but there is still an opportunity for you to speak positively about Tasmania's opportunities with renewable energy into the grid. In the conversations I have, one of the things I hear from people is that they're disappointed about the lack of urgency from government to be able to meet its targets. Tasmania's reputation rests on your ability to actually deliver renewables and maintain Tasmania's reputation.

Just in the last couple of weeks we saw South Australia take that peak from Tasmania. If you go and have a look at anywhere that you can get the information - I've sought information from openelectricity.org.au - in terms of the trending of Tasmania's position relative to other states, it's really clear that from around 2005, Tasmanian's position has flatlined, and in fact now is trending down. The other states are aggressively investing in renewables and in firming, and are able to see what is required to continue to be able to deliver renewables. Our position is flatlining and trending down.

If we can't do the work that is required to meet not just these targets - set the targets aside - but to meet requirements from industry and members of our community, let alone electrification, let alone attracting new investments, we will miss the boat with this and Tasmania will be worse off. It will have economic implications and community implications for us.

In restating your lack of willingness to aggressively support Port Latta or Whaleback, one of the other things that I want to ask about is the ABEL Energy Project at Bell Bay and other opportunities at Bell Bay. We've asked this question of you before in parliament. I would like to understand what is limiting your commitment to delivering water to Bell Bay in order to bring on renewable projects in that region?

Mr DUIGAN - It's one of the very core considerations of this government. We have a -

Ms FINLAY - Consideration isn't action.

Mr DUIGAN - No. We signed in January this year a grant fund with the federal government to deliver a green hydrogen hub at Bell Bay. That is a very prospective thing for Tasmania to be investing in. It is centred around the notion of delivering common-use, shared infrastructure to the green hydrogen hub at Bell Bay. There is a quantum of state funding. There is more than $11 million from the state committed in this Budget and the next. There is $70 million of federal funding tied to that commitment, and we would see the full scope of the Tasmanian green hydrogen hub being built out with commercial opportunities offered to our project partners.

In terms of delivering on our green hydrogen hub, I know you like to propagate the narrative of there being nothing happening, but that is not true. We have some key milestones

for that, as you would expect, that we need to meet, and we are continuing to meet those milestones.

Ms FINLAY - The question was specific around water infrastructure.

Mr DUIGAN - Which is obviously one of the components that would be required to be delivered for a green hydrogen hub.

Ms FINLAY - I know that another fellow member of the Committee and I spent hours, in fact you could say days, providing the instrument for you to deliver water to Bell Bay through the water amendment bills last year. It was about community management, but it was also about -

Mr DUIGAN - Another action of government?

Ms FINLAY - Yes, but that was in November last year. It was urgent. It was rushed through to the parliament. There was a sense then that there was this pop-out-of-nowhere announcement from two ministers, the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for Energy, that came out of nowhere and took people by surprise. They rushed through the work of the bill to the parliament. We sat into the early hours of the morning each day when we were dealing with this because it was an urgent matter in order to secure these projects and deliver water to Bell Bay.

That was November last year. You secured this money in January this year. It's now September, nearly October. There are a number of proponents that would wish to develop at Bell Bay and that would see Bell Bay as an opportunity. What they're reading is that you weren't able to secure Fortescue, you weren't able to secure Origin and you weren't able to secure Woodside. They've all left because of a lack of infrastructure and support in that area. You have projects there that would be able to advance if they had a commitment of water.

You have the instrument; you have the ministerial opportunity to deliver that. What is now holding you up from doing that? In the other portfolio discussion that I've had with the Primary Industries minister this morning, it is also beneficial to the farmers of the Tamar Valley. What is stopping you from executing the instrument that we put in place last year - not this year - to deliver industrial water to Bell Bay?

Mr DUIGAN - As you may or may not be aware, projects like that actually take some time and some scoping, and there is a quite a bit of work to do. The legislation needed to be passed in order to enable some of the scoping work to be done in terms of Milestone 3 - Design and Economics for Water Infrastructure for the Green Hydrogen Hub. Initial design and cost modelling for the water infrastructure led by TI is now complete, with this work informing advice for TI's next milestone which will be Milestone 5. TI have completed capital cost modelling, hydraulic design works and optioneering work to internal P90 cost estimates with external cost valuation processes underway. Financial modelling has also been completed to determine debt and risk scenarios for constructions to government. In-principal water pricing has been developed for combined industrial irrigation water supply options. These are not things that just emerge and because you pass something in the parliament, it doesn't mean that all of a sudden water is flowing at Bell Bay. There is a long lead time -

Ms FINLAY - Can I ask you for clarification? Are you committed to delivering water to Bell Bay through the industrial arm of the irrigation project through the Tamar Valley? Yes, or no? Because you haven't actually answered that question - ever.

Mr DUIGAN - We have passed legislation as a government to enable that to occur. We have met our milestones under the guidelines of the green hydrogen hub funding agreement with the federal government. We are on track and we are committed to our vision to deliver hydrogen. Tasmania is a substantial producer and consumer of hydrogen.

Ms FINLAY - Yes, but are you committed to delivering the water through the industrial irrigation?

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay. Mr Bayley has the call.

Mr BAYLEY - On the hydrogen hub, and particularly Paladin Hydrogen. Paladin is the proponent of a contentious coal mine on the east coast, lease number 4M/2012, and wants to use that coal to create hydrogen. The company has previously indicated that it has been receiving support from the Rockliff government to find a site for the hydrogen plant component of the project. Can you explain and confirm if government's been providing any assistance to Paladin or to HardRock Coal Mining?

Mr DUIGAN - For detail on that, I will potentially ask the CEO of ReCFIT to detail whether he's had conversations there.

Mr BOWLES - We understand that they are exploring the potential for Tasmanian coal resources to be used in their production of hydrogen. That is a commercial prospect that they are pursuing. I would add that the Tasmanian or the ReCFIT hydrogen strategy, including the Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub strategy, is focused on green hydrogen from renewable sources. ReCFIT's focus is on projects that are sourced from renewable sources.

Mr BAYLEY - The question then is, is anyone giving Paladin or HardRock Coal Mining assistance?

Mr BOWLES - I understand that, over a period of about two years, there have been some meetings across different parts of government, but as far as I'm aware, there has been no more proactive assistance than that.

Mr BAYLEY - Just to be clear, it sounds pretty clear and I welcome that you're absolutely rejecting that basically coal-fired hydrogen could be considered green. Would this kind of project be excluded from the Bell Bay Green Hydrogen Hub as a result? Have you had that conversation and made it abundantly clear that this company, if it is going to fire its operations with coal, isn't welcome in a Bell Bay Green Hydrogen Hub? It shouldn't have access to the infrastructure resources we have just been talking about and, really, we should be telling it that it's got no place in Tasmania at all.

Mr BOWLES - The work that we're doing to provide multiple-use infrastructure into Bell Bay for the Green Hydrogen Hub will be designed around green hydrogen proponents - one or more - that are sourcing from renewable sources.

In terms of access to that infrastructure for other uses, including non-hydrogen uses or other industrial uses, that would be a matter to determine in the future.

Mr DUIGAN - The advice that I have here is, for hydrogen proponents to be eligible to participate in the Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub, they will need to be able to verify their green credentials, and this is especially important for international export.

Mr BAYLEY - How do you define that though? With respect, minister, we don't have a lot of confidence in the Tasmanian government's judgment when it comes to their sustainability and what is green and what isn't. What's the definition there? What's the line that it crosses? Would you accept coal, in part, as being a contributor in the energy mix?

Mr DUIGAN - I would say that it's difficult to find the green credentials in coal.

Mr BAYLEY - I welcome that.

Mr O'BYRNE - I'll give you the tip: don't bring a piece of coal to parliament.

Minister, my question is about the REAP program, the Renewable Energy Approval Pathway. It was lovely to hear the response to the member for Lyons. It was announced last year, but I understand that project officers who are allocated under that program are still yet to be appointed. Is that correct?

Mr DUIGAN - We are working in our first 100 days of government this time around to stand the REAP capability up through ReCFIT. I note that the Budget commits a substantial amount of funding, $14.4 million over the next four years, for REAP. To provide an update on the status of REAP and where we are with that in staffing those positions, I'll pass to the CEO.

Mr O'BYRNE - Just to clarify, it was an announcement last year, so it's probably something that's not in the purview of the 100 days.

Mr BOWLES - ReCFIT, as at the end of June, had 26.4 FTEs in the energy and renewables division; within that division there are a number of staff who are involved in working directly with wind and solar proponents. That includes me as acting CEO and the Executive Director, Sean.

We have a major projects facilitation team. That team has - I'm just seeking the exact number now - around nine staff already. That included staff that did the policy work to establish REAP. Those staff are already working with proponents. The exact headcount for the major projects team is 11. On the case management function, we're just about to go to market for two more dedicated case managers to support that work.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, the roles that were announced under REAP, as you pronounce it, the Renewable Energy Approval Pathway announced last year, they haven't been filled yet? You just said you're going to market on two roles; is it a part of REAP?

Mr BOWLES - There are two new roles. There are existing staff in ReCFIT that were effectively doing that work, and what the Budget commitment allowed us to do is create new roles with new funding.

Mr O'BYRNE - But they're the ones that were announced last year, correct?

Mr BOWLES - But funded from this year.

Mr O'BYRNE - They were announced but not funded?

Mr DUIGAN - It is important to recognise that in the budget process this year, there is funding for those to allow for nine new FTEs across a number of agencies and regulators, as explained by the CEO. Engagement is underway, with prospective projects to trial the case management function. I'm pleased to confirm today that we have dedicated staff in all key agencies specifically to facilitate the Bell Bay Wind Farm located near George Town, and Cattle Hill Wind Farm located in the Central Highlands and more projects will be added over time, once the process is tested and refined. I note that Whaleback Ridge Wind Farm continues to receive coordination services through the Office of the Coordinator-General.

Mr O'BYRNE - Just to confirm, the two positions you announced, you're about to go to market on? That's what I heard.

Mr BOWLES - Yes, correct.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you.

Mr GARLAND - When considering the need or desire for generating additional power in Tasmania and the need to supply the National Energy Market through additional interconnectors, such as the proposed Marinus Link, it is important to consider whether or not other states will need or demand energy from Tasmania. Can you guarantee that other states will need, demand or use energy from Tasmania?

Mr DUIGAN - Other states will continue to need and demand energy. I think that's pretty clear. What we've got in the coming decade is the shutting down of around 20 gigawatts of coal generation up the east coast of Australia. That is going to require a very large mobilisation of renewable energy, or energy of some form or other, to make that shortfall of 20 gigawatts. I wouldn't propose that Tasmania sets out to provide base load generation for other jurisdictions in the National Energy Market (NEM). I don't think that's where we need to be, but certainly variable renewable energy sources do require firming. That is absolutely true and will remain the case.

Currently firming is typically provided by way of coal, but increasingly through gas fire generation. Tasmania's opportunity is to access those firming and markets in the NEM. Deep storages give us great opportunity there.

Mr GARLAND - If all the potential renewable energy generation is realised in offshore energy zones and onshore locations in the east Australian states, would that risk Tasmania energy exports? Have you and your department considered this scenario? What would the impact be on Tasmanians if this very real possibility occurred?

Mr DUIGAN - The missing piece in the renewable energy story in most jurisdictions, as they grapple with this, is that notion of deep storage. That is, as I say frequently, Tasmania's profound opportunity that we have deep storage, deep renewable storage. There is the chance for us to find a highest and best use for deep storage as the situation evolves.

Mr GARLAND - Pardon my ignorance, but what is deep storage?

Mr DUIGAN - Deep storage is renewable energy storage that has a timeframe of more than a few hours. So, batteries in the current grid scenario typically offer two maybe sometimes four-hour duration and then they're spent. If you don't get some more renewables or some gas or coal to charge them back up, then you've got a problem. Tasmania's hydro system offers storage durations of a much greater length than hours.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, Marinus Link has already been discussed and it's obvious that the government is committed to the Marinus Link. I would appreciate if you go over the benefits that it would bring again. What are the benefits of the new Marinus Link ownership arrangements?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. The government is committed to Marinus Link. Its delivery is a central feature of our renewable energy vision, underpinning the development of new on-island renewables and providing energy certainty for the growth of Tasmanian industry and putting downward pressure on prices for customers. Marinus is expected to unlock over $1.3 billion in economic activity and 1400 jobs in Tasmania. Economic modelling has been very clear that wholesale energy prices in Tasmania will be lower with Marinus than without.

The June 2024 Integrated System Plan released by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) still has Marinus as an actionable project with the availability to provide significant benefits to the NEM. Marinus Link will help to unlock the development of new on-island renewable energy generation. Marinus means we can import low-cost renewable energy, such as the highly variable wind and solar from Victoria and South Australia, allowing more water to be held in storage here in Tasmania.

Tasmania has a once in a generation opportunity to take advantage of the nation's energy transition and the strength of our hydro-electric system. As coal is retired it can provide more of the reliable dispatchable base load as required and this will create even more value for Tasmania and Tasmanians who own hydro.

Marinus Link Proprietary Limited is making excellent progress with key procurement milestones reached with contracts executed for the two key elements of the project. A contract with Hitachi Energy for a high voltage direct current technology and a contract with Prysmian PowerLink to design, manufacture, supply and install the cable system for Stage 1 of Marinus Link.

The Marinus Link Board has advised that the timing for Marinus Link stage 1 final investment decision will be May 2025. Becoming a minority shareholder in Marinus Link does not reflect the lesser commitment to the project, rather, through this new arrangement, the Tasmanian government has been able to lower the risk of this very large project to Tasmanians.

Ms FINLAY - I want to thank you for your answers to the questions in the previous round around Bell Bay. You gave more information than you had previously in the parliament around where you're at with meeting your milestones. One of the things we discussed was the amendments to the legislation last year. The second reading speech indicated that the minister - the minister for Primary Industries, I acknowledge - but the minister, when satisfied of the delivery of industrial water to Bell Bay, would declare that. That was one of the steps in the

process to delivering that. What I'm trying to clarify from your earlier answers is, are you committed to delivering the water to Bell Bay through the combined Tamar Irrigation Scheme and industrial water infrastructure? Is that on the table as a commitment?

Mr DUIGAN - I believe it's not controversial to say that, at this point in time, as we contemplate delivering water to Bell Bay, that the combined delivery and the augmentation of the Tamar Trans 3 Irrigation Scheme looks to be the most cost-effective and efficient way to deliver industrial scale water into Bell Bay. In all these things I'm not about closing any doors. If there are other options that become available at some time, I'm happy to entertain them. At this stage, the most prospective way to deliver industrial scale water to Bell Bay is through the TI scheme.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you for confirming that. Are you able to confirm whether the minister has provided an order for that?

Mr DUIGAN - I would need to check with my department on the status of that.

Ms FINLAY - Are you happy to take that on notice?

Mr DUIGAN - I am happy to take that one on notice.

Ms FINLAY - I'm happy that you do to take that one on notice. I appreciate that. In terms of Bell Bay, you just outlined the amounts of $11 million and $70 million that's being invested there. I'm interested to understand which of each of those allocations of funds has already had expenses recorded against it and for what purpose?

Mr DUIGAN - Again, it's a level of detail probably that I don't have in front of me, but I'm happy to ask the CEO or Sean to provide some detail around that.

Mr BOWLES - In terms of the Tasmania Green Hydrogen Home Project funding, so far the profile of funding was for 2023-24, $0.05 million for the Tasmanian government, $5.8 million for the Australian government. For the current financial year, our budgeted figure is $11.3 million for the Tasmanian government and $8 million for the Australian Government.

Ms FINLAY - They're allocations. My interest is, for what purpose will they be expended and if there's been any other funds called against those balances?

Mr BOWLES - For phase 1, and this is aggregated across a two-year period, last year and this year. It's $4.1 million has been allocated for water; $0.8 million for transmission; $6.9 million for market activation hydrogen projects; $1 million for industry engagement and communications; and $2.2 million for the project costs including staffing and support.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you. If I can unpack those numbers a little: $6.9 million for market activation, can you detail for me what that might look like?

Mr BOWLES - Under the grant deed that we have with the Australian government, there was a requirement to pursue a hydrogen vessel project. There was $6.5 million allocated to that and the remaining is for other market activation projects. We're in the early stages of investigating that hydrogen vessel project and that will be subject to further reviews as we go through our stage gate.

Ms FINLAY - Can I ask at this point, is the vessel project one that a private proponent is already delivering and that you're seeking to support? Is that something that has already been underway and commitments were given or is that a new project for a new vessel?

Mr BOWLES - It would be a new project, yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I want to talk about onerous contracts and for the record, onerous contracts are where the government directs one of your businesses to enter into a contract that has unavoidable costs to be fulfilled that exceed the economic benefits expected to be received. You've done that in the past to kind of, I guess, shore up the economics around a couple of wind farms.

In June 2023, the Tasmanian government committed to buying energy from an offshore wind farm. The Equinor-backed plans to develop offshore wind of up to two gigawatts in Bass Strait off the coast of northeast Tasmania won the backing of the government and through a commitment you committed to sort of source green power to put into the Bell Bay Hydrogen Hub and green ammonia.

Has the government undertaken to enter into a power purchase agreement with Equinor and, if so, what are the terms?

Mr DUIGAN - The Tasmanian government has MOUs with two offshore wind providers, Wind Equinor and Wind Energy Bass Strait Offshore Wind Energy (BOWE), and is continuing to work with those proponents on what promises to be a pretty exciting development for Tasmania given our level of natural resource out there in Bass Strait where you can rely on 10, 15 knots of breeze most days.

No, we haven't signed any power purchase agreements. There are no contracts in that regard and no onerous contracts to the early part of your question. Certainly, we're continuing to work with both of those two offshore proponents, noting that the Tasmanian offshore wind zone has not yet been declared by the federal minister. We are hopeful that that will happen in the coming months, but it's not within my remit of control. I note that in the budget there is $5 million allocated for the development of a services hub at Bell Bay, the port of Bell Bay, which stands as a very likely contender to be a services delivery hub for offshore wind not only in Tasmania but in northern Bass Strait as well for the Victorian rollout of offshore wind energy, which is probably a little further advanced than we are here.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you. I appreciate you probably don't want to go into the exact details of the MOU, but what are the kind of things it covers and does it sign you up to a commitment to enter into a power purchase agreement or one of the GBEs at least to enter into a power purchase in the future? Have you made that commitment to those two proponents?

Mr DUIGAN - These are non-binding MOUs that have been signed between the government and the offshore wind proponents TasRex and Equinor to further the development of offshore wind energy projects in waters off Tasmania. My understanding is that both of those MOUs are publicly available and can be found on the ReCFIT website if anyone is interested to have a look at those. We are supportive of people wanting to develop offshore wind in Tasmania.

Mr BAYLEY - Would you rule out going into a power purchase agreement?

Mr DUIGAN - No.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, with some of the wind farm projects, you said they were erupting out of the ground -

Mr DUIGAN - No. I said they don't just erupt out of the ground.

Mr O'BYRNE - Well clearly, they don't under this government. It's glacial. Even you must be frustrated with the time it is taken to get some of these projects up. What impact will the efficiency dividends have on ReCFIT and EPA that will further diminish the government's ability to get these erupting out of the ground?

Mr DUIGAN - I would point to the extra resourcing that will be delivered and has been delivered into ReCFIT through the REAP process, as I pronounce it.

Mr O'BYRNE - That we haven't appointed yet.

Mr DUIGAN - But, there is more capability being added to the department to perform the functions. Also, as is contained in the detail of that program, further resourcing being allocated to EPA, Aboriginal Heritage and our regulators to help with that. I'm not expecting to see any backward movement in terms of getting these things through the approvals process. We are seeking to accelerate.

Mr O'BYRNE - ReCFIT is ring-fenced from efficiency dividends?

Mr DUIGAN - No. ReCFIT and the department will be expected, I'm sure. I will throw to the secretary to outline how he will seek to find those efficiencies, but I wouldn't expect that they will be ring-fenced.

Mr LIMKIN - As the minister said, the 2023-24 Budget does include an efficiency dividend for the Department of State Growth which ReCFIT is part of. The efficiency dividends are $2.6 million in 2024-25, $5.1 million for 2025-26, increasing through a structural reduction of $7.7 million in 2026-27. The department will achieve these efficiencies through a combination of efficiency measures and scaling back or ceasing non-core activity or non-priority activities that are either not of the highest strategic priority or have been replaced by election commitments.

I do want to make a point that the department has recently undertaken an internal realignment. This process is separate from efficiencies dividends, however, by its very nature, we are finding operational efficiencies through this approach.

Our approach as a collective executive has been to deliver a simpler, more efficient operating model that delivers the government's priorities and our core services as a department to the Tasmanian community. Several of the strategies that we have identified to meet the efficiency dividend across the department are -

> Combining functions and service delivery areas to implement leaner operational models.

Reviewing how we administer programs, for example grants through our capital program, to ensure that they deliver values to the Tasmanian community and consider process improvements and systemisation processing to ensure that they are efficient.

Reducing operational expenses, suppliers and consumables, including marketing and consultants, accommodation, and ICT costs including telecommunications, travel and postages.

And managing our workforce to ensure that the resources are targeted to our highest priority areas.

I do want to be clear to the committee that the department does not have a formal vacancy control in place and so the strategies I've outlined are how we are going to manage it as a department.

Mr O'BYRNE - If you could answer my question in terms of ReCFIT, will its resources be reduced?

Mr LIMKIN - As I said to you, Mr O'Byrne, we are managing this on a department basis. Our strategies are what I have outlined to manage this on a department. ReCFIT is part of the department.

Mr O'BYRNE - There's no details there.

Mr LIMKIN - The strategies I've outlined is how the department is managing those efficiencies that the government has asked us to find.

CHAIR - We are going to have a short 5-minute break. We will resume at 3.35 p.m.

The Committee suspended from 3.30 p.m. to 3.38 p.m.

CHAIR - The first question will go to Mr Garland.

Mr GARLAND - Alternate energy sources: other than windfarms, can you detail what other alternate renewable energies can be used locally to provide us with additional power? Have there been any feasibility studies into tidal? Given that tidal movements globally are absolutely minuscule and we've got sufficient both ends of Bass Strait, which I think should be looked at.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. I think it is a fascinating area of interest and it's the time to be looking at all these sorts of things to see whether they stack up. Certainly solar, as I was saying to the member across the table from me. I think Tasmania has got some fairly prospective solar proponents and we would say that the pathway and the lead time for solar projects isn't as long as wind. Solar energy is viable here in Tasmania. It is something we're actively considering and have projects on the table. Hydro Tasmania has a suite of improvements and upgrades and maintenance works that it is doing to its existing fleet to derive more energy from the same amount of water in storage. Noting that anytime you do work on hydro plants it tends to be some big numbers, but here in the state, we need to continue to invest

in our hydro assets. They've served us well for a long time, but we've got to spend a few bucks on keeping them up and going and delivering as best as they can for Tasmania.

In terms of tidal energy, I had a briefing from a gentleman who was running a hydro kite. They installed these things in the Faroe Islands in the northern hemisphere. Hydro kites, which are tidal energy generators, they look quite prospective. He was interested in Banks Strait and looking at an opportunity to generate energy for Flinders Island and reduce diesel energy cost there.

Small scale hydro is something else that I potentially should mention. I was really pleased to go and have a look at Cumberland Hydro out on the west coast recently, which has a one-megawatt, small scale hydro plant in a fairly contained small storage environment, and it does a good job as well. There are lots of things that we look at and that one particularly is feeding into the grid.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, could you please outline to the committee the vision for the Bell Bay Hydrogen Hub? What actions are being taken to build our capacity to deliver this, and to get the settings right for further investment?

Mr DUIGAN - I note that we have spoken at some length about the Bell Bay hydrogen or Tasmania's green hydrogen, and note that it is a team approach that we're taking. ReCFIT is leading the project, working with TasPorts, TasNetworks, TasWater, Tasmania Irrigation in the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone to deliver the hub over the next four years.

This week $2.435 million in a funding agreement was executed with the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone for it to deliver multiple bodies of work against three key work streams. Those are local industry and business, jobs, skills and workers and community engagements. These are important early capability building activities, and knowing how well BBAMZ is plugged in, it is appropriate that they do that. Bell Bay is perfectly placed to be a world class green hydrogen hub with its established port infrastructure and highly experienced skilled workforce. The project is expected to inject over $1.2 billion into the local economy and generate around 740 jobs, providing work for local skilled trades like concreters, plumbers, fitters and electricians.

In terms of things that are happening, I would ask Mark Bowles, CEO, to make some further comments.

Mr BOWLES - The other key point I would make is that earlier this year, we've appointed the Director for the Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub. That was a dedicated position, and we managed to recruit an ex-Tasmanian working in South Korea with Austrade and previously the energy sector into that role. Since that time we've recruited a number of key procurement and industry engagement positions into the roles as well.

Ms FINLAY - That was a good question; thank you very much. In the breakdown that you provided, you gave some insight into the $6.9 million allocated into Bell Bay. There was $2.2 million for project costs. I'm interested in if there's any crossover between these funds and the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone. Are the funds that you just mentioned for them new money from a different source, or is that out of the collective funding that we were previously talking about?

Mr DUIGAN - Certainly. That's out of the same pool of funding. That's out of the Hydrogen Hub funding. Just while you're looking there, Ms Finlay, I would offer these documents taken on notice from the morning session on the divo and the Three Capes Tracks. I have those documents to provide.

Ms FINLAY - So, that $2.435 million that's just been allocated to build by Advanced Manufacturing, where does that come out of the breakdown that you gave previously?

Mr BOWLES - That's included in the engagement and communications amount that I mentioned. It was $1.04 million for phase 1 and for phase 2 it's $3.5 million. The commitment to the BBAMZ is a multi-year commitment that comes out of that line.

Ms FINLAY - Over how many years is it? How is it broken down?

Mr BOWLES - Three years.

Ms FINLAY - Over three years. Initially you said $2.435 million, that's in one year, and then you said $1.04 million and $3.5 million. Can you break it down for me over those years?

Mr BOWLES - The $2.4 million is the total grant value, and how that's apportioned across time will depend on them meeting milestones.

Ms FINLAY - Okay, great. I thought I heard you say the industry piece of the previous money that you allocated, there was $1 million there for that for comms and industry engagement. Then you said, just now, $1.04 million and $3.5 million, which doesn't add up to $2.435 million.

Mr BOWLES - That budget line covers other costs as well, in addition to the BBAMZ.

Ms FINLAY - Right, so it's not all. What I'm trying to understand is so I can be clear, there are multiple amounts of money being allocated to the Bell Bay Hydrogen Hub and there's the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone, and I've often wondered how those things intersect and how money is going to Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone and where those ones come from.

Mr DUIGAN - There is $11.9 million of state government funding and $70 million of federal government funding into the Bell Bay Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub and then -

Mr BOWLES - Certainly in the BBAMZ funding, we are cognisant of the activities that the BBAMZ undertakes for State Growth in other areas, for example, jobs hubs and things like that. We do work with our colleagues to ensure that those different grant deeds are complementary.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, in the Climate Change Action Plan, you committed to developing a whole-of-government policy framework to embed climate change into government decision-making by mid-2024. Has that been done?

Mr DUIGAN - The action plan sets out our agenda for action on climate change through to mid-2025 and supports Tasmania's transition to a low-emissions economy in line with our target to maintain net zero greenhouse gas emissions or lower from 2030. In addition to the

delivery of the legislative measures under the *Climate Change Act 2008*, $14 million has already been allocated to deliver programs over two years. There are 98 actions across all areas of government, with more than 60 already underway.

Key actions include our emissions reductions and resilience plans, which are currently open for public consultation across a range of sectors, noting the transport ERRP has been released; and significant investment of more than $250 million in climate change activities across government departments, demonstrating a commitment to a coordinated whole-of-government response to climate change.

I will ask Mark potentially to provide some further detail.

Mr BOWLES - We are progressing the framework to build capability and embed climate change considerations into whole-of-government policy. The next steps involve analysing agency baseline information to understand current considerations for climate change in decision-making. That includes plans, policies and strategies, and introducing education material to enable agencies to include climate change considerations into their risk assessments. I note that the climate risks report is also due this year and that will influence our thinking about how to plan ahead for climate change actions.

Mr DUIGAN - I'll just ask the secretary to add some detail in there.

Mr LIMKIN - Dr Woodruff, I have written to each of my secretary colleagues asking them to help the department and the Climate Change Office meet this commitment. The secretaries have been asked to nominate a senior executive to sponsor this work so that we are leading from the top and that all secretaries are committed to implementing this commitment through our agencies. It's an ongoing conversation that we have had and will continue to have to make sure we deliver on the government's commitment.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, you're progressing a framework, I've just heard. It was due to be completed by mid-2024; when do you expect the framework will be in place?

Mr DUIGAN - I would ask the CEO to provide the detail of when he would expect that to occur.

Mr BOWLES - We need to ensure that we're engaging with all of the other agencies, so that does make it difficult for us to commit to a time frame, but certainly our objective would be to have our draft work completed in the first half of next year.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay. Because the Climate Change Action Plan was a legislated instrument, so you have overshot it and so that will be some time.

My second question is in relation to your draft Land Use Change and Forestry Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan. It mentions as a future opportunity supporting the forestry industry to look into the use of biomass and biofuels. It doesn't explicitly say that the native forest industry will contribute to biofuel production, but it also doesn't state that only the plantation sector, industry or forest residues would be used. Will you confirm that it won't include carbon-storing native forests as part of the biomass?

Mr DUIGAN - I would be looking for advice here, potentially out of the Climate Change Office - Sarah.

Ms RUSSELL - At this point in time, we've identified a whole range of opportunities through our research and consultation phases. The feedback we've received at this time is that these will be plantation-based residues, but it's still being scoped at this point in time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay. The strategy itself is silent on this, but it's the intention of the department to pursue biofuels that come from the plantation industry and not from the native forest industry?

Ms RUSSELL - That's my understanding, yes. But, again, it's a future opportunity. We're publicly consulting on it at this point in time and we'll work through scoping that program in more detail. It's identified as a priority -

Dr WOODRUFF - So, the Burnie and ABEL Energy and Powerfuels in Bell Bay, those two e-fuel facilities that are planned, are not planning - or using as part of their modelling for their business case - to rely on native forest biomass for their fuel production?

Mr DUIGAN - No, it's my understanding that both of those e-fuel facilities would be using plantation forest residue in the first place, so carbon that is currently not being utilised in a productive stream and plantation forest woodchip as a second stage.

Mr GARLAND - Tasmanians are concerned about the rise in their power prices over the past 10 years. It would seem this is largely to do with the price fluctuations in the National Energy Market which impact the network charges.

A number of submissions to the Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters have raised a suggestion of investigating disconnecting Tasmania from the NEM and regulatory structures, reducing the fluctuation in the price for Tasmanians and reducing their power bills, but maintaining the physical connection to the NEM through Basslink.

Is this something your department has looked into or is looking into?

Mr DUIGAN - The first thing I would say about power bills in Tasmania over the last 10 years, and it may not feel like it in the current cost-of-living circumstances in which we find ourselves but increases in the price of power bills have not kept up with the pace of inflation. They go at about half the pace of inflation. The government, in actual fact, has done a very good job of keeping a lid on power prices here in Tasmania. That's the first point I'd make.

We are, via Basslink, connected to the National Electricity Market (NEM) and that is a physical link that flows both ways. In today's market, in 2024, maintaining a link to the National Electricity Market pricing is necessary to ensure our energy security and keep delivering lower prices. As we contemplate last financial year, which was the driest in terms of hydro storages in 90 years, and we had in concert with that, a period of very low wind, we had what's known as a wind drought. Being connected into the NEM does give us a good degree of electricity security here in Tasmania, especially as we rely on renewable energy sources and wind and rain to fall in the state.

I think we will continue to be. We're looking at further interconnection into the market rather than less and I would point to Tasmania having the lowest regulated power prices in the country. Also, moves we've made this year through renewable energy dividends and so on, where hydro profits have been directly attributed back to the customer base in Tasmania as a way of managing and delivering Tasmanian energy prices to Tasmanians.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you please provide an update on the first Climate Change Activity Statement, which provides a summary of the government's deliverables on climate change activities over the last year? Can you also outline some of the actions achieved that reduce emissions and build resilience to a changing climate?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes. I'm pleased to announce the release of the first Climate Change Activity Statement, which includes a description of Tasmania's action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change over the past financial year. Tasmania's climate change legislation requires the statement to be prepared every year and tabled in each House of parliament.

The Climate Change Office in Renewables, Climate and Future Industries (ReCFIT) coordinates a whole-of-government approach to climate change action, supported by our $250 million investment across government. The first statement will report on actions from Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25. We know that not one single action will target climate change and that it is obviously an integrated issue and that's why we're addressing it right across government and various sectors of our economy. Since launching Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan last year, 97 of the 98 actions are now complete or underway and one action was discontinued, the Emissions Reduction Loan Scheme. That was discontinued because of federal government grants.

Some of the climate change activities delivered across government in the last 12 months include: half-price fares for public transport, including the River Derwent Ferry Service; $4.5 million to local government through the Better Active Transport grant program; $8 million Green Hydrogen Price Reduction Scheme towards Countrywide Hydrogen's $60 million commercial green hydrogen refuelling network; $4 million toward a large-scale trial of *Asparagopsis* feed supplements to cut emissions from livestock; $20 million over 4 years to expand the River Derwent Ferry Service with three new terminals; an additional $900,000 over 3 years to expand the Land Care Action Grants program to support Tasmanian landholders into carbon markets; construction of the new Dulverton Organics Treatment Facility supported by $9 million of grants funds from the Tasmanian and Australian governments; $300 million Tasmanian green hydrogen hub project at Bell Bay funded by both the Tasmanian and Australian governments; consultation on a proposed approach to phasing out single-use plastics to inform legislation development over the next 12 to 18 months; Energy Saver Loan Scheme, which provided more than 4100 no-interest loans toward the purchase and installation of energy efficient products and upgrades in Tasmanian households.

The government is also preparing emissions reduction and resilience plans across six Tasmanian sectors and these plans will help Tasmanian businesses, industry, and the community reduce emissions and assist in the transition to a low-emissions economy while building resilience.

Chair, I am very pleased to table our first Climate Change Activity Statement of 2024.

Ms FINLAY - Staying at Bell Bay and in response to a question earlier by Mr Shelton, as I understand it, in the Budget, there's $5 million over three years for the Renewable Energy Services Hub. Unfortunately, my response to that is we often seem to be in a position - or you often seem to be a position - which is sort of a little bit of too little, too late. I want to fully understand what that $5 million is intended to achieve. We just saw in the last few days that Geelong have announced $500 million to create an offshore wind terminal. As I said earlier, the other states around Australia seem to be very aggressive in terms of chasing their generation and their renewable capacity. We have known for a long time that these opportunities in south-east Australia, Bell Bay does need significant upgrades to be able to meet that demand. What are you intending to deliver over three years with the $5 million? Won't that be too late to capture that opportunity in Tasmania?

Mr DUIGAN - Two lots of the $5 million are around the state government's funding to activate the federal government's $70 million grant funding to deliver the green hydrogen hub as I understand it and with a further $5 million for the development of Bell Bay as a services hub. I am going a little bit off the top of my head there, but I will pass to Mark to give you some further details on that, noting, and I think it is important to keep reiterating, particularly in the realm of hydrogen, which is not just a greenfield development - but it is a greenfield industry - and there are demonstrated challenges in other jurisdictions around the country. Tasmania knows and understands that, and we are well placed to be a significant player and we are doing the groundwork to progress that. I will pass to the CEO to make more comments around the specific areas of funding you identified.

Mr BOWLES - The Renewable Energy Services Hub is being designed to complement and enhance the investment that's already happening at Bell Bay as part of the hydrogen hub work. It expands that vision from beyond hydrogen production for export into servicing both the offshore wind opportunities that are already emerging rapidly on the Victorian side of Bass Strait as well as the potential for Tasmanian offshore wind projects as well as utilising the Bell Bay port as the hub for the growth in onshore renewables. This builds on years of work and investigation and investment by TasPorts who will be a cornerstone tenant of the hub. To be clear, the hub isn't necessarily an exact physical location. It's about building Bell Bay's reputation as a hub for services for those wind farms.

One of our first initiatives last week, was to hold a webinar for interested industry players not only in the renewables industry, but in adjacent industries such as construction, engineering, services, and research and development. We had 130 attendees at that workshop. What we're very conscious of is building a strategy and designing a strategy with the industry and really being informed by what industry seems to be the opportunity rather than government running too far ahead on its own. We are being very deliberate in a series of further workshops that we will hold in person in Bell Bay and around the state.

What is emerging is that, while the focus of the hub will be in Bell Bay, it is a statewide opportunity and will plug into the maritime capability we have in the south and other investments that we have in the north west in terms of training.

Ms FINLAY - On that, what I haven’t been able to glean out of that answer is when will there be a final position on what needs to happen to have a services hub that is servicing offshore and onshore wind? By what year do you expect to have a final position so that you can start? I know that you said it is not necessarily physical, but there will be physical works

required to do to attract in that opportunity, when do you believe that work will change from planning to delivery?

Mr BOWLES - By the end of this year we intend to start market activation around attracting interstate and international offshore wind developers to Bell Bay and start to undertake business matching activities. We'll also be working with Tasmanian businesses on identifying opportunities to enhance their own capability through grant programs and incubation programs. Our intention is to have a costed strategy to the minister early in the new year.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the *Climate Change Act* is currently being reviewed, which is what's required under legislation. When do you expect the review to be completed?

Mr DUIGAN - We expect the review to be completed in 2025, understanding it is one of the requirements of the act. While we are doing that, as the previous minister committed to, reviewing the governance around the act, that is work that will be completed in line with the time frame that is required and completed in 2025.

Dr WOODRUFF - There have been significant delays on implementing the results of reviews of the act in previous years under your government. Once the review's completed, can you please tell us what time next year you expect that will be, 2025 is a long time, will you commit to implementing the results of the review within six months?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm happy to report that it is my understanding that the review will commence during the course of this year and be completed next year. The terms of reference are currently in draft as I understand it.

We will look at the at the review, we will support its undertaking. I won't make commitments here at this table, but I certainly expect to be acting in light of the findings of the review.

Dr WOODRUFF - You didn't answer the question about whether you do it within six months? Not what you'd act on, but the timeframe for action.

Mr DUIGAN - I don't think I will weld myself to a timeframe here at this table without understanding what the advice and the contents and nature of the review gives me, but I expect to be acting on the contents of the review.

Dr WOODRUFF - There is public consultation around the last review and there'll be public consultation for this review as well? A major call for Tasmania from the last public consultation was that we have emission targets for each industry sector, not just guidelines, which aren't bringing us to the place that we need to be as a state. Will you commit to implementing targets at the next round of changes to the act?

Mr DUIGAN - I think what I will do is point to what is a very clear, unambiguous target of net zero or lower by 2030. That is a target that this government has identified and is committed to. Noting that we will need to consider substantial reforms in our economy and our businesses in order to enable us to continue to claim net zero beyond that time.

In terms of public consultation on the independent review of the act, it will be undertaken for at least five weeks. This means that all Tasmanians will have the opportunity to provide feedback on climate change governance arrangements in Tasmania. We would be interested to hear what Tasmanians would like to see reflected in the climate change act.

Mr SHELTON - This season's been rather dry up until the recent rains, minister. As a farmer, I really noticed that. That has significant effect on our storages and so forth. Can you please provide an update on the effectiveness of the Energy Security Risk Response Framework in managing this extended dry period?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, Mr Shelton, and it was a topic of thought that was occupying much of my thinking not that long ago as we flirted with the prudent storage level in our Hydro. Storages in Tasmania, as you pointed out, experienced drier than average conditions over the previous 12 months. The month of May, for example, was amongst the three lowest yields recorded for Hydro Tasmania's catchments dating back to 1924, so, 100 years. In fact, last financial year, 2023-24, was the second driest recorded by Hydro Tasmania.

Pleasingly, the Energy Security Risk Response Framework implemented by the government worked effectively. The framework consists of two key energy and storage triggers, the prudent storage level (PSL) as the early indicator to modern water storage, and the high reliability level (HRL) sits at the top of the energy security reserve. The HRL ensures that even if Tasmania experienced very dry weather in a six-month break, and a Basslink outage, we would still have enough energy and storage to maintain Tasmanian supply.

With the recent dry weather, storage levels were, as I mentioned, very close to the PSL. Due to the long-range forecast indication of below-average rainfall, Hydro Tasmania began proactive management of its water in storage. This involved higher imports from Basslink and the proactive operation of gas generation from the Tamar Valley Power Station. Despite this, gas generation was less than 2 5 per cent of Tasmania's total generation last financial year and I'm pleased to report that while storage levels were very close to PSL, we did not cross into PSL.

As of Monday 16 September 2024 Hydro Tasmania's total storages were 45.8 per cent, total energy and storage measured against the Energy Security Risk Response Framework for September. This means that storage is 8.7 per cent above PSL and 16 per cent above a high reliability level. I think that's probably a reasonable place to leave that.

It was a very good demonstration that the framework does work well. It was a particularly dry period, as I mentioned, also not a very windy period. The system got a run. We flirted with PSL and we got nowhere near HRL, but I am pleased to say the system worked and we have now, to some extent, sailed out of the danger zone.

Mr SHELTON - I'm sure, minister, you would have been disappointed. The floods created some problems for certain communities, but from the Hydro's storage perspective, it was a great thing. The reality is that it's a shame to see all that water going out to sea when we would love it in our dams.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, just confirming on the information provided about the Bell Bay services hub, and that may not necessarily be a physical thing. Can I clarify that that means there's no intended upgrade to support infrastructure at Bell Bay?

Mr DUIGAN - Certainly not. As part of the Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub, TasPorts is one of the key partners in that project and we would see in the full development of the Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub - TasPorts, on commercial terms, doing port development and infrastructure development, noting that $5 million for the services hub, while it is welcome funding to scope that, isn't a large quantum of funding when it does come to port infrastructure developments. Certainly, around the Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub, TasPorts and port infrastructure developments are an aspect of that and I'm happy for Mark to provide some more detail.

Mr BOWLES - Through the minister, we understand both the Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub and the Renewable Energy Services Hub to be key commercial opportunities for TasPorts. They're in a good position to capture the revenue from the activity there and that work has been progressed on the basis that they will be funded commercially by TasPorts. Much of the focus of the work that we do for the Renewable Energy Services Hub is trying to understand how we can best support private industry.

Ms FINLAY - Yes, okay. Thank you for the clarification. Can I just move on now to a different scale of energy production? I'm interested in new strategies around rooftop solar. I wonder if you can disclose the current percentage of available rooftop solar in Tasmania and what your plan is to see that activate and grow.

Mr DUIGAN - Currently, my understanding is that rooftop solar provides around 3.3 per cent of Tasmania's total energy generation, so it is not insignificant. In terms of one of the key initiatives from government to support the installation of rooftop solar, the Energy Saver Loan Scheme has been absolutely pivotal in that. There is a funding amount of $50 million in that scheme, and rooftop PV has been the most frequently taken up opportunity through that scheme. That has been a real enabler of rooftop solar throughout Tasmania.

Ms FINLAY - And a target? What you're hoping to get that number to as a percentage of generation?

Mr DUIGAN - As a percentage of generation - and again I speak off the top of my head, I think the 3.3 per cent mark is where we are at - I am happy to pass to ReCFIT to talk about where we see the opportunity in the future to get that number.

Mr BOWLES - Through the minister, there's certainly a strong organic demand from households for rooftop solar. Of course, that's balanced by the sun resource for different households. It's important to note that for Tasmania, given the predominance of the availability of hydropower, we will never be in the situation of, say, South Australia, that is heavily reliant on rooftop solar and that level of over-reliance has its downsides as well. We would argue that a strong base of domestic supply from hydropower is a good thing, supplemented by those other variable sources.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you. I suppose that leads to my question, is there a plan for rooftop solar in terms of setting a target and seeking to incentivise more? I recognise that the hydro is valuable as that base, and we've got other as well, but where we can diversify and decentralise energy for users at the site, that's important. Is there a strategy and is there a target to increase that percentage and what is that target?

Mr DUIGAN - Again, I would point to the Energy Saver Loan Scheme. I know it's not a target, but it is a large quantum of funding and it has been predominantly used to deliver rooftop solar to Tasmanians and that loan scheme continues. For people wishing to install rooftop solar on their homes, there is a very helpful government initiative to facilitate that.

Ms FINLAY - I appreciate that but my question is more - are you satisfied that 3.3 per cent is the number that is always going to be in Tasmania or do you have a target to increase that? Is there a strategy in place, yes or no? And if there is, what is the target percentage of -

Mr DUIGAN - I would say in terms of strategy, what we have got is a way to incentivise. I would say that - and now I understand that that's not necessarily what you want to hear - but what we are doing is making it easier for Tasmanians to install solar in their home.

Ms FINLAY - I suppose you would appreciate that unless you set targets things, you can't measure the benefit of it. Yes, you've got a fund, people can apply for it and - what? For Tasmanians, where we're talking about transmission infrastructure, where we're talking about wind infrastructure, where we can actually generate and use power on site, it's a positive thing. Yes, there are other states that are doing it and they don't have the base of hydro, but I'm interested if you do have a plan on what percentage of our energy will be rooftop solar? It sounds like there isn't a plan, but there is the grant. Is there a target?

Mr DUIGAN - There is incentivisation for people to install -

Ms FINLAY - But not towards a focus -

Mr DUIGAN - rooftop solar.

Ms FINLAY - that classic focus. If you don't have a target, you don't know what you're aiming for. there isn't one. Can I then ask about community batteries in terms of the number of community batteries that you're intending to see or hoping to see in Tasmania and whether there's a plan or a strategy around that? I know you've got a trial.

Mr DUIGAN - Certainly, there are a number of large-scale battery proponents in the state at the moment and community batteries are an important aspect of supporting the growth of renewable energy sources. They are a shared solution that benefits both the local neighbourhood and wider community, and benefits include allowing more solar connections without expensive network upgrades and can allow households to share the electricity produced from solar panels within a local area and help with network quality.

The 2024 Integrated Systems Plan released by the Australian Energy Market Operator suggests that the future national electricity market will need both batteries and longer-term storage and it is work that is happening, particularly at the national level. The Australian government's Community Batteries for Household Solar program is providing support to their development, including grant allocation as part of the first round of funding to TasNetworks for six batteries in Tasmania. TasNetworks have been successful in applying for two grants under the Community Batteries for Household Solar program and will be installing two 100 kilowatt to 250 kilowatt community batteries in Shorewell Park [ok] and Glebe Hill. As a successful applicant, TasNetworks is responsible for the installation, connection and operation of these batteries at two sites.

I'd be happy to –

Ms FINLAY - It's current though, but is there a plan beyond that first step? No plan.

Dr WOODRUFF - I think Ms Finlay's got a really important point. We've just seen the extreme events and with people being out of power for weeks at a time, it's incredibly concerning. Whilst we all think it's fantastic to have the large battery that Hydro represents, the reality is that when poles and wires go down we need to move as much as possible into a diversified energy generation system. Will you be developing targets under the next climate action plan [or 'Climate Change Action Plan'] around the rooftop solar and community battery systems installation in Tasmania?

Mr DUIGAN - What I would point to is, again, the Energy Saver Loan Scheme which supports the installations of batteries -

Dr WOODRUFF - We've heard that.

Mr DUIGAN - Yeah, I know, but it is important and it is an absolute action of government that is seeing many more batteries installed than would otherwise be the case. I think that is important.

The notion of consumer energy resources is an important and emerging issue, or rather an opportunity for jurisdictions around the country, around the rest of the world, and here in Tasmania as well. Obviously, electric cars provide fantastic energy storage opportunities and getting those plugged into the grid and charging those from solar is a great opportunity.

There is a great deal of work happening at the national level through ECMC and progressing those conversations, noting that there are potentially rule changes and things of that nature that need to occur to enable those things to happen and for network operators to tap into existing community energy resources.

We have a scheme in place that has been very successful in getting more rooftop PV, more batteries installed in Tasmania. As I mentioned in answer to my last question, TasNetworks is currently engaged in the community battery space. There are a number of grid-scale battery proponents looking to set up in Tasmania. A very active space is how I would describe it. As a government, we need to be understanding and participating, where possible, in those developments.

Dr WOODRUFF - What I'm hearing from you is a really kind of hands-off, laissez-faire market - a kind of 'do its own thing' approach and individualised solutions. What we need in a climate-change, increasingly volatile environment is governments that will be directive and solve some of the tensions.

One of the tensions that's been sitting there for over a decade is between TasNetworks and solar users. What we have are missed opportunities. Obviously, we need to find a way of ensuring that TasNetworks is funded for the poles and wires part of the distribution. That is a public good and everyone should be paying towards that. However, that is stopping targets, like a real focus from government on community-level electricity generation.

When poles and wires go down from far away, communities are cut off. This will happen again and again, more and more frequently. Will you investigate this, as the minister, to look at creating some targets so it's not just left to businesses and community to kind of come along, but actually direct what's going on in Tasmania? When you have islands and far-flung communities cut off for weeks at an end, will you work towards a solution so that doesn't happen next time?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you, appreciate that. I would point to substantial work that is happening at the national level, and Tasmania is a party to that work that is going on around these sorts of conversations. In terms of targets and so on, Mark, is there anything you would like to add in terms of what ReCFIT is saying/doing in this space?

Mr BOWLES - In addition to what the minister's already spoken about, the primary target that we're working towards is the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target (TRET). We are very conscious, in terms of the activity we do, not duplicating what federal agencies are doing. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) is a source of funds for community batteries, and we're aware that there are six proposed community batteries seeking ARENA funding. That is something that we will certainly be monitoring, and continue to look at how that rolls out. They're in addition to the batteries, the grid community batteries that TasNetworks are trialling as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, Parents for Climate, from the north west, have a question for you. It's about the solar panel rollout and whether the government would extend that to childcare centres, with the costs of savings being invested to Tasmanian public schools and childcare centres. Will you extend that rollout?

Mr DUIGAN - I will have to take some advice on this, around the rollout.

Yes, that is a project, I'm advised, that is been handled by the department of Education. It is not something that I have any detail or real visibility on, but yes, it sounds like a good program.

Dr WOODRUFF - They've also asked a question relating to climate change emissions reduction. Will you commit to ending all household gas connections and directly investing in home energy upgrades for low-income houses, to help them pay bills, help with cost-of-living pressures, and reduce emissions that are going to the climate as well? Do you have a plan to do that?

Mr DUIGAN - Certainly, we have a gas strategy, which was released in the early part of this year, which looks at Tasmania's gas use and the opportunities that exist there. One of the things I would point to is our existing gas network, which is relatively young in age and does lend itself very nicely to blending with green gases, particularly green hydrogen. There's some work happening there; we could - potentially out of Bell Bay, where gas comes ashore in Tasmania - see green hydrogen being blended into our LNG and gas supply through the state and that is an opportunity that exists.

Dr WOODRUFF - Isn't the opportunity to stop using gas for Tasmania? I mean, we are the state that's lauded as - we don't need to use gas in Tasmania. We've got electrons produced by hydro, we can we can convert. We don't need to cook on gas, we can cook on electricity

that's produced from renewable sources. Isn't that the opportunity for Tasmania in a climate emergency?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, look, I think we need to be a little bit pragmatic. I'm not sure that too many people are going to be thanking me for coming in and chopping off their gas connection to their homes.

Dr WOODRUFF - The people who had their houses underwater with the floods last week might be really happy that you're taking it seriously.

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, and we are, we're looking at positioning Tasmania as a very significant producer of green hydrogen, which will be the next gas that we are using at scale. We are taking it seriously. Banning new gas connections is not part of the strategy. The strategy recognises the importance of gaseous fuels, which we need to recognise in Tasmania's energy mix -

Dr WOODRUFF - No-one needs to do that in Tasmania 2025. You don't need gas to cook your food.

Mr DUIGAN - and incorporate gas into decarbonisation pathways, including options for locally produced hydrogen, renewable methane or biogas. One of the key considerations of transition is the notion of fair and just, and we need to be very careful that we don't do things that necessarily disadvantage one cohort of the community.

Dr WOODRUFF - An implausible scenario in this situation. That is just ludicrous.

Mr SHELTON - Just following on from my previous question when we talked about the weather events of the last 12 months. In the recent months we've had significant rain and then the storms came along which, as Dr Woodruff has mentioned, affected many communities around the state. Could you just explain to the committee what assistance is being given to those communities that were affected during that storm event?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, it was a really significant storm event and I have noted that on Thursday 19 September TasNetworks achieved a great milestone in restoring our last outage caused by the late August storm damage. At its peak, 47,000 customers lost power and overall 200,000 connections have been restored during that time. I understand there are there are some still some individual households with further work to be done before they can have power restored in terms of having privately owned poles and things of that nature.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the people who were impacted by the storm for their understanding. We empathise with them and it was it was a challenging time. I note that the government did provide a number of supports in terms of emergency food grants of $350 for outages of longer than 72 hours, and temporary living support grants of $2000 per household where the principal place of residence had been without powerful more than seven days or is uninhabitable due to damage.

I am aware of at least one circumstance where, I think, $6000 was paid out in that grant funding to a particular household. It's a pretty tough time for all of those people. I take the opportunity again to thank all the TasNetworks staff, the contractors and the people from interstate that got us back on line.

Ms FINLAY - I'm keen to just explore North West Transmission Developments a little. Prior to the announcement we broke it down into two stages, when it was a complete project -

Mr DUIGAN - Marinus?

Ms FINLAY - North West Transmission Developments.

Mr DUIGAN - Oh, sorry.

Ms FINLAY - I'm wondering what the final cost estimate was before you broke it down into two projects.

Mr DUIGAN - I think the latest numbers I have are $950 million and $550 million. That is, stage 1 is $950 million and stage 2 is $550 million.

Ms FINLAY - That's since you have broken it down into two stages. I'm just wondering what the estimates were for the complete project.

Mr DUIGAN - Yes.

Ms FINLAY - At the moment prior to your breaking it into two.

Mr DUIGAN - I would be relying on my memory. I don't think I want to rely on my memory, sorry. Are you happy for us to take that one on notice?

Ms FINLAY - If there's anyone who has the memory, it's helpful for my next question.

Mr DUIGAN - I'm happy to say as I recall, I believe it was around $1.4 billion in total.

Ms FINLAY - Yes, thank you. What I am interested in is before the project was broken down into two stages, there were particular qualities of the project that would mean then that elements became redundant and you could actually take down within an existing easement and then rebuild one of the sections. At that point, there had been a whole lot of community engagement, landholder engagement concerns, whatever, for that. As I understand it, now that the project is being done in stages, the area that would have been able to be redeveloped within its easement now will no longer be because it has to be live and then a new one. The easements will have changed, meaning disruption to landholders. That will come with a whole lot of extra costs, more land, more impact, more concern. You said currently it's $950 million -

Mr DUIGAN - For stage 1.

Ms FINLAY - For stage 1 and $550 million for stage 2. What have been the increasing costs attributable to stage 1 had it been done in the first section versus now, because of that extra, easement and that sort of thing?

Mr DUIGAN - The detail contained in that question is probably one for TasNetworks. However, having said that, ReCFIT might have some understanding. In terms of easements, I know that, as you have articulated, it has become somewhat more complex to deliver the project in that staged way. Easements I think have been temporarily widened, but TasNetworks is still

in the procurement phase, as I am advised. It is a question that sits best there in GBE scrutiny, and I guess they are still in procurement.

Ms FINLAY - On that project, has the final pathway of the line and the final engineering of the line been completed? There are some concerns being expressed to me, particularly with my primary industries background I have an interest in primary producer land but in any landholder, that they are being asked to enter into agreements now and consider the impact on them prior to the end of the project being clear. At what point will the final pathway and the final impact of that project be known? Do you feel that it is reasonable that there is lots of work going on with landowners at the moment where they are expected to enter into agreements, but we don't actually have the final project lined up?

Mr DUIGAN - Again, I think that is me entering into areas which are really quite specifically in the realm of TasNetworks and I think I would have to push those to GBE scrutiny committees.

Ms FINLAY - Perhaps I could ask a question of you then in the context of that. In reimagining the project, realigning the project with the easement changes, the delays as opposed to having to do this again, and then the cost increases that are likely to occur because of that, at what point would that concern you as minister in terms of the delivery of the project, the current estimates, and the final reality of the cost of the project and the impact on those landowners?

Mr DUIGAN - I think what I would say is, the timing of the North West Transmission Developments is critical, in concert with the delivery of stage 1 of Marinus. As a government, and me as minister, we are doing a lot of things to ensure we have visibility around the timing and doing things to coordinate our efforts very closely. We are hyper-aware that these projects need to be delivered together.

Working things out with landowners is ongoing. There is still a substantial piece of consultation. There are TasNetworks land agents out there talking to landholders on a daily basis, as I understand it. It's important to note that the notified corridor is not necessarily the easement that will be acquired by TasNetworks. But, again, I'm getting into the realm of talking about things - Hang on.

> TasNetworks are engaging with landholders. Easements will not be registered unless the project receives all approvals and construction of the electricity infrastructure commences.

So, I guess, that's interesting.

Dr WOODRUFF - Stop me if this question has already been asked because I haven't been in the committee the whole time. Hydro Tasmania has said it will spend $1.6 billion to maintain 10 power stations and five dams over the next 10 years. Can you please provide an itemised list of the power stations and dams, and the expected expenditure on each of them?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes. I am obviously aware of the large-scale maintenance job ahead for Hydro Tasmania. Again, I fear we are in the GBE realm, particularly as these are very much Hydro-specific projects. I will ask my team at ReCFIT if they have that detail to add.

Dr WOODRUFF - I certainly hope that you do for such a large expenditure.

Mr BOWLES - We don't have that detail at hand.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I take it on notice?

Mr DUIGAN - No, I won't because it is absolutely Hydro Tasmania. It is a GBE question.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's $1.6 billion of taxpayers' money, you're the minister for Energy, you're the shareholder minister. I think it's fair that we have that information here in budget Estimates. I'm not going to get fobbed off to GBEs on this.

Mr DUIGAN - I will see what I can find in here. I don't have a breakdown and I will seek to hold the line, through you, Chair, that that is a question for GBE scrutiny.

Dr WOODRUFF - I want that on notice, please. That's $1.6 billion of taxpayers' money. Why don't you, as the shareholder minister, have information about that? You have the information; you can get the information. Ten power stations, five dams; this is critical infrastructure for Tasmania. It's $1.6 billion. I want to take it on notice. It's outrageous that you would fob that off until GBEs. Parliament has not even decided who's going to appear this year in GBEs. It's not even necessarily the case that Hydro would appear.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, thank you. I've heard what you've got to say.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm waiting to -

CHAIR - No, please let me speak. I cannot direct the minister to answer the question in a particular way or to do as you are requesting. If the member is not satisfied with the response, you can ask a further question or raise it as a matter of concern in the committee's report. I would suggest you ask another question or I will give the call to -

Dr WOODRUFF - Hold on. I would like to ask another question because the minister hasn't answered anything yet. He's withholding incredibly important information from Tasmanians. Are you concerned about the fact that there's going to be 2.5 per cent less going into Tasmania's dams a year because of global heating? Is that something that you have taken responsibility on yourself as climate change minister - well, as the minister having responsibility for climate change, for Energy? What conversations have you had with Hydro about diversification? Is there a plan to diversify energy generation on the back of that reality that's facing us all?

Mr DUIGAN - Hydro Tasmania obviously takes great interest in hydrological flows and rainfall into Tasmania and has very substantial dataset around that particular question. They hold a great deal of expertise in that regard. I point to the government's Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target commitment of doubling our on-island generation by 2040 as a way of mitigating that risk and diversifying our portfolio of energy generation opportunities in the state. Renewable energy generation is largely weather-dependent, and spreading our risk profile is a good thing to do.

Dr WOODRUFF - What about for Hydro? This is Hydro's generation capacity, Hydro's income-raising capacity. It is expected there will be 2.5 per cent less inflow per year on average. That's a massive reduction over time. What conversations have you had with Hydro about them diversifying their energy production?

Mr DUIGAN - Hydro Tasmania is already a holder and an investor in wind-generating assets in the state. We have rewritten the Hydro charter to refocus Hydro on delivering more generation in Tasmania, returning to its foundation principles of delivering jobs and economic outcomes for Tasmania. I think we would see and expect Hydro to be a more active participant in the bringing on of new generation in Tasmania, whether as an off-taker or as an investment co-partner, things of that nature. We have had a fairly substantial reset of the Hydro Tasmania position.

Mr SHELTON - Action on climate change is an integrated issue. Can you explain how the government is supporting the local community to tackle climate change and get involved in climate action?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, I would be pleased to. Climate change is a very large issue but the impacts are often felt very locally. Recently, I was pleased to launch the Climate Change Action Grants Program which is providing $350,000 toward tackling climate change at a local level. Grants range from $2000 to $20,000 and are open to Tasmanian organisations such as local government entities, community groups and not-for-profit organisations to support a wide range of climate change-related initiatives and projects around the state. Some of the simplest and best ideas to address environmental issues locally come from the community, so these grants will help support locals driving action in their own neighbourhoods.

The grants program is a great opportunity for Tasmanian communities to get involved in climate action. The program offers grants for projects that meet one or more of the following objectives:

- Improving information and knowledge sharing, including providing accessible and useful information about climate change.
- Educating or raising awareness about the impacts and opportunities of a changing climate.
- Reducing emissions, including practical targeted on-ground community action that supports behavioural change and social innovation.
- Building resilience to the impacts of variable and changing climate, including stronger social connections to increase resilience to future climate-related shocks and stresses, or supporting vulnerable community members to prepare for climate impacts such as extreme weather or energy and food insecurity.

The types of projects that could be funded include community clean-up events; climate change education project programs; energy efficiency initiatives; and projects that build community resilience to climate change. Applications opened on August 15 and will close on 27 September. I encourage anybody who has a local community group who is active in that space to reach out.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, I am wondering, since you made the announcement to divide the project into two stages, whether you've reflected on that at any point and decided that it

would have been better to keep the project as a whole? And whether you're likely to return to that position where you deliver the whole project, instead of in stages?

Mr DUIGAN - I note that transmission builds and transmission development is very tightly governed by national regulators and so building transmission that doesn't pass a ReCFIT or an investment test or a net benefit test for the community is very difficult to do.

What I would say in relation to particularly north-west transmission, that scale of project with one Marinus cable would be problematic from a regulatory point of view. I'd be interested if ReCFIT had anything further to say on that matter.

Mr BOWLES - That part is correct and one of the key focuses that we have with all these transmission projects is to optimise and provide the lowest possible cost to consumers. That's a key factor while providing the necessary resilience and capacity in the system.

Ms FINLAY - If I can move to the announcement that you made prior to updating the charter about, I think the language was 'unleashing' hydro and enabling the capacity for them to invest on island generation. You had a cap in that announcement of 300 megawatts. I'm interested to understand why there was a cap included in that and why you landed at 300 megawatts?

Mr DUIGAN - Three hundred megawatts is regarded, particularly in the solar generation space. Typically, we see a lot of solar farms and I'm not exactly sure of the reason, but there is a reason for a 288-megawatt solar farm. That's in part, reason for the cap, noting that wind projects are already exempt under the regulation. We wanted to be able to capture those prospective solar proponents particularly, and understanding that there are a number of wind proponents as well with projects that would fit inside that cap and as a signal to those people, that was a reason for that.

Ms FINLAY - Do you have any earmarked projects for Hydro to use to activate that?

Mr DUIGAN - In terms of what Hydro's role is, as I have said, we have done a substantial amount of refocusing of Hydro; asking Hydro to be a more active participant in the support and bringing new generation on island, whether that's having Hydro build its own new generation potentially by way of wind or solar, or partnering with other entities, or providing PPAs or firming agreements. That's where we would say Hydro is Australia's largest generator of renewable energy. It has a lot of expertise on board and we see it as a key asset for Tasmania in activating the space.

Ms FINLAY - I hope that you'd recognise that there's been a bit of a theme through today. Obviously, this interim target is front of mind and that's being able to bring on generation. We need it now. We don't have enough generation for all the things that we're hoping to do and that we currently do in Tasmania let alone bringing this new investment.

We've gone through a number of projects where there are opportunities to activate those to bring them online, and you did provide this opportunity for Hydro to actively invest. Whether it be in wind or solar themselves, PPAs or firming, I'm yet to hear of anything that is advancing specifically in bringing on new generation. I did ask for an outline of how you're going to meet that interim target year on year and where you thought there would be projects that would be operating and putting new generation into the network.

I suppose my question is, do you have a plan with Hydro as a minister? Have you generated a plan on how they're going to utilise that opportunity? Is there a plan to bring on any generation from Hydro to help meet that interim target?

Mr DUIGAN - Hydro is working on a number of its maintenance and upgrade facilities that will add capacity to its existing fleet -

Ms FINLAY - Not enough to meet the interim target.

Mr DUIGAN - But important progress that needs to be made. As you talk to, particularly, those solar proponents we're talking about, they will reference conversations they're having with Hydro as being very important to the ongoing viabilities.

Ms FINLAY - Yes, but there is a shared concern that we're not going to meet that interim target. I think that whatever can be done to do that is important, given that we seem to be flatlining, not advancing. I've heard you mentioned Port Latta and I say this positively, but it's a small amount of megawatts. There are some other projects and increased productivity of our existing assets through Hydro, small megawatts. What is actually going to come on-line to deliver that interim target? I acknowledge that some of the solar farm projects could, but I believe there's a collective desire for more effort, more urgency, and a willingness to get on with it because there is a concern that we're not going to meet that target.

Mr DUIGAN - I hear that, and I understand that is a perception, particularly as we know the long lead times. It feels like we come back year on year and talk about these things. It doesn't mean that progress isn't being made. I again point to large-scale wind farms that are in Major Projects.

Ms FINLAY - They're not going to stand up in time.

Mr DUIGAN - But they are large, they are big dial-shifting projects. There are still large solar projects for Tasmania, which I think would have the shortest lead time. They are continuing to progress, continuing to have productive conversations with Hydro Tasmania, among other energy entities in the state, continuing to move forward. I understand that people would like to wave the wand on all these things, but we need to be -

Ms FINLAY - I don't think they are asking to wave the wand. I think they are asking for very particular action.

Dr WOODRUFF - Our reporting to the national carbon accounts under the land use, land use change and forestry sector includes the carbon emission withdrawals of forests in Tasmania, balanced with the emissions produced by forestry in Tasmania. How much does the forestry sector emit in the logging and burning process annually, plus annual emissions from bushfires? If you can give me the last five years, that would be fine.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. It might take a little bit to find that detail. Secretary, have you got something in front of you there? No, you don't. So we're looking for total emissions out of -

Dr WOODRUFF - No, the total emissions are already in the report in the national carbon accounting process, but it's a combination of both what is sequestered and what is emitted. I'm looking to -

Mr DUIGAN - You just want the emission number?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, because the sequestration is the other part of that.

Ms RUSSELL - We have a couple of really detailed appendices at the back of our greenhouse gas emissions report which identify land use and land use change by sub-sector and shows where there's been positive emissions and negative emissions. Those sub-sectors are in both the report and there's a description as well in the other sub-sector, but as to adding it up right this second, no, I can't respond to that.

Mr DUIGAN - Does that that give the detail you are seeking to find?

Ms RUSSELL - I'm just getting a little bit of advice coming through around that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Real-time advice as we're talking. We'll just talk a little bit longer. It would be helpful if the minister could point directly to that information, or if it's not there, provide the information on notice. Do you want to wait for that advice? I'll move on to another question. Or can I take that on notice? What's the best thing to do?

Mr DUIGAN - We'll take it on notice and try to get it back to you before the close of the proceedings.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yesterday, you suggested I ask you this question here today. Do you have any advice on the 39,000 ha of additional forests in the Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) land that the government is planning on going into logging? Has there been an estimate of that land area and the carbon emissions that would be released? I understand that would need to be part of the process that Parks would need to give to the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources.

Mr DUIGAN - Other way round.

Dr WOODRUFF - Business, Industry and Resources would need to give to you. I'm assuming that the Climate Change Office would need to provide the information to Parks about the values of that estate. Do you have information about what the carbon emissions would be if those 39,000 ha were logged?

Mr DUIGAN - The Department of State Growth is working through the preliminary steps required to undertake the conversion of Future Potential Production Forest land under the *Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act 2014*. Under the act, an assessment of conservation values needs to be undertaken, as has been discussed. This has not yet been undertaken. The minister, Mr Abetz, is in the phase of obtaining detailed information under section 7.2 of the *Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act*. Let me see. No, it hasn't yet been written.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, it hasn't happened yet?

Mr DUIGAN - As this is a legislative process, I'll be making a decision based on my obligations under the relevant act. Emissions from land use, forest change and forestry emissions is attributable to multiple factors. No, it's this process, sorry: emissions are reported in accordance with international frameworks. The data is calculated and is the responsibility of the Australian Government. The Climate Change Office analyses the specific data relating to Tasmania on a yearly basis and presents findings within the annual greenhouse gas report, as referenced by Sarah Russell. The Climate Change Office monitors and evaluates impacts of all greenhouse gas emissions produced on-island, including land use, land use change and forestry. The data is used to inform initiatives and actions that will lower our emissions and build resilience. It's also used to identify the greatest opportunities for emissions reductions and is reflected in the Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans.

Tasmania's managed forest estate has a role to play in reducing Tasmania's emissions by sequestering carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it in wood products, while also providing a renewable low-emissions alternative to emissions-intensive building materials.

So, a legislative process. Data calculation is the responsibility of the Australian Government.

Dr WOODRUFF - But you still have to provide the information to them, so will you be doing an assessment of those emissions for the 39,000 ha? It's one of the requirements you just read out. The legislative requirement is to monitor the impacts. One of the impacts would be 39,000 ha being released for logging and burning. That would be a source of emissions.

Mr DUIGAN - Sure, and I will be committing to whatever is legislatively required.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, what progress is the government making on domestic activation to foster a new hydrogen industry? How important is the Green Hydrogen Price Reduction Scheme for this?

Mr DUIGAN - I am pleased to speak to this one. The Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan was released in March 2026. Our strategy for the development of a renewable hydrogen industry in Tasmania includes a $50 million Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Industry Development Fund to kickstart the industry. The Green Hydrogen Price Reduction Scheme announced on 25 October 2023 allocates $8 million from the development fund to stimulate green hydrogen supply and demand. Countrywide Hydrogen was announced as the successful applicant on 13 May 2024. The first phase of the project is to construct a hydrogen production and refuelling facility in Brighton, which will produce up to 800 tonnes per annum of green hydrogen.

Once the Brighton facility is established, Countrywide wants to expand production and refuelling facilities to the north and the north-west of the state. This will see the major road freight routes in Tasmania being serviced by a reliable hydrogen supply. The funding agreement between the state and Countrywide has been executed and Countrywide is well advanced with site planning for two of its locations. Countrywide is also in discussion with various end users.

That is a really positive move in Tasmania that we will have a refuelling network of hydrogen so that anyone who wants to run hydrogen trucks and buses can do so.

Ms FINLAY - In the current cost-of-living crisis - and I know that we share a community - we are hearing stories of people through winter turning off the lights, not having their heating on, going to bed early because they are not able to afford the current tariffs that we have. In Tasmania, we are blessed by having special heating tariffs. In reading the tariff structure explanatory statement, the tariff reform strategy specifically says that it is about changing behaviours. We know that there are many older people and other people in the community who are worried about the impact of prices of power and already changing their behaviours - not buying groceries, not buying medications - in order to pay for their things.

In that, it outlines that there is an intention to remove the special residential tariff for heating. I am wondering how you are going to communicate that to the community. I am not sure that people are aware of this and it's something that they do hold dear because it does indicate that in a domestic setting there is relief for the use of hot water and heating.

Mr DUIGAN - Yes. As part of the rollout of advanced electricity meters, which have now reached over 77 per cent in Tasmania, which is well ahead of other areas in the country, together with time-of-use tariffs, it seeks to give consumers greater control over their power bills. Importantly, we must recognise that in Tasmania existing Tariff 31 and Tariff 41 will be grandfathered. If you are on those tariffs -

Ms FINLAY - This is what I am saying.

Mr DUIGAN - you will be able to continue on 31 and 41.

Ms FINLAY - For how long?

Mr DUIGAN - In an undetermined period of time. We have seen in other jurisdictions the roll-out of time-of-use tariffs that have caused some degree of angst. I acknowledge that. We have been very firm with our energy retailers here that tariffs 31 and 41 be grandfathered. There is potentially an issue if you are changing or building a new house.

Ms FINLAY - And moving into new premises.

Mr DUIGAN - I'm not sure.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates for the Minister for Energy and Renewables has expired. The committee will adjourn until 9.00 a.m. in the morning. Thank you, everybody.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. Good job.

The Committee adjourned at 5.09 p.m.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Nic Street MP

Thursday 26 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Dean Winter MP
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Mr Mark Shelton MP
Ms Rebecca White MP
Ms Anita Dow MP
Ms Helen Burnet MP
Mrs Helen Beswick MP
Mr David O'Byrne MP
Ms Kristie Johnston MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. NIC STREET MP
Minister for Finance, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Sport and Events

Tim Lovibond
Chief of Staff, Ministerial Office

Gary Swain
Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance

Jonathon Root
Deputy Secretary, Revenue, Gaming and Licensing, Department of Finance

Dean Burgess
Acting Deputy Secretary, Corporate and Governance, Department of Finance

Mathew Healey
Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Mike Mogridge
Acting Executive Director, Office of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Craig Limkin
Secretary, Department of State Growth

Denise McIntyre
Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Housing, Infrastructure and Planning, Department of State Growth

James Avery
Chief Executive Officer, Stadiums Tasmania

Anne Beach
Chief Executive Officer, Macquarie Point Development Corporation

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

CHAIR (Mr Wood) - Good morning, everyone. The time being 9.00 a.m., the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Finance will commence. Welcome, minister. Could you please introduce the persons at the table?

Mr STREET - To my immediate left is my Chief of Staff, Tim Lovibond. To his left is Jonathon Root, Deputy Secretary of Revenue, Gaming and Licensing. To my right is Gary Swain, Secretary of Department of Treasury, and to his right is Dean Burgess, Acting Deputy Secretary, Economic and Financial Policy.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Finance is two hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask the question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so that it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

I would also remind everybody that the microphones are sensitive, so please be careful of knocking them when you're moving paperwork around your desk space. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other. I would ask members to please speak one at a time to assist with this. Thank you.

Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Mr STREET - I have a very brief opening statement. I am pleased to be here today as the Minister for Finance. When I took on this new portfolio responsibility, I was aware of the challenge that lay ahead in developing the 2024-25 Budget. I am conscious of the need to carefully balance the responsible management of the state's finances with the need to continue to invest in essential services and infrastructure, and provide cost-of-living relief to Tasmanians. As the Treasurer has made clear, now is not the time to pull back from supporting Tasmanians. National inflationary and global supply chain pressures have impacted the cost of living and the cost of doing business.

As the Finance minister, I'm very aware that revenue from state taxation is an important source of funding for the government. In 2024-25, state taxation revenue is forecast to be $1.8 billion, increasing across the forward Estimates. Offsetting this revenue is the cost of providing relief through a range of targeted tax concessions to provide support for Tasmanians when they need it the most. A number of these concessions are, however, time-limited and this is reflected in the revenue profile across the Budget and forward Estimates. That doesn't mean that the concessions will cease, but more that the policy decision is yet to be made, which we will do in full consideration of the economic climate at the time.

Ensuring more Tasmanians are able to own their own home is critical. I'm proud to be doing my bit as the Minister for Finance. We provide a range of concessions and exemptions from stamp duty for first home buyers, as well as land tax relief and also payroll tax exemptions for employers who hire Tasmanian apprentices, helping more young people into work. Providing relief from state taxes is one key way this government can assist Tasmanians, from those buying their first home to businesses looking to employ young Tasmanians.

I'd like to quickly note that the Treasurer has already been before the Estimates committees for this year, so if there are any questions that are better answered through that portfolio, the Secretary will likely be able to provide some high-level commentary.

Mr WINTER - Minister, your government announced a mandatory card-based play arrangement for electronic gaming machines (EGM) a couple of years ago. It's been delayed but I understand from the recent consultation paper that the government is still committed to it. I asked this question last year to the former minister. It was about budget paper 2, volume 1, page 106, which shows the revenue stream flowing from gaming taxes. It shows that it's relatively flat. I wanted to understand - I understood last year why it hadn't been updated, because it was relatively new, but we're 12 months down the track. Why have those revenue estimates not been adjusted given that the very intention of your policy is to reduce turnover in gaming?

Mr STREET - I'll defer to Jonathon Root for that answer. We got this question in the Legislative Council as well.

Mr ROOT - Thank you, minister. It is certainly the case that there will be an update to the revenue projections once we get to the stage where we've got the final design signed off and the time frame confirmed. As you would see from the consultation paper, the first phase is in venues, the second phase is in casinos. We haven't put down the time line for casinos at this stage. We have kept the projections pretty flat, as you identified. In other circumstances there may have been a smaller amount of growth through there, but until we have both the time lines and the final design set in stone it's difficult to come up with precisely, particularly in the first year, what those numbers might look like.

It is also the case that there are challenges around doing these sorts of projections, but there are some things going on nationally which will give us a better insight so that we can come up with a more accurate estimate. For example, Crown Casino has a mandatory pre-commitment system in place that came in December and we certainly anticipate through this year that we'll be seeing some numbers on the impact of that. Obviously that's an important estimate for industry as well as for care and concern in seeing what the anticipated impact would be.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I understand it's very difficult to predict exactly what the impact of the policy is going be. I understand that. I also understand that it is completely not plausible that these estimates of revenue could possibly happen if you have the system in place, there is going to be a reduction, that's the design of it. Has the government done any work to model the impact the card would have on state revenue?

Mr STREET - Again, I'll defer to Johnathon, but as he was saying, they are looking at the impact that the card will have with its introduction at Crown Casino in Victoria. That will inform some of the work that they do.

Mr WINTER - I understand that bit, but has the government done any work itself or is the government aware of any work specific to the design of your card system that would tell us what the impact is going to be?

Mr ROOT - The first thing I'll say is that the policy intent of this harm minimisation initiative is not around specific revenue targets or player expenditure targets or anything like that. This is about harm minimisation and a player protection initiative. With that context, as I

think the government has said a number of times in the previous minister, this really is a first for a system that is both card-based with pre-commitment across multiple venues.

Mr WINTER - Is that a first in the nation or first in the world?

Mr ROOT - Norway had a similar sort of program. The approach they took was very different and so it's not really a correlative. What they did was shut down all of their machines and then they built this system around pre-commitment and so on and then started it all up again, so a really different sort of thing and that's not what's going to happen here.

There's been a voluntary system in Victoria, as I touched on; there's a mandatory system, so it's a very different sort of program, but we have certainly been keeping a close eye on and done background work on what's happened around the world and where things are going in other jurisdictions. We do have a mandatory pre-commitment system in Tasmania in the premium player lounges in casinos and that's been in operation for some years now. I don't have specific numbers around the impact in that environment. Where we collect data, it doesn't go to individuals who are in those environments. As an anecdotal observation, the premium player lounges in casinos are doing quite well; it certainly hasn't been a significant impact.

There have been a number of inquiries from going back to 2010 with the Productivity Commission inquiry into gambling that have come up with a range of numbers. Industry has made estimates itself. They've ranged from downplaying the number of problem gamblers that are actually in the system to some quite large numbers when the policies around mandatory pre-commitment have come into play.

We've got a fair bit of background work done. We have some sense of where things might play out. We are not in a position to come up with some actual numbers at this stage.

Mr SWAIN - If I could, I was just going to make the point that state tax revenue is forecast to be $1.8 billion in 2024-25. Of that amount, something between 13 to 15 per cent comes from gambling-related activities, of which we're talking about a subset of 15 per cent. In the context of the overall state revenue, bearing in mind taxation in totality is 20 per cent of state revenue, we're talking about a fairly small element of the total state revenue base.

Mr WINTER - Thanks. The other question that I got to last year but we didn't get to fully explore was the net impact of the Future Gaming Market reform on state revenue. Last year, Mr Root might not remember, we went through what the net impact of the changes had been on the budget; if I recall correctly, at the time the bill went through the parliament, the estimation was that the state would be around $20 million better off per year. Have you looked at that number in terms of the net impact of the reforms on revenue? And can you give us an update as to what the impact has been?

Mr ROOT - Yes, I do recall that conversation. My answer at the time was based around taking the 2022-23 numbers. Just to dial back a little bit, the government's policy announcement when it came out around future gaming markets, at that stage because of COVID, the only numbers we had were 2018-19. The treasurer at the time, who was the relevant minister, was talking about an uplift of about $8.5 million in terms of taxation. When we crunched the numbers last year on 2022-23, I think the number was $9.5 million.

If you look purely at the same year and applying the previous tax rates and the new tax rates to that, the outcome for 2023-24 has been an uplift of $7.5 million in taxation and CSL and the movements there have been a little bit lower than the anticipation for two reasons. Basically, the Keno operator had some difficulties when they changed their system last year and it led to some outages and keno revenues have dropped slightly. The other thing that's happened is casino EGM players have done quite well and when you're comparing apples with apples in the same year, if the tax rates went down in casinos and then revenues go up, then the gap becomes higher. That is essentially what went on. The $20 million number you may be thinking of is the commentary around the impact on the Federal Group of losing the network gaming, which was $20 million.

Mr WINTER - That's in line with your expectation, the $7.5 million?

Mr ROOT - Yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I want to stick with the mandatory pre-commitment cards. When it was announced by the Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, apart from vested interest in the industry, there was near-widespread support for it and the recognition that it would ease the pain on vulnerable Tasmanians. We did genuinely see the human side of the Treasurer and his commitment to this as a system, and I think we all acknowledge that he was driving it strongly. Just two days ago, community advocates released some data they believe there's $1.4 billion worth of community losses that have been sustained since the 2018 election, on poker machines. In my electorate and in Mr Willie's electorate in Glenorchy, it's estimated to be $125 million alone since 2018.

All the way through this, vested interest like the hotelier's association have aggressively campaigned against this card, have claimed that it can't work and won't work, and earlier in the year when the delay was announced, they again attacked Mr Ferguson for this card with very much an 'I told you so' type approach. There's a lot of fear that with Mr Ferguson no longer responsible for this card, the government's commitment to it and its ability to deliver it will be lost with him. Minister, I'm looking for an ironclad guarantee from you that it is still government policy, you are still pulling out all stops to overcome the challenges and get this card in place as soon as possible, in the interests of vulnerable Tasmanians.

Mr STREET - I've had this question when I was sworn in as the Finance minister, Mr Bailey, and I have had it in the media since then. The government's commitment to implementing this card has not changed. My commitment is the same as Mr Ferguson's commitment. The delay was unfortunate but necessary. I would make the point that it wasn't me who signed off on the delay. I was on leave at the time and Mr Ferguson was acting as the Finance minister at the time as well. So, any correlation that people tried to make between me becoming Finance minister and the delay being announced is erroneous as well. We are absolutely committed to the introduction of this card.

What I will say is that when you're dealing with an external organisation that is developing a bespoke system like this, MaxGaming will do everything within its power to deliver it to the time frame that it has set and we will keep the Tasmanian public updated on the progress of it. But I can sit here and look you in the eye and tell you that the government's commitment to the PCG has not changed.

Mr BAYLEY - That's very welcome. Can you give us a bit of an overview of some of the - I think they were described as - challenges from MaxGaming? I guess it's a recommitment by them to a time line. Can you talk us through some of those challenges and progress in addressing them?

Mr STREET - I'll defer to Jonathon on that to talk about that because they are the ones who to deal day to day with MaxGaming.

Mr ROOT - There's a bit of context in the lead up to the government's policy announcement that's important to understanding the time lines. The government policy announcement came following the Liquor and Gaming Commission's inquiry that came out of the legislative amendments. At the time that inquiry was underway, there was a tender process in play to appoint the network operator, and as part of that tender process we asked tenderers to commit to being able to deliver this sort of player card, cashless gaming infrastructure. Through that process, however, because the inquiry was still underway, we didn't have a clear idea of what the system requirements were going to be.

The government policy announcement came out in, I think, late 2022, at which point the operator was fully engaged with rolling out the new network around the venues. They basically had nine months to completely retool all of the venues in Tasmania, cut over to the new system, do any customisation of their system to meet Tasmanian requirements for a drop-dead date of 1 July 2023 to switch over.

They took the opportunity to basically rebuild their network operating system for Tasmania, so we have a very up-to-date system running the network in Tasmania. But one of the outcomes of that was that it was difficult for them to start the development of the player card gaming system until they'd rolled out the underlying network infrastructure. Their design work commenced following that.

There are a couple of things about the Tasmanian policy that are very different to the sorts of systems that are operating around Australia at the moment. One of those is that it's a mandatory system. If you look at, say, a voluntary system in Victoria, the requirement for its availability is lower. If the system fails, games keep going. Whereas with a mandatory system, it has to have really robust, high-level infrastructure design and so there was a requirement for extra work in there. The other component that's very unique is the cashless system. Generally, where these systems happen, say in Crown Casino, it's one entity. You're not allowing for money on a card to be moved across venues and there are complexities with that. In working through with MaxGaming on the best way to approach that, they're looking to get a payment services operator, a banking provider rather than building it themselves a banking provider, rather than building it themselves.

Those complexities are the design complexities that we've been going through. They basically turned around the initial design between when they bedded down the new system around 23 September 2023; by December, there was a consultation paper that went to industry. The time line on that was to give consultation by the end of January. Then a design paper came back to government in February. That was signed off after the election, and then things have been progressing.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, supplementary to that is that MaxGaming, as they are rolling out the system, they're an industry partner for the Hospitality Association. They're part of the

system. They are profiting from the system as it stands at the moment. Can you understand and don't you think there's scepticism in their motivations for actually delivering a pre-commitment card model? What are you doing and what can you do to ensure that the very real conflict of interest that sits with MaxGaming is addressed? We are seeing these delays and we are concerned that the conflicts of interest embedded in contracting them to deliver it are potentially unsurmountable.

Mr STREET - That's a contract matter for Treasury. I'll go to Gary.

Mr SWAIN - I can answer generically. I think if a profit-maximising firm is providing services, they stand to make more revenue and more profit once the services are fully rolled out, and they have a brand to protect in terms of future opportunities across the rest of Australia, given some of the findings of the national study into gambling points to the kind of system that Tasmania is already moving to.

I don't know if Jonathon is able to add detail but, broadly, yes, they're part of the industry, but they get paid for providing services.

Mr STREET - With other states looking to potentially roll this out, there is an incentive for MaxGaming to get it right in Tasmania to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Mr BAYLEY - You acknowledge that there's a conflict of interest there though?

Mr STREET - No, I wouldn't acknowledge that there's a conflict of interest. I think it's a fee for service with a commercial company.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, as part of the government's 2030 Strong Plan, you committed to increasing the frequency of responsible conduct of gambling training. Can you please provide an update on this?

Mr STREET - Our government is committed to poker machine harm reduction while also providing the opportunity for people to exercise their free choice. That's why, as part of our 2030 Strong Plan, we committed to implementing a number of poker machine harm reduction initiatives, along with the PCG.

We've committed to $100,000 to promote awareness of the Gambling Exclusion Scheme, which includes third-party exclusions. We're examining the option of implementing automatic responsible gambling systems as part of gaming machine software for the detection of potential problem gambling behaviour in real time, and engaging with venues interested in using facial recognition technology to help identify excluded persons.

Regarding the frequency of training that you're talking about, Mr Shelton, I've recently issued a ministerial direction requesting the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission implement a requirement that responsible conduct of gambling training be undertaken every two years. This was published in the *Tasmanian Government Gazette* this week.

Employees that interact with patrons are currently required to complete a Responsible Conduct of Gambling course approved by the commission within three months of commencing their employment and every five years thereafter.

The commission is best placed to determine what is required from a practical perspective to increase the frequency of the training requirement. I understand that an amendment to the commission's Responsible Gambling Code of Practice and other regulatory instruments is likely to be required.

In implementing the direction, I've requested the commission consider how more frequent training is to be provided, the cost to employees of the additional training, the ability of registered training organisations to deliver additional courses, and opportunities for industry to support the training requirements.

The government's expectation is that this increase in the frequency of training should occur as soon as practicable, and this has been included in the direction issued to the commission.

The government will work with key stakeholders to implement this commitment to ensure responsible conduct of gambling training meets the needs of industry and helps to minimise harm from poker machines.

Mr WINTER - I'm just making a point. This committee, I think, is quite genuine so far in trying to extract information. I'm not sure why we need Dorothy Dixers in this circumstance, but perhaps the government could reflect on that.

There's a lot of interest in the card-based player system and I'm interested in the implementation of it. The Player Card and Cashless Gaming Public Consultation Paper points out on page 18:

> There will be a phased approach to the introduction of a player card in gaming in Tasmania. The first phase will be implemented with a new system in December 2025.

That is 14 or 15 months away. Can you take me through the time line for implementing this? It seems very tight to get from a consultation paper in September this year to actually having it rolled out in December next year. That seems potentially impossible to do. Can you step out for me the time line for implementation?

Mr STREET - I'll defer to Jonathon on that.

Mr ROOT - It is a tight time frame, there's no doubting that. I would say in defence of MaxGaming's capacity to deliver, they delivered a more complex role which was completely retooling the entire network in nine months from their appointment as the preferred tenderer in late 2022 until 1 July 2023, and they had a drop-dead date, because on 1 July there was no alternative. It was either have it running in every venue or switch it off. So they have a good record of delivery.

The time line broadly looks like this: the consultation paper will close in the middle of October. We will also get an updated design brief from MaxGaming at around that time. The commission will then go through what's come out of consultation and what that says about any changes that might need to be made to the design work, and the design will be finalised and signed off. MaxGaming is looking at a nine-month period to finalise the implementation and do the rollout, so that'll commence in March. From what I said earlier, this is a similar sort of

time frame to what they took to do the previous block of work, so it's certainly doable, assuming that no major hurdles come out in the interim. That's the time frame, and it is achievable.

There is a bit of flexibility in there, but there are risks around acquisition of hardware and those sorts of things. Obviously, the task involves procuring 2500 card readers, installing them on the sides of all of the machines that are out there, hooking those up to the network, and rolling out card writers in venues. On the government side, it's doing education work; with the commission, it's doing guidelines and rules and so on. There's a lot of work there, but it is doable.

Mr WINTER - I would call that ambitious. When did the government or commission make the determination that it was unachievable to roll this system out by December this year?

Mr STREET - Again, that was an operational decision, so I'll defer to Jonathon.

Mr ROOT - It was effectively when the first-phase design brief came through. MaxGaming had put in there some time estimates around what would be required. There was some uncertainty around some of the strategy for things like testing and piloting the system.

Mr WINTER - When was the first-phase design?

Mr ROOT - The first-phase design was received by Treasury in February. Obviously, then there was an election. It was signed off in April by the government, and with that effluxion of time it pushed things out a bit. The December 2024 time line was quite ambitious, and with the delays that were inherent in what was going on at that time, it did naturally push it out, and I think we've built in some additional time for consultation as well.

The government was quite responsive to some criticisms around the degree of consultation that had occurred previously and asked to do a broader consultation, so that's been added into the system as well. It's essentially around providing the capacity to ensure that the technical design is right rather than pushing -

Mr WINTER - Given that the government was aware that it wasn't possible to deliver this program by the due date of December this year in February, why was the Treasurer, Michael Ferguson, on radio in March telling Leon Compton that he thought it was deliverable by December?

Mr STREET - Chair, I can't possibly answer that question. That's a question for the Treasurer.

Mr WINTER - It always seems difficult. I have to say, I think the time lines you're talking about here are extremely ambitious. Just to go back through that time frame, you will be getting a design brief in October, which starts in four days. Then you are going to provide that design brief - when will MaxGaming get the design brief?

Mr ROOT - MaxGaming are building the design brief. They're the ones who are doing the design. They're the operator who will be -

Mr WINTER - So you provide the brief to them to do the design. Is that right?

Mr ROOT - All of that's already done. The consultation paper sets out essentially how it will all work. There was a previous consultation paper in December, which again set out at a high level how it will all work. The technical design work is not what the government does, because that's talking about how you turn those functional requirements in the system design - how it will work - into a technically implementable system. MaxGaming is doing that work now.

What will happen once the consultation process closes is that we will go through that consultation to see if there are issues raised by industry, care and concern groups or the general public that speak to some change required in that design. We don't anticipate that will be major. We'll then work with MaxGaming to tweak the design that they're already working on. We're anticipating to get the next-to-final technical design at about the same time the consultation closes, so that then we can merge them both together and then there'll be a final design.

Mr WINTER - Just to follow up - it is the last one on this; I appreciate your allowing me to do that, Chair and the Greens - when you talk about the design, are you talking about them actually having already commenced the development of the software that will underpin the system? Because earlier you talked about this being quite a unique system. Are they currently writing the software that underpins the system at this point in time?

Mr ROOT - They're currently finalising the specifications at a technical design level that would then enable their programming changes and so on to occur -

Mr WINTER - So they do the software design completely and wholly from October to March? They'll have that period of time to -

Mr ROOT - That work will flow. The March period will encompass also some further software design work and so on. They have a system currently that they operate in Queensland. There's some further work required to make that sort of system work for Tasmania.

Mr BAYLEY - I let that go because I'm really interested in MaxGaming's involvement in writing the programming and delivering this, but I want to go back to my previous line of questioning. I hear that there are opportunities for MaxGaming around the country and other jurisdictions are looking at this, but the reality is we've seen how hard the pokies and the gambling lobby nationally have focused on Tasmania, because they are so afraid that if Tasmania breaks the mould and starts to put in positive steps in terms of harm minimisation and starts to rein in problem gambling and the harm that it does to communities, the gambling lobby is going to lose a hell of a lot of money.

We know that there was national money that went into the 2018 elections, so hearing this hasn't given me a whole lot of confidence around the delays that we have had. The government has chosen an industry partner to deliver an activity that, at the end of the day, will cost industry itself hundreds of millions of dollars a year. The rest of the country is looking at Tasmania and putting a lot of their effort in. The other hotel associations, and the clubs and hotels associations and so forth are looking very closely at Tasmania. How can Tasmanians have confidence that these delays are not just kicking the can down the road and, at the end of the day, delaying the card to death because there's not the commitment there to deliver it in the first place?

Mr STREET - Because I'm sitting here telling you that the government's commitment has not changed to implementing this system, Mr Bayley. The decision for who was contracted

to do the work is perhaps a matter that Gary can speak to. I've got every confidence in MaxGaming delivering this system. As I said before, it is a fee for service. As Gary also pointed out, there is reputational damage for MaxGaming if they don't get this right as well, and deliver a program that works.

Mr BAYLEY - Our concerns are around the government's commitments to the hoteliers' association. We understand the Premier, Mr Rockliff, met with the hoteliers' association prior to the election and gave them two commitments. One was that the mandatory pre-commitment card system would be scrapped and two would be that Mr Ferguson wouldn't be minister post-election. Now, obviously, Mr Ferguson isn't Finance minister post-election. The first has come to pass and we're deeply concerned about the second. Are you aware of this meeting? Have you got any knowledge of that?

Mr STREET - I'm not. You would have to ask the Premier about that. What I'm telling you is, sitting here as the Finance minister with responsibility for this policy, that the government's commitment to implementing the PCG has not changed since I became Finance minister.

Mr BAYLEY - Have you met with the hoteliers' association since becoming Finance minister?

Mr STREET - I had an informal meeting with Steve Old in my office after a particular media appearance where he felt that he was misrepresented and wanted to come and clarify his position. That's the only meeting I've had with him. I've also met with MaxGaming in the last month as well.

Mr BAYLEY - Was that the extent of the conversation with Steve Old? Just the misrepresentation of him in the media?

Mr STREET - My Chief of Staff just reminded me we talked about the JackJumpers as well, because he's the chair of the JackJumpers. But yes, it was to clarify his position.

Mr BAYLEY - Did he ask you to abandon the pre-commitment card?

Mr STREET - He did not. He understands my commitment as Finance minister and he understands the government's commitment and my responsibility.

Mr BAYLEY - Does he completely accept that this is happening and needs to happen and will continue to happen irrespective?

Mr STREET - I have no way of being able to read anybody's mind, let alone Steve Old's.

Mr BAYLEY - He didn't ask you directly to scrap the system?

Mr STREET - He did not.

Mr SWAIN - I was just going to say my understanding is MaxGaming, and Jon is going to be able to talk to this, were selected through competitive processes. I think the other thing that's worth pointing out is, there is significant employment in this space. In getting up to speed with this, I went through the previous socioeconomic study, which I think identified some

1200-odd people involved in the sector. Jonathon's comment before was that it's a mandatory take-up, so we also need to make sure that this works practically. It has to deliver. I think the minister is articulating the government's position on wanting to get on with this, but there's also a practical consideration that we have to make sure the system works smoothly when implemented.

Mr STREET - Just for absolute clarity as well around that conversation, he obviously made it clear that he disagreed with the card-based system. He did not ask me. He understood my commitment to it and didn't ask me to renege on the government's commitment. He's been very clear with me in the past as well on the industry's position as you would understand.

Mr ROOT - While we're on this output, I would like to clarify one thing that I said earlier to Mr Winter around the time line and the receipt of the design in February. I would say that was not to the government. The commission reviewed that design to qualify that it met with the requirements that they had set prior to that document going to the minister.

Mr WINTER - Are you able to tell us the date the government received the information?

Mr ROOT - It was once the new government was sworn in that that minute went down to them.

Mr WINTER - The government wasn't aware that there would be a delay until after the election?

Mr ROOT - That's correct, yes. That paper didn't go to the government until after the election, because that was the process.

Mr SHELTON - Can you please advise the committee how many Tasmanians are on the Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme?

Mr STREET - I can. For people experiencing difficulties with their gambling, the Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme provides a means for patrons to exclude themselves from gambling. We don't want any Tasmanian to lose more money than they can afford. The Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme allows for self-exclusions, venue exclusions and third-party or Tasmania Police exclusions. As of 31 August, 369 people were listed on the Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme. This included 272 people recorded as being self-excluded, 106 venue operator exclusions and one third-party exclusion. For those who are quick with their maths, this includes 10 individuals that are recorded as having both a self-exclusion and a venue operator exclusion.

Self-exclusion is organised through a counsellor who, in addition to assisting with the self-exclusion process, is able to help the person with their gambling problem. Anglicare provides for Gamblers Help counsellors who are available for in-person support across Tasmania. I commend the work Anglicare Tasmania does in this space to provide the support to those in our community. Anglicare service extends not just to those experiencing problems with their gambling but also to those who may be directly impacted, such as family members.

We've committed $100,000 to promoting this exclusion scheme and I've had discussions with Jonathon and the department about making improvements to make it easier for people to get themselves onto that exclusion scheme. At the minute, you have to make an appointment

with an Anglicare counsellor and then go through a filling-out-a-form process to exclude. We know it would be far better if people were able to exclude themselves at the time when they were under most pressure. That means by being able to, potentially, use their phone to take a photo of themselves and upload themselves to the exclusion database at the time -

Mr WINTER - In real time.

Mr STREET - In real time, when they're under the most pressure. We know somebody will have a terrible day on the pokies, will make an appointment with an Anglicare counsellor, that appointment might be five days, it could be seven days away. The pressure they felt under to exclude themselves has dissipated and they might back away from putting themselves on that exclusion scheme. We're investigating how to increase the ways to get people onto the exclusions.

Mr BAYLEY - I think a point to be made there is that it's better not to have the temptation there at all. Some people just can't manage those temptations.

Mr WINTER - Just going back to the timeframe, I was clear on the timeframe and now I'm less clear. On 16 February, the then Finance minister, Michael Ferguson, put out a statement in relation to card-based play. He said:

> The scheme is an important initiative which allows a person with a close personal interest in welfare to apply for a commission in order to prevent them from gambling for up to three years. Importantly, we also remain committed to harm minimisation and will implement a mandatory card-based gaming system for electronic gaming machines as soon as reasonably practicable. We acknowledge implementing such a system is a complex task and, as such, the development of full and efficient implementation may take more time than originally anticipated.

If the government wasn't aware in February, what was that government statement based on? The delay in the rollout was announced on 16 February. If the government wasn't aware that there would need to be a delay, why were they announcing the need for a delay?

Mr STREET - Again, that's a question for Mr Ferguson.

Mr WINTER - It's this portfolio. It's a question for the government.

Mr STREET - I understand that, but I wasn't the Finance minister at the time. If Jonathon has any more information on the timeline, I'm happy for him to provide it.

Mr ROOT - I think it was just a reflection and, again, it was the Treasurer's view, it was a reflection of the complexity of the design work.

Mr WINTER - He didn't know about that, though. If he didn't know about the complexity, if he hadn't had that advice there would need to be a delay, then how was he announcing the delay?

Mr ROOT - He wasn't announcing a delay. He was simply flagging that it may take longer than 24 December. The firm timeframe -

Mr WINTER - They're the same thing.

Mr ROOT - Well, there's a specificity versus a generality. Essentially, the Treasurer, in my mind, was simply reflecting that this was a complex task. He had, at that time, a target in mind of December 2024 that everyone was working towards. The design brief that came through subsequently had a view of the operator around what a firm delivery date might be and it wasn't locked in until the government agreed to it. That's the reflection. At the time, we were all working to the December 2024 date, noting that it may take longer due to complexities in any system design and development.

Mr WINTER - Last year I requested a briefing on the implementation of the Mantra card-based play scheme as well as the social poker issue. Social poker has been resolved so we won't need to go there.

Mr STREET - I thought I did a terrific job with that to be honest, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Very good. I was denied a briefing by the independent commission, which I'm still a bit shocked about. Can I ask why the independent commission would deny the shadow finance minister a briefing about the implementation of a major reform like this?

Mr STREET - We're going to have to defer to Gary.

Mr SWAIN - I don't know the detail of all that but they are independent. I don't know if that - when was the request?

Mr WINTER - Both in December and February. Ms Cranston wrote to me in February to tell you that she was not going to, she had nothing further to say and wouldn't brief me on the government's plan. Really the question is - I think I know what you're going to say, but was there any push from the government that Ms Cranston not brief the opposition about this matter?

Mr STREET - I wasn't in the portfolio at the time. I'm not aware of any direction from the government. I wouldn't think that a minister would be in a position where they would be issuing directions to an independent commission either.

Mr WINTER - I would have hoped so. In relation to the mandatory card-based play system, will it be a chip card, a radio frequency card or what sort of card system will it be?

Mr STREET - That is an operational matter, so I'll defer to Jonathon.

Mr ROOT - The current design brief has a magstripe card.

Mr WINTER - I think you answered this earlier, but will the card system be external to the machines? And how many of the current electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in Tasmania's fleet, if you like - I'm sure you'd call it something different, already have hardware capable of accepting that card?

Mr STREET - 'Fleet' is as good a word as any.

Mr ROOT - Yes. We'll go with 'fleet'. Currently, all of the machines in Tasmania are coin-operated, so there aren't machines in the venues. In the casinos, there are card-based machines. We'd anticipate, when we get to the subsequent phase of incorporating the casino systems into the pre-commitment gaming card (PCG) network, that that infrastructure will use a similar sort of magstripe card. We'll be looking to make those work across. But all of the machines in venues are coin-operated at present, so they will need to be retrofitted.

Mr WINTER - How many EGMs are there?

Mr ROOT - The limit is 2350. I think there are about 2200 out there at the moment.

Mr WINTER - So, in nine months you're going to install card readers to 2200 machines and update their software in order for them to accept card-based play and not coin-operated?

Mr ROOT - These are chassis that are built to have card readers in them. There's a logistical exercise to procure the readers and insert them into the machines. That's something that's been taken account of in the time line that's been developed.

Mr WINTER - You are actually quite far into this.

CHAIR - Mr Bayley.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, you've mentioned you've met with the Australian Hotels Association (AHA). Have you met with Federal Group or any of our other pokies interests in relation to the card since you've taken on the portfolio?

Mr STREET - I met with the Federal Group and that was to accept an invitation to go down to Wrest Point to have a look at the facial recognition technology system they've put in place. They showed me the front of house - how it looks, how it presents to the public, and then took me out the back and showed me what happens when somebody who is on their exclusion scheme is identified and how they handle it.

Mr BAYLEY - Any discussion of the pre-commitment card in that context?

Mr STREET - No.

Mr BAYLEY - What about some of the organisations working to pick up the pieces from gambling, Anglicare and others?

Mr STREET - I have met with Charlie Burton and Adrienne Picone from the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS). Much like you, they were looking for a recommitment from the new minister that the PCG was still government policy, which I was able to give them. It was a very short meeting because that's all they wanted. I said exactly what I said to you earlier this morning and they were happy with that and left. That was the only issue they wanted to discuss. I believe I've met with Anglicare since I've been in the portfolio as well. They expressed their support for the PCG system, but we also talked about the counselling systems that they run outside of that as well, and the success of them and what they could be doing to improve that as well.

Mr BAYLEY - The 2018 election stands as a low point in terms of gambling money coming into the political system and buying elections. We've passed some reforms in terms of donation reform and declaration since then, but it hasn't come into play as we know. Do you know, can you confirm who and how much gambling donations were received by the Liberal Party in the lead-up or as part of the election context? That's this year?

Mr STREET - I don't have that information. That's a matter for the Liberal Party. Just going back to your previous question as well, though, I just want to make it clear that I'm happy to meet with any group that has an interest in this particular policy as well. Doesn't have to be TasCOSS or Anglicare. Any other group that's got an interest.

Mr BAYLEY - Have you personally sat down with any problem gamblers who have lost their house or lost family members or who have suffered real harm at the hands of pokies?

Mr STREET - I want to be very careful here. I've spoken with a parliamentarian who has had experience within their family and told me their story. I'm more than happy if there are organisations that would like me to sit down and meet people with lived experience, more than happy to take that on board as well.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you have any concerns, then, just coming back to the delay and to MaxGaming. MaxGaming, as we discussed earlier, provides services to the gaming industry around the country. We don't necessarily accept that they'd suffer reputational damage when it comes to delays or inability to deliver this particular mechanism, because their key business is in the gambling space and, so, in some ways you could say that their reputation would be enhanced in many ways. Do you have any concerns whatsoever that inside the system and the organisation that they are playing Tasmanian government and this is just obfuscation and delay in order to ultimately kill this as an initiative because their key interest is in servicing gambling providers and producing and providing and managing these machines and their various updates?

Mr STREET - Having met with three members of MaxGaming's executive, there was no discussion around anything other than the implementation of the PCG. I'm absolutely convinced from that meeting of their commitment to the implementation of this system, but to getting it right. What the government wants is to reduce harm to those who have a gambling problem whilst having as little effect as possible on casual users who don't have a problem.

I'm absolutely convinced from that meeting with MaxGaming that they are of the same mind, that they want to deliver a system that works and is effective both in terms of reducing harm but also not damaging the businesses

Mr BAYLEY - Even though that will come at a cost to their main clients, which are the gambling providers themselves?

Mr STREET - They have been contracted to do this work. I am absolutely convinced that they will carry out the contract to the best of their ability to make sure that this system is implemented as quickly as possible, but as effectively and as efficiently as possible.

Mr SHELTON - I have some questions to interrogate you on land tax and payroll tax and that sort of thing, but, as the theme so far this morning has been on gaming, a question around social poker, which hit the media a few months ago. My question is that the government

is committed to ensuring genuine social poker tournaments can be played in Tasmania without wagering and without low entry fees paid by players. Can you please advise if Tasmanians are back playing social poker and under what conditions?

Mr WINTER - They are? So, there you go.

Mr STREET - You can either ask the questions or you can win an election and sit on this side and answer the question, Mr Winter, but you can't do both at the same time. Thank you for the question, Mr Shelton. Social poker tournaments are back up and running in venues across Tasmania. Feedback received today has been positive. Tournaments at venues on the north-west coast and in Launceston are being run every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night with entry fees ranging from $30 to $60. Legislative amendments to the *Gaming Control Act* were not required to get

Mr WINTER - Just have to write a letter, as it turned out.

Mr STREET - As the responsible minister, I was able to direct the commission to declare social poker an exempt game under the act. Our government worked with the social poker community to deliver on this commitment -

Mr WINTER - To write a letter.

Mr STREET - To understand all that's important to Tasmanians in being able to participate in this genuine social activity. You're making it very hard for me to read this, Mr Winter.

The three main operators of tournament poker in Tasmania were consulted as part of determining limits and controls which will allow genuine social poker tournaments to operate effectively and responsibly. On 17 July, I issued a direction to the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission to declare social poker an exempt game under the *Gaming Control Act* with a Gazette notice on 21 August the commission declared social poker to be an exempt game.

The direction's subsequent exemption notice defines the parameters for what constitutes a game of genuine social poker and outlines conditions that the operators of a social poker tournament must adhere to.

It's important to note that social tournament poker is very different to what you'd expect to see in a casino. For starters, it isn't played with cash-value chips; players pay a fee to enter a tournament and there is a prize pool available to the winners. It's a genuine social activity for many Tasmanians and is described by many players as a real family. Just because I'm feeling a little bit bipartisan at the minute, I'm happy to acknowledge Mr Winter's advocacy for this move and for social poker.

Mr WINTER - The point, minister, is that at least three businesses were effectively shut down for nine months because of the commission's decision on social poker, on their new position that they decided to establish, and what we learned, after nine months, was that all it took for the government to fix it was to write a letter to the commission to direct them.

What do you say to those businesses who lost thousands of dollars, to people who lost their jobs, about the government's snail-like response to this and refusal to listen to business in the first place?

Mr SHELTON - Mr Winter, you just took the next question.

Mr STREET - The commission made the decision that they made, and the government rectified that position.

Mr WINTER - After nine months.

Mr STREET - We think that we've done it in a balanced way. We're glad that social poker is back up and running. We're sorry for the inconvenience that was caused.

Mr WINTER - Job losses, inconvenient job losses?

Mr STREET - As minister, I acted to reinstitute social poker and it's now available to those people who enjoy it in Tasmania.

Mr WINTER - Back to the card-base play system, minister. We've heard a bit about the implementation and that we're up to the design, that there's a design going on, the consultation leads into the final design, and then the rollout from March.

Where in the Budget is the allocation of funding to pay for this? How much is it going to cost in total?

Mr STREET - I'll go to Jonathon.

Mr ROOT - We're working through the commercial negotiations at the moment. The model will likely be similar to the current monitoring network whereby the costs of the network have been amortised across the 20-year life of the licence.

Mr WINTER - Is that CapEx or OpEx you're talking about - the operational cost of the scheme?

Mr ROOT - That's all of it.

Mr WINTER - All of it?

Mr ROOT - The monitoring scheme currently I'm talking about - not the PCG scheme yet - but how that works is it is amortised across the life and there's a daily charge per machine for the operation of that. That's the model we're working through at the moment. There may be some other costs that are more specifically related to government, but generally the base cost of the system will be amortised across the life of the licence and there'll be a daily charge on operating that to machines.

There may well be other charges such as standard EFTPOS transaction fees and things like that that'll be inherent in the system.

Mr WINTER - The plan is for the operators to pay the vast majority of the costs here.

Mr STREET - The government's policy is to keep the operational daily cost to as small an amount as possible.

Mr WINTER - Do you know what that cost is going to be - or an approximate amount?

Mr ROOT - We are currently working through the commercial negotiations with the operator, so we don't have a precise cost.

Mr WINTER - Sorry, the operator meaning the LMO rather than the operators of the venues?

Mr ROOT - Correct. MaxGaming, which is running the system, is essentially an infrastructure provider in this context. It will recover the cost of running that infrastructure.

Mr WINTER - To clarify, you don't know how much the implementation is going to cost, and you don't know what the impact will be on revenue, and yet you are going to roll this out by December next year, is that correct?

Mr STREET - That's correct.

Mr BAYLEY - We spoke a little bit earlier on the harm minimisation. We are advertising to promote $100,000 in the Budget. Every day this scheme is delayed comes at a cost to Tasmanians. For some it could be catastrophic. It could be incredibly deep and have a wide-ranging effect across their family and friends. Have you made provision for further delay, and boosting the temporary or interim harm minimisation activities that the government can support? Our line of questioning has been sceptical about the motivations, the capacity, and the interest of MaxGaming to deliver this. Clearly, as we are hearing, this is also an incredibly technical challenge. Putting aside any cynicism or scepticism about the motivations, it's not unrealistic to expect a further delay and that this won't be in place by the end of next year. What have you got in place, or what are you prepared to advocate for in your role as Finance minister, for additional harm minimisation activities that can at least try to stem the pain and bleeding for vulnerable Tasmanians?

Mr STREET - There are the items that we took to the election in harm minimisation. One of the most important things that we have is a doubling of the community support fund as well, which has gone from 4.1 to 8.3, roughly. Of that, 75 per cent is dedicated to harm minimisation programs that departments can bid for to run programs. There has already been a significant investment since the new arrangement we'll put in place to double that fund and double the amount of money that's available for those programs - 25 per cent goes to Active Tasmania for sport and recreation, that's in the legislation. The other 75 per cent is available for harm minimisation programs. We believe that we're already making a significant increase in investment in those harm minimisation programs. Gary or Jonathon, do you want to speak any further about that?

That fund is available for any government department to put a bid in to access that money. For example, DPAC might put a bid in for a specific amount of money to go to the market for organisations like TasCOSS or Anglicare to run additional harm minimisation programs.

Mr BAYLEY - Have you set yourselves a threshold or a point where if you don't get progress on this card, and you keep getting delays, and MaxGaming keeps highlighting the

problems or challenges, is there a point where you have to completely review this as an option and go to more effective ways of delivering safety for Tasmanians, which is clearly taking poker machines out of pubs and clubs? Is that something that you're willing to consider if MaxGaming keeps putting on the table these delays and inability to address the challenges?

Mr STREET - Our commitment is to introduce the gaming card system. We're still aiming for December next year. At this stage we haven't contemplated any other action outside of that because we're confident that we can meet that time frame.

Mr BAYLEY - What are you going to do if it can't be? What happens in June next year when MaxGaming says, 'These challenges continue, we haven't fixed XYZ' - what are you going to do there?

Mr STREET - That's a hypothetical that I'm not prepared to even enter into at this stage.

Mr SHELTON - I did mention about the payroll tax earlier on. I have a granddaughter who's a first-year building apprentice, and another grandson that's about to hit the employment market. I'm interested in finding out about the one-year extension of the payroll tax rebate that's available to businesses that employ new apprentices, trainees and youth employees. Can you please outline the support this provides to Tasmanian businesses in helping to grow Tasmania's skilled workforce?

Mr STREET - Thank you for the question, Mr Shelton. Obviously, as part of our suite of tax concessions, we've extended the payroll tax rebate scheme by a further year to 30 June 2025. The rebate provides payroll tax relief to businesses that employ apprentices, trainees and youth employees. It's designed to foster skills, create more jobs and help more young Tasmanians into work. The rebate for apprentices and trainees has expanded to all industries to include youth employees from 1 January 2021 in response to recommendations made by the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council. The payroll tax rebate is available for a two-year period from the date that apprentices and trainees are employed. Importantly, any youth employee under 24 qualifies, for the employer, for a one-year rebate.

The continuation of this scheme recognised the need to support Tasmanian businesses as they train our next generation of workers, but also continues the government's support for the employment of young Tasmanians statewide. The scheme supports around 3300 apprentices, trainees and youth employee placements each year. Employers can claim the rebate on a monthly or annual basis depending on how frequently they lodge their payroll tax returns. The average rebate pay per employee for the period end of 30 June under the scheme was $1741.

This is an important investment that will support the delivery of our ambitious infrastructure program by training a pipeline of future builders, tradies and industry leaders. Not only are we helping young Tasmanians into these trades through our infrastructure investment, we're creating a pipeline of work for years to come.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I'm a bit flummoxed by your last answer to my question around the costs, the spread of the costs, and also the revenue or loss of revenue. Has there been any work at all done by the government in terms of assessing the impact that this might have on - I asked you about revenue for the budget earlier - but say for business and also the impact it might have from business if large costs were to attach and is there a sovereign risk issue here

given that they signed licences, what three years ago, and now presumably you're going to add additional cost to those licences?

Mr STREET - Look, I'm not sure about the last part of your question, but I know that the Premier is the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality; he has been in discussions with the industry about the costs associated with implementing this program.

Mr WINTER - So, I had assumed until this that the government would be paying for the implementation, particularly for the capital costs. There are 2000 card readers or thereabouts being implemented, presumably that's a significant capital cost. Are you saying that the government isn't going to make a contribution to that at all?

Mr STREET - I'm not. That's still being worked through as to what contribution the government will make towards the implementation of the policy and the actual installation and what have you.

Mr WINTER - But there's no money in the Budget for that. There's no money in the Budget for the capital costs of the rollout, is that correct?

Mr STREET - Yes, look the costs are being contemplated. I mean as Jonathon said in his answer, the costs are still being worked through. We may make a contribution from the Community Support Fund as well.

Mr WINTER - The CSL to pay for it.

Mr STREET - Potentially that might be an option, but there are other options that are being explored as well.

Mr WINTER - I understood that there were some quite significant regulatory hurdles around the use of the CSL. Would that require a legislative or regulatory change in order to use the CSL in that way?

Mr STREET - No, the 75 per cent that's available is for harm minimisation and so I don't think it would be completely out of bounds for a portion of that to potentially be used.

Mr SWAIN - That's my understanding, minister. I'll just make a couple of comments, just to follow on for what Jonathon said before. It's not the case that the cost of a machine is an unbounded discussion; it's a 'how low can we get it' discussion that's underway, so, there's some boundaries around what those costs might be that are live commercial negotiation. In relation to Treasury's advice to the minister, generally, I am being careful what I say, we would be advocating for a self-funding system as the end point. However, if you needed to look at transitional costs for a smooth implementation to occur, we would practically consider that in our advice to the minister.

Mr WINTER - Can you take me through what the CSL is currently being expended on or planned to be expended on?

Mr ROOT - As the minister touched on earlier, following the reforms to the *Gaming Control Act*, there was a new framework around expenditure of the CSL and there are regulations that set out the appropriate areas in which that can be expended. There is 25 per cent

hypothecation for sport and that goes to Active Tasmania and the remainder is open to bids for activities that are within those regulated appropriate expenditures.

For example, in 2023-24, out of the monies allocated in that remaining 75 per cent pool, there was $938,000 winter specialist gambling support services, $460,000 went to community education, $380,000 to research, $800,000 to community grants - and these are grants that assist in community resilience, particularly in areas where there is a risk of gambling harm - $2.2 million went to Neighbourhood Houses and to Neighbourhood Houses' engagement program and $283,000 went to gambling support program operations. Those are the sorts of expenditures that are currently coming out of the CSL.

The criteria for distribution from the fund, as I said, are set out in regulation and that is that there is a link between the location of gambling losses and the location of where the money to be distributed is spent. It is distributed to support partnerships and collaboration; long-term programs; major initiatives aimed at reducing gambling harm; provision of specialist support for people impacted by gambling; investment in programs, infrastructure and activities including community engagement, and health and wellbeing; and research into an evaluation of gambling prevalence, risk factors, and so on.

Mr BAYLEY - This is some of the most alarming news I have heard all day. To think that you would raid CSL - money that is going to a whole range of important community support opportunities - to fund an infrastructure commitment - to implement this kind of card-based -

Mr STREET - It is only one option that would be considered.

Mr BAYLEY - Why would you consider it when this card is not going to automatically end problem gambling across the board? It only tackles one part of the gambling sphere. We know that online gambling and a whole range of other gambling activities are incredibly problematic. Why on Earth would you raid the Budget for community organisations that are helping support people through a whole raft of gambling challenges to put this single piece of infrastructure in?

Mr STREET - The bids to the community support fund are made annually as well. I would not see that we would be not funding any particular organisation that makes a bid to that fund in order to spend money on this. However, there have been cases of money being left over in the fund. I do not think you can be wholly supportive of the PCG as a harm-minimisation measure and not acknowledge that it is going to reduce problem gambling and that, maybe, there is a case to be made for some money to come out of the community support fund for targeted assistance towards the installation of this program.

Mr BAYLEY - That assumes the community support fund is adequately funded all the time.

Mr STREET - It's gone from $4.18 million to $8.36 million.

Mr BAYLEY - Sure, and problem gambling is also a significant issue that's escalating as well. That's not to say that $4.1 million is enough or that 8 odd million dollars is enough either.

On it, would you need to change the regulations for the government to raid that fund to invest in implementation of the card?

Mr STREET - Under the Gaming Control Support Fund Regulations, discretionary distribution to the Fund in addition to money otherwise payable out of the Fund. Under these regulations, money may be paid out of the Fund in accordance with Regulations 6 for any of the following purposes:

> Gambling harm prevention and harm-minimisation programs or initiatives.
>
> Direct support program services or initiatives aimed at the minimisation, prevention of gambling harm, or both.
>
> Research activities relating to the minimisation of prevention of gambling harm.
>
> Community capacity building and community development projects, programs or initiatives aimed at the minimisation of prevention of gambling harm or community sport and recreation activities.

Mr BAYLEY - Most people would read them in the context of community support organisations and their eligibility for those funds, as opposed to government itself. You've got control of the Treasury books. You can find this money and invest it in parallel with maintaining the CSL.

Mr STREET - The community organisations don't bid, the departments do. Then the community organisations bid to the departments.

Mr BAYLEY - This is a piece of infrastructure as opposed to education or other initiatives.

Mr ROOT - I would say, minister, currently funding comes out of CSL for the Gaming Exclusion Scheme, which is a piece of harm-minimisation infrastructure, so it's not a new concept. I can't speak to where the government will land, but, as the minister said, within the regulations there is approved allocation for investment in infrastructure that acts as a protective factor against gambling harm, which is what the minister was getting to.

Mr SWAIN - Treasury's advice would be that it has to be needs-based, targeted, and usually of a fixed duration. Typically, if it was focused on anything, it would be a capital component. It would not generally go to ongoing operations that you would look to the industry to fund. Having been involved in a few major reforms, and this is a significant reform, it's very important to reach the new end state, but there's usually some practical considerations to get there.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, the cost of living is a big issue for everyone out there, all communities and individuals, and it hits in different ways. It particularly hits those people who are either buying or wishing to buy their first home. For some it can seem out of reach.

Reading through the Budget, I noticed a few incentives there for first home buyers. I'd be pleased if you could inform the committee about what's in the Budget and how it provides for the first home buyers through tax concessions or grants.

Mr STREET - You're right, this Budget does contain a number of tax concessions designed to help first home buyers purchase their first home. Our Stamping Out Stamp Duty Plan is helping a huge number of Tasmanians enter the property market. This policy waives stamp duty on established houses valued at up to $750,000, making it easier for Tasmanians to enter the property market.

The exemption doubles the previous 50 per cent stamp duty discount that was available for first home buyers and it significantly increases the property value cap from $600,000 to$750,000.

This change took effect retrospectively from 18 February 2024 and is available until 30 June 2026. This will save eligible first home buyers up to $28,935 and is a key priority of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future.

The support provided by the government to first home buyers through this duty exemption is estimated to be $80.6 million over the 2024-25 Budget and forward Estimates period. Combined with support offered through schemes such as the government's MyHome shared equity program, it is now easier for people on lower incomes to enter the property market.

Mr WINTER - Chair.

CHAIR - Mr Winter.

Mr STREET - First home buyers have told me - I was pausing for effect, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Thank you.

Mr STREET - First home buyers have told me -

Mr WINTER - Oh, you are still going.

Mr STREET - that without this government's support, they would still be renting, spending years and years trying to save a deposit at the same time. A First Home Owner Grant of $10,000 is also available to eligible applicants who purchase or build a new home. The First Home Owner Grant reverted to this base level on 1 July 2024.

We also cut stamp duty in half for many Tasmanians - not just those buying their first home, but those who purchase a new apartment off the plan or one that's under construction, up to the value of $750 000. This doesn't just help the buyer - it also assists the developer. Incentivising people to purchase a home off the plan gives more certainty to the people and businesses constructing them, and it's these types of medium-density developments we want to see more of.

I'm pleased, Chair, that these initiatives in the Budget make it easier for first home buyers to enter the property market and realise their dreams of home ownership.

Mr WINTER - I think the minister has touched on this earlier, and apologies if I'm asking something you did cover. I want to ask whether there was a financial services partner engaged to work with MaxGaming - whether one was required in the first place, and if there had been one, what sort of role did they play?

Mr STREET - Whether one would be required or not was part of the discussion that I had with MaxGaming when I met with them, but Mr Root will be able to elaborate further on that as well.

Mr ROOT - There are obviously options for how to give effect to the cashless infrastructure. The view of [inaudible] working through it is that the most effective way of delivering this service is through a specialised provider. If you go back 10 or 15 years, a lot of these network-operating companies would have built this infrastructure themselves, but there are people out there who's day-to-day job is doing this and they are looking to engage with a partner who will do that component, and similarly, with a partner who will deal with the card-based infrastructure side of things.

Mr WINTER - Will that be a subcontract with Max? It won't be directly through the government?

Mr ROOT - Correct.

Mr WINTER - What's the time line around them needing to engage a partner, in terms of your delivery dates?

Mr ROOT - They're working with potential providers as we speak, so we would expect that they would have engaged that partner once the final design work is signed off, post the consultation process.

Mr WINTER - Minister, this scheme will involve the collection of a lot of personal data from people. Is the plan that the data will be stored by the government, Max, or someone else?

Mr STREET - That's an operational matter for the system, so I'll pass to Mr Root.

Mr ROOT - The expectation is that it would be stored centrally by Max as the provider. There are a whole range of contractual controls around security of information and there are legislative controls around security of information as well. It won't be the case that venues will have ongoing access to individual personal data, it will be stored centrally and controlled through contractual and legislative requirements. MaxGaming is currently managing the data for the network operating system itself; that's the current model.

Mr WINTER - Is that data likely to be - obviously it'll be a data centre somewhere - is that likely to be held here in Tasmania on island, or in Australia, or elsewhere? Or is it? I suppose you're already aware, given the rollout has started.

Mr ROOT - The storage location is probably going to be in some sort of redundant data centre infrastructure - you don't tend to store everything in one data centre these days. It's on island, and currently- I'll just check this with Ms McIntyre - Currently, the data is stored within Australia.

Mr WINTER - Okay.

Mr BAYLEY - We had the information from community advocates earlier in the week, I think it was around $1.4 billion being lost to pokies since the 2018 election. I'm interested if Treasury's done any modelling on the cost to Tasmanians from poker machines, and modelled what you believe the savings would be going forward. We had the conversation earlier around taxes and what's in the Budget and so forth, and it being flat, but have you done any modelling on the real-time harm that's happening to Tasmanians from poker machines and the impact of this scheme when it's implemented.

Mr STREET - To start with, I know for a fact that part of the community support fund is used by Treasury to fund the social and economic study that's undertaken. I believe the frequency of those has changed. I think it's been lengthened out to try to improve the data and the ability to compare across time. I'm more than happy for Gary or Jonathon to add to that in terms of the research they do as part of their work.

Mr ROOT - As the minister said, the principal piece of work that's done is the social and economic impact study. Those studies have looked into the economic impact of gambling in the past, and I have to say, they've been fairly equivocal on whether it's a net positive or a net negative.

Mr BAYLEY - The impact of gaming?

Mr ROOT - As an economic impact across the economy, because obviously there's economic activity and there's the cost of the harms that are caused. Past studies haven't been clear. They've tended to give ranges that have been from negative to positive. There will be another SEIS due in 2026, and that'll certainly be in a position to look at the impact of this.

Mr BAYLEY - How often are they?

Mr ROOT - They're every five years.

Mr BAYLEY - And they're publicly available?

Mr ROOT - That's correct. It's an independent study. We engage experts in this area to undertake it. The base study is done on a fairly consistent basis so that we can look at longitudinal impacts of initiatives, and the impacts and harm on individuals and families.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you plan to conduct these more frequently in the wake of implementing the scheme so as to be able to properly track the efficiency and the effectiveness of it, and make sure that it's actually having the impact you want?

Mr STREET - The next study is due in 2026. I don't know whether there's any intention to change from that particular schedule in light of the changes that we're making, is there, Jonathon?

Mr ROOT - That's right. When the legislation was amended as part of the gaming reforms, the period for the SEIS was actually pushed out. The reason for that was that the time taken to undertake - it takes about 12 months to do the study - there are a lot of interviews with gamblers, there's telephone surveys and things like that that go into it. By the time we'd work

through a process of doing the tender, appointing an operator, getting the study done, considering it, the government responding to the findings, then evaluating the nature of those responses, we're already deep into the next SEIS.

It was extended to allow for a more rigorous understanding of the impact of initiatives. I think the 2026 one will be a very useful baseline and, whether there are further studies done, it would be a matter either for the gambling support people in Health and DPAC or the government itself to determine. The SEIS is a major study, but there is other research going on frequently, as you know.

Mr SWAIN - Minister, I thought you might be interested, if you haven't seen it already, that the last survey found that 0.4 per cent of Tasmanian adults were classified as problem gamblers, which I think goes to the minister's statement of government intent to identify problem gamblers but not prohibit people who don't have a problem with it.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess this goes to the concerns in terms of the economic modelling and how wide it reaches. It looks at the cost. We know this is having a significant cost. The economic modelling is one thing, but then the human suffering and -

Mr STREET - That's why it's referred to as the Social and Economic Impact study, because obviously it needs to consider both.

Mr BAYLEY - Yes. It's hard to hear that you're willing to trade off the economy versus some of those social costs though - the very real human costs of this industry. That's effectively what this study does, doesn't it? It takes into account the economic benefits of jobs and services and turnover and the like, and then it might stack it up against the social impacts of it. But I'm hearing -

Mr STREET - Not 'might'. It does.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess the question is: how do you value them? People do, I know, but how do you value a life that's ruined by these machines?

Mr SWAIN - I take the point, but there are lots of activities that we engage in routinely that have the same features. Driving a car is the most obvious one where there's a significant economic and social benefit, but there's also an extreme cost to individuals.

Mr BAYLEY - I don't necessarily accept the analogy, Mr Swain, but I see what you're getting at. These are machines designed to addict. They're put in our most vulnerable communities and at the end of the day, they're stripping millions and millions of dollars out of people's bank balances.

Mr STREET - The reason that we're introducing the PCG is reduce the harm that these machines cause to people who have that problem.

Mr BAYLEY - Yes, I understand that, but the reason we're so concerned is that we've now seen a delay announced. I take your commitment to it, but we know the power of the pokies lobby. We know the influence it's had. We know the amount of money that it's given to the Liberal Party and others over the years. We know that they've had taxpayer funds returned,

literally, to their organisation. We're now hearing that the CSL is going to be raided in order to implement this policy.

Mr STREET - To go back to that, when I mentioned the CSL - there is no intention of raiding the CSL or jeopardising the harm-minimisation programs that are funded out of the CSL by accessing money out of that. I simply wouldn't sign off on a bid that did that.

Mr BAYLEY - You give your commitment here that implementing the card and making sure that it is rolled out across every poker machine in the state will be paid for outside of the CSL?

Mr STREET - No, what I'm saying is that it is only one option that is on the table. When the government has worked through the total cost of implementing this, there will be a number of discussions around how we pay for it.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you please outline what is included in this year's Budget to provide assistance with land tax bills?

Mr STREET - I can, Mr Shelton. In recent years the government has made changes to land tax rates and thresholds in response to strong growth in the Tasmanian property market, because we recognise that while people's property values have increased significantly, their capacity to pay land tax has not necessarily increased at the same rate. For anyone paying land tax in Tasmania, we've taken action to relieve land tax pressures by increasing the tax-free threshold for land tax by a further $25,000 to $124,999. This will save around 60,000 property owners up to $112.50 on their land tax bill. It also means that an additional 4450 taxpayers will now pay no land tax at all in the year ahead.

In addition to these, two land tax incentives designed to increase the number of properties available for long-term rental have recently been extended for a further two years until 30 June 2026. In 2018, we introduced a three-year land tax exemption for a newly built home that is made available on the long-term rental market, encouraging both new housing supply and availability to Tasmania's rental market. For those who build to rent, land tax will be waived for up to three years.

In addition, we've incentivised property owners renting their property as short-term accommodation to instead make their property available on the long-term market. For anyone who makes this transition, they will pay no land tax on their property for 12 months. These are fantastic incentives aimed at making it easier for more Tasmanians to secure high-quality rentals. We're continuing our efforts to support the many Tasmanians who are renting a home.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, during the election you made some commitments around stamp duty concessions and we've heard about those today. The government was very quick to implement those changes. However, you linked that policy to a short-stay tax, and you accounted for $11 million per year over four years, so $44 million. My question is, does it concern you, given the terrible state of the Budget, that there's now a revenue hole in your policy?

Mr STREET - In terms of the short-stay levy, it is under active development. We are also monitoring the legislative changes that Victoria is potentially bringing in by bringing in

the same levy as well. I don't know whether Gary has anything further to add in terms of a timeline.

Mr SWAIN - I can say that Treasury had given advice to the minister around the merits of perhaps sitting a little bit behind Victoria. They will have a range of conversations with the affected parties and it may actually be practically an easier and quicker pathway to follow on what they've already negotiated for Victoria. I can say that Treasury gave advice to follow Victoria rather than the government saying to Treasury that that was the preferred timing.

Mr WILLIE - That's an explanation for why we don't have the $11 million revenue accounted for this year. Are you planning to introduce it for the next financial year?

Mr SWAIN - It's $11 million. There will be a partial impact if this is delayed by some months. It is important to lock it in for the long term, but in this year's revenue, it's part of $11 million out of $1.8 billion, so it's pretty tiny.

Mr WILLIE - The next question, minister, is how can you say that the government won't introduce new taxes or increase taxes when clearly you went to the election with a new tax?

Mr STREET - Because this is a levy whose proceeds are entirely dedicated towards offsetting the stamp duty concessions that we've offered to first home buyers, Mr Willie. No new taxes and no increased taxes were introduced at the same time as the levy.

Mr WILLIE - Can you explain to me what the difference between a levy and a tax is, minister?

Mr STREET - Tax income goes into general revenue. The money from this levy is entirely dedicated towards offsetting the cost of the stamp duty concessions that we're making.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I'm going to ask again about the CSL and paying for this implementation. I hear you say that it's just one option that's currently under consideration, and I also hear that the CSL has in the past funded other structural initiatives, but I think most reasonably minded Tasmanians would expect that the Community Support Levy would go into supporting people and supporting the organisations that support people, and that this piece of infrastructure is the responsibility of government to implement. It is a government commitment. It's a standalone piece of infrastructure that is yours to implement and pay for.

We're seeing a situation where efficiency dividends are being imposed across departments and across the public service. It's almost impossible to think that you wouldn't take up the opportunity to raid that fund in order to at least absorb some of the cost of implementing this.

Why aren't you prepared to rule it out to give some confidence to organisations in the bidding process for the CSL, and to make sure that Tasmanians can have confidence that you'll put dedicated and real money into that piece of infrastructure? It is a standalone initiative that needs to happen and has now been a long commitment for government.

Mr STREET - Again, Mr Bayley, I only mentioned that it was a potential option.

Mr BAYLEY - I realise that.

Mr STREET - There was $1.235 million of unspent money in the CSL last year that rolls into this year. I believe in the PCG as a harm-minimisation program. There will be contributions from the government and contributions from the industry towards the implementation of this. Like I said, the Community Support Fund is there as well as an option, but that's all. I will not sign off on money coming out of the CSL that puts in jeopardy the harm-minimisation programs that are funded from the CSL.

Mr BAYLEY - The question is: when will the taxpayer stop paying for the implications of the 2018 election? When will we stop? We're giving money directly to the AHA; we're paying taxpayer money to support vulnerable Tasmanians through this scheme. When are we going to stop paying for the harm that's caused by these machines?

Mr STREET - I understand that that's your position, Mr Bayley. I would have thought that the government's position on implementing the PCG is a pretty fair indication that we disagree with the THA on this particular policy as well.

Mr BAYLEY - Is that why you pay them taxpayer money direct into their coffers?

Mr STREET - It's not. There is money paid to the THA for a number of worthwhile programs that they run including Clubs Tasmania in my Sport and Recreation space, but other programs as well, training programs et cetera as well.

Mr BAYLEY - We just see and taxpayers see money continually flowing out to ultimately support people who are suffering at the hands of an industry that should not and could be dealt with by virtue of getting them out of pubs and clubs. Simply because of the outcome of the 2018 election and the commitments that were made there and the funding that was given to the Liberal Party, we're in this situation.

CHAIR - Is there a question? If not, I'll go to Mr Willie.

Mr STREET - Again. I understand your position but the THA is a representative organisation of a number of businesses who are significant employers and contributors to the economy in Tasmania as well. I understand that our positions on certain matters with the THA differ, but I think that the investments that the government makes into the THA's programs are worthwhile contributions to the community as well.

Mr BAYLEY - The question is when our taxpayers going to stop paying money to support this industry that is so destructive?

Mr STREET - The government made election commitments to support the THA and we will fulfil those commitments, Mr Bayley.

Mr WILLIE - The government's tried to make out like the short-stay tax won't impact Tasmanians, but are you aware of the Parliamentary Budget Office in Victoria's paper on the Victorian Government's levy?

Mr STREET - I'm not.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. Well, in that they do talk about, 'We expect that most property owners would absorb some of these tax burden through a reduction in returns and it would be

market conditions on how much they could pass a proportion on to the consumer through higher prices'. Do you acknowledge that Tasmanians will be impacted by this?

Mr STREET - It is certainly not the intention of our levy. Our levy is going to be designed to be paid for by the users themselves, not the property owner.

Mr WILLIE - It sounds like it's a very similar levy to Victoria and this is what the Parliamentary Budget Office is saying.

Mr SWAIN - Victorian levy is going to be at a 50 per cent higher rate.

Mr WILLIE - It might be a higher rate, but it's a similar levy and they're talking about an impact to property owners, which would be Tasmanians.

Mr STREET - We don't think that it will have an impact on property owners in Tasmania. We think that it's a reasonable levy for visitors to be paying. The intention is that it will be broken out on an invoice, I believe, that's provided so that they can see that the levy is being paid for by the user and not by the property owner.

Mr WILLIE - The tourism industry is a very important industry to Tasmania, a big industry in Tasmania. They're opposed to this. What consultation have you had with them?

Mr STREET - The consultation with the tourism sector has happened through the Premier as the minister for Tourism and Hospitality.

Mr WILLIE - You've had no consultation with them as Minister for Finance on how this will work?

Mr STREET - I haven't met with them. But this really demonstrates the Finance portfolio in a nutshell in that I have the mechanics of implementing the policy, but the policy itself sits with the Tourism and Hospitality minister and he's the one who's been doing the consultation with the industry.

Mr BAYLEY - One of the many recommendations from Saul Eslake's independent review of the state's finances was to increase the rate of mining levies, noting that Tasmania can do and, I quote:

> without rendering mining operations uneconomic, noting that mining royalties are deductible against federal company tax liabilities.

He's saying we can do this without significantly impacting them. Mining levies in Tasmania are some of the lowest in the country and disproportionate to the incredible wealth that the mining industry extracts from Tasmania's natural resources, but the government has continued with the refrain of 'no new taxes'. With our finances in such dire straits, shouldn't you be doing anything that you can to ensure that companies are paying their fair share, or are you happy to give Tasmania's resources away to the lowest bidder?

Mr STREET - The Treasurer has made it clear that he'll deliver a comprehensive response on behalf of the government to the Eslake Report and all of the recommendations. I don't know whether Gary wants to add anything to that as well?

Mr SWAIN - The only thing I can say is I think the Treasurer's comments made clear in this place a couple of days ago that the settings that were in the Budget reflected the circumstances of the time, and weren't set in stone for all time. There are particular cost-of-living pressures which are contemplated in the Budget. The effect of interest rates through into rental housing and rentals is contemplated in the Budget. There's a whole set of current circumstances that would be reviewed as you go through each future budget.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you see that, minister, as opening the door? Surely, you recognise the difference between raising new taxes for individual Tasmanians? I think he also talked about car registration and other initiatives versus raising taxes for corporations like Grange Resources who made $151 million profit in the last financial year, predominantly from its Savage River Mine. Don't Tasmanians deserve to be compensated for the resources that companies extract from public land?

Mr STREET - Again, that's a policy decision for the whole of government. Much like Mr Willie's question, I'm responsible as Minister for Finance for the mechanics of collecting this revenue, but it's a whole of government decision. It's something that I would imagine the Treasurer in his response on behalf of the government will address.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you read that as a commitment to review mining levies, the comments from the Treasurer the other day, or are you willing to give a commitment on behalf of government to review mining levies?

Mr STREET - No, I'm certainly not going to be giving a commitment sitting at this table without having discussed it with Cabinet and as a whole of government, but Mr Eslake's report has a number of different recommendations in it, all of which I imagine, the Treasurer will address in his response.

Mr SWAIN - We had in-principle conversations with the Treasurer about that, the need to give advice. We haven't got down to the level of recommendation by recommendation where we'd go in that advice at this point.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, do you see the benefit of it or do you see it as a real option to be increasing the royalties that companies like mining companies pay? $151 million from Savage River, that's a lot of money.

Mr STREET - I'm not going to give it definitive opinion sitting here at the table today, but I can acknowledge the difference between what you're talking about in terms of Mr Eslake's recommendations around car registrations and things that affect Tasmanians directly versus some other recommendations that he made as well.

Mr BAYLEY - That sounds positive. We urge you to have a look at that. Mining revenues and royalties are clearly an option going forward.

Mr WILLIE - On Mr Eslake's great report, as Finance Minister did you take an interest in the Parliamentary Budget Office recommendation and if so, do you have a view on it?

Mr STREET - I think I'll go to Gary. I think that that's a matter for the Treasurer more than it is for me as Finance Minister.

Mr WILLIE - It will impact financial matters and debates.

Mr SWAIN - I think we need to think that through carefully. I've talked to Mr Eslake about that. He has worked extensively with those offices and other jurisdictions and sees significant value in them. There is again a practical consideration in Tasmania in relation to our scale. We would need to have a solution if the government chooses to go in that direction, which is practical and commensurate with our scale, which is probably code for, I don't want to see half of the budget branch moved into a different function because I really need them in the budget branch.

Mr WILLIE - The model he talks about is placing a person in the federal parliamentary budget office and then scaling-up prior to an election. Is that something that's feasible, minister?

Mr STREET - Again, like I said in answer to Mr Bayley's question, the Treasurer will deliver a comprehensive response and my view is I imagine it will be canvassed at Cabinet in terms of forming up the response as well, and that's where I'll give my opinion, not at this table.

Mr WILLIE - Are you open to this suggestion by Mr Eslake?

Mr STREET - At this stage, I don't think the government has ruled in or out any of the recommendations that Mr Eslake made. What we've said is that we will read the report in its entirety, consider the recommendations and then the Treasurer will provide a response on behalf of the government overall.

Mr WILLIE - It could be a positive for the state though; where these officers have been introduced in other jurisdictions, it does bring up the level of economic discourse and it gives all members of parliament access to a resource that is currently only accessible to the government.

Mr STREET - It may do, and that may form part of the discussion that we have for firming up our response.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the government's Fiscal Strategy includes a target of greater than 37 per cent of total general government sector own-source revenue as a percentage of total expenditure. It's currently sitting at 32 per cent, so it's 5 per cent down. Not only are you not enacting any of Mr Eslake's recommendations, but you issued a third round of land tax cuts. What is your plan to improve this performance indicator, or are you content to continuously underperform against your own fiscal targets?

Mr STREET - We do see the need to grow own revenue as a percentage of the overall budget, Mr Bayley. That's why we need to make sensible and considered decisions about where we forgo revenue. They need to be considered in the same light as new expenditure decisions. I would imagine that any decision about forgoing revenue would go through the budget committee process just like any consideration of increased expenditure. We know the volatility of the GST receipts that we receive each year. That's why we need to work towards that 37 per cent to give ourselves some more surety and we're absolutely committed to doing that.

Mr SWAIN - I could add to that if you would like, minister. In the current Budget forward Estimates there is a GST reduction that is not quite offset by an uplift in own state

taxation in the budget, but it's reasonably close. It's 390[39?] versus 33-40, from memory. In the Budget already, there is a trend upwards from 30.4 per cent in 2023-24 own-source revenue outcome to 36 per cent in 2027-28. With the current tax settings and exemptions, it is trending back towards that 37 per cent level.

Mr BAYLEY - Have all your past trending forecasts always come to fruition on review or when you get to - ?

Mr SWAIN - I wouldn't want to mislead you in that regard. I mean, the budget is an estimate. The elements of tax revenue have various degrees of accuracy in terms of time - some of them are moved around more than others so and the compliance sheet is one of the ones that moves around, for example. They are a combination of projections and forecasts.

Mr BAYLEY - I have a bit of a niche question in relation to the coronial inquest into Robert Bo Xu and Jarrod Robert Davies. The recommendations in this report crossed over a couple of portfolios and there's a few relating to liquor and gaming. Are you able to outline the government's position on the recommendations and any progress on implementing them and, specifically, that the Commissioner for Licensing give consideration to attaching a condition to a venue's out-of-hours permit requiring the implementation of real-time CCTV monitoring?

The second one is the Liquor and Gaming Branch, Tasmania Police and CBOS so that regular random spot checks of licensed premises are conducted, any potential breaches are fully investigated and, if appropriate, prosecuted, and any proper disciplinary action is then taken against the licensee under the *Liquor Licensing Act 1990* or against the licensee or crowd controller under the *Security and Investigation Agents Act*. I know that's pretty specific. I apologise.

Mr STREET - That's okay. I will pass to Jonathon. Obviously, I'm aware of the tragedy that led to the coronial inquest. The details of the response I'll leave to Jonathon.

Mr ROOT - Just to clarify my response, I am the Commissioner for Licensing. We have taken on board the Coroner's findings and I did give evidence to that particular coronial inquiry. We have done a lot of work with police to improve both our communications on incidents that might require liquor disciplinary action, noting that police have a role under the *Liquor Licensing Act* as well. We have been undertaking dual inspections with police and in the past have done it with CBOS. We've stepped up that activity and I've met with Adrian Bodnar as the relevant senior police officer and discussed the findings with him.

With regard to the conditioning, that is certainly a recommendation that I'm keeping in my mind when I'm looking at conditioning. It's a fairly narrow set of venues where it might be relevant because, essentially, the requirement is not simply to have CCTV, which I have imposed on all venues that trade past 2 a.m. due to the that higher risk, and I do apply to other venues in response to disciplinary action. If there's a badly performing venue that doesn't have CCTV, I will often require that to be in place. The real-time monitoring is a step up from that and, in my view, is not something that I would do unilaterally for all venues, but in specific circumstances that may be appropriate and I'm bearing that in mind. I haven't done it to this stage but certainly it's a recommendation that I'm taking on board. We do have quite a rigorous compliance program and there are regular disciplinary actions taken against licensees where they breach the act.

Mr BAYLEY - Just as a follow-up, if I may, I understand that you can - while we've got the commissioner here - order alcohol through Uber Eats, through BWS. I'm interested in your take on that, minister and commissioner, on that, as a notion in the context of the responsible service of alcohol. It seems like a relatively unprecedented and new initiative and capacity in terms of getting alcohol.

Mr STREET - I'll defer to Jonathon, but I would say at a high level that we've had an initial discussion about a review of the liquor licensing provisions; the fact that we've got such significant changes in the market in how you can access alcohol is one of the things that has prompted these.

Mr BAYLEY - Is this one of the things that you'll look at?

Mr STREET - It's one of the things that has prompted the initial discussion with the department around a potential review. There are significant technological changes that are allowing different service of alcohol that would never have been foreseen under the current arrangements as well. I don't know whether Jonathon wants to add anything to that.

Mr ROOT - I'd simply confirm what the minister has said there. The act is fairly old now and didn't envisage particularly the same-day delivery aspect of liquor sales, which does increase the risk and does bring into question the sorts of controls that are needed around who can deliver, to whom and what controls you should have around it. There are controls in the act around online sale of liquor currently; we do apply those and certainly I've conditioned licences that are doing same-day delivery to try to minimise the risk of harm there. But it's always been the case that the capacity to do this has sat within the act because there's nothing that really restricts it particularly. It's an issue on the minds of all regulators around Australia, and I know there's been action in other jurisdictions to put in place initiatives around the hours at which it can occur, how it should be done and what training should be provided to delivery drivers and so on.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Minister for Finance has expired. After a five-minute break, we'll proceed to the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Local Government.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

The Committee suspended from 10.59 a.m. to 11.04 a.m.

CHAIR - Thank you. The time being after 11.00 a.m., the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Local Government will commence. Welcome again, minister; could you please introduce the people at the table.

Mr STREET - Directly to my right is Mike Mogridge, Acting Executive Director, Office of Local Government; and to his right is Mathew Healey, Acting Deputy Secretary of Strategy and Delivery; and to my left again is my Chief of Staff, Tim Lovibond.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates is scheduled for one hour.

Mr STREET - Chair, our government remains committed to making sure our local councils can serve their communities well now and into the future. We want our councils to be

in the best possible position to support the wellbeing, sustainability and prosperity of all Tasmanians. We want to work alongside the local government sector in achieving this goal. It's for that reason that back in 2021 we announced the Future of Local Government Review with the interests of Tasmania's local communities front and centre.

The review provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to consider how to shape a flexible, adaptable and sustainable local government system that can respond to the growing demands and changing needs of our communities in the decades ahead. The board's final report recommendations outline a suite of measures to improve the overall governance of councils, the transparency and the sustainability of the sector.

The recommendations have required careful thought and will take a long-term commitment and collaboration with all levels of government and our communities to be successfully implemented. This Budget has allocated $250,000 for the Office of Local Government to continue their work with the Future of Local Government Review. This allows them to lead the priorities of our response to the review as they work with our 29 councils as well as our peak bodies in Local Government Association Tasmania (LGAT) and Local Government Professionals (LGPRO) to ensure our councils are in the best position to serve their communities.

Chair, I'm proud of the government's priority on legislative reform program that's being developed in response to the Future of Local Government Review. It is an important body of work and has never been about quick fixes. I look forward to releasing a formal response to the review in the coming weeks. Tasmanians should have confidence that their local councils are delivering for them where it matters, and I look forward to working with our sectors to deliver these lasting changes. I recognise that there is plenty more work to be done and I'm up for the challenge and for your questions.

Ms DOW - Minister, how much has your government spent to date on the latest local government reform process?

Mr STREET - The actual budget for the Future of Local Government review was $3.186 million. To date we have spent $3,002,779.

Ms DOW - How much has your government spent over the last 10 years on your local government reform iterations that you've undertaken?

Mr MOGRIDGE - We have to take that on notice to get a sense of what that might be.

CHAIR - Would you like to put that on notice?

Ms DOW - I will put that on notice. You have said that there is $250,000 allocated in this year's Budget for the local government reform process. Can you outline for me what the next steps in that process will be and how that money will be allocated?

Mr MOGRIDGE - The $250,000 is a body of money that provides the Office of Local Government the ability to begin to have a conversation with councils in relation to the structural reform opportunities but also to provide some targeted reforms to the sector that we've heard are acutely in need.

The Director of Local Government Reform will remain within the Office of Local Government over that 12-month period. One of the core functions of that staff member will be to provide support to the sector in relation to the government's proposed structural reform proposals where, and I believe we spoke about this yesterday, the government is proposing a three-phased approach to structural reform for those councils that are interested where councils - off the back of the final report for the Future of Local Government Review who are interested in structural reform - step forward and work with our office to develop reform proposals in relation to the sorts of reform that they might see are of benefit in their communities. That's phase 1. It's developing a proposal for the government to consider.

Phase 2 is bringing that proposal to the government. That would be identifying the level of community interest and appetite for the sorts of technical analysis that might be relevant so that the government has a clear sense of the strategic opportunity for that region. Government decides to provide some funding in relation to that proposal and that's Stage 2, at which point we undertake the analysis. That would be supported by the government and I believe there'd be a component of it that would be supported by the sector to undertake the technical analysis and prepare a report in relation to the viability of that reform proposal.

Phase 3? would be setting up a local government board, and this sounds very bureaucratic, but it's technically necessary in order to proceed through to a final amalgamation proposal. There would be a local government board process that would be undertaken to look at the report that's prepared and make a decision or recommendation to the minister about the amalgamation.

Ms DOW - There are a number of initiatives that are outlined in these recommendations that require legislative change. Back in 2019, your government initiated a review of the *Local Government Act* that has just sat on a shelf.

The process that's been outlined by the director, obviously, is going to take some time including the allocation of resources, but there are things here that could really improve the governance and structure of local government right now if they were just given some priority by your government to move those legislative changes through.

Mr STREET - The first two priority areas of responding to the Future of Local Government Review are around lifting standards of professionalism, conduct and integrity and driving a high-performing, transparent and accountable sector. They would be the two main items that drive the legislative agenda for next year for the Office of Local Government.

The wholesale new Local Government Act has probably been put on hold for the time being while we work through these priority areas.

Ms DOW - So, you'll just be doing piecemeal-type adjustments to legislation rather than reviewing the entire act?

Mr STREET - At this stage, the feedback that we've had from the sector, having gone through this review, is that they would like to see some of the changes enacted as quickly as possible, and that means working within the current *Local Government Act*.

Ms BURNET - Minister, I just wanted to ask a few questions around local government reform. There have been significant concerns around the lack of progress on local government

reform in the sector and in the community over many years. I know that there is a lot going on, but it's still not necessarily landing. We know that communities guard their local representation jealously so forced amalgamations are not welcome across many parts of Tasmania. This is one of the proposals your government was pushing hard to deliver and we need clarity on whether or not you have completely dropped forced amalgamations.

Could you say what steps you are taking to allay these concerns and what ways your government is looking at strengthening regional approaches whilst retaining community connection with local reps?

Mr STREET - There will be no forced amalgamations under this government, Ms Burnet. I can't be any clearer than that, and that is why we have developed the three-phase process that Mike just went through.

It was made abundantly clear to me at any meeting with councils or local government representatives that the last thing they want from the state government is a top-down approach to the relationship. They want to work with us. They want to be respected as an independent sphere of government so we think the process that Mike outlined - where it's the councils and the communities themselves that initiate the process around potential boundary adjustments or amalgamations - is the best way of getting community buy-in for any of those proposals. I don't think forced amalgamations was ever going to work anyway. It was going to lead to a stand-offish approach with the local government sector. We recognise that we need sector and community buy-in for any reform around boundary adjustments, amalgamations, whatever term you want to use.

The only way they're going to work is if we can stand up a business case for a particular proposal that demonstrates to both local government representatives and the municipality that they represent the benefits that we think will flow from that particular reform. That's exactly why we've put that particular three-phase approach together with a recognition that there is going to have to be state government investment in that process as well, in terms of engaging consultants or external people to help put the work together. As I acknowledged in the Legislative Council Estimates last night, I'm acutely aware of the amount of time and resources that local governments have put into this review that we initiated, in terms of resources, staff time and commitment.

I take every opportunity I can across the state when I'm meeting with councils to thank them for their engagement, because when we started this process back in 2021, we weren't sure that we would get the level of engagement from the sector that we got. The sector's been far more open-minded and proactive in terms of looking at the sort of issues that the review went to.

Ms BURNET - My second question follows on with the amount of interest there is from the state government in this local government reform. Local government as an instrument of the state parliament is often picked over, under review, and is set higher standards than even this House. In a recent survey of local government representatives across Tasmania, one respondent said that they were incredibly poorly remunerated and yet held to a higher standard than state parliamentarians, who are often on three times their pay, and some of the smaller councils get a pittance, really.

One of the proposed reviews is to look to require professional development before candidates are even elected, which I find extraordinary. Whilst professional development is important for any occupation, and arguably any tier of government representative, do you see this as a possible hindrance to having a broad assortment of representatives in the local council?

Mr STREET - I do, and there has been pushback on any form of screening. What's not intended is some sort of screening of people for suitability to run for council. We want as broad a range of Tasmanians running for local government as possible. What we're talking about is possibly having some sort of system where individuals who are running for council for the first time are able to educate themselves on the role that they are stepping into.

We've had numerous examples since the last lot of local government elections where people have been elected for the first time and have walked away in less than three months because either the job wasn't what they expected it to be, or they didn't feel like they were up to the job that was expected of them because it was different from what they perceived it was going to be. There's no intention of having some sort of test or screening process for people who run for local government.

We want not just a broad a range of people, but in terms of numbers, I would like to see more people running for local government. It is not healthy when there's nine seats available on the council and only 10 people in a municipality run - that's not giving the municipality choice, either. So, we need to find a way to encourage more people to run, but I want to make sure that those people who do run understand what the role is and the expectations that are going to be placed upon them if they're elected.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, you've spoken about these three stages. What's the time frame that you expect those to occur?

Mr STREET - It is a 'how long is a piece of string' question, only because we don't know how much interest we'll get at the first phase and when we'll get it. When we deliver our response to the 29 recommendations, we will again outline the process that I outlined at the LGAT conference. That'll be, basically, the open door for councils to take advantage of the process we're putting in place. It will then be up to the councils and communities to bring those proposals forward. How many different proposals we get from across the state and when we get them will, I guess, determine how long the next phase of work is. The money we put in the Budget is there to staff the Office of Local Government to be able to assess those proposals as efficiently as possible, to be able to bring them to the government to make a decision on whether we think it makes strategic and monetary sense for us to invest in the next phase of work.

Mrs BESWICK - So, when you've got that $200,000, is that going to be stuck in this year or will that roll into, depending on how much -

Mr STREET - No, it's $250,000 in this year's Budget. We'll have to make a decision in the preparation of next year's budget around any allocation of extra funding to the Office of Local Government. Some of that might be dependent on what happens in the next five or six months, before the development of the next budget. If we get a heap of proposals that we think are worthy of consideration, I'll have to go to the budget committee, as Local Government minister, and argue the case for the amount of money we need to flesh those proposals out.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, I expect that most around the table have heard concerns from the community around council behaviour. I know the Future of Local Government review did not specifically capture this. Can you please outline what, if anything, the government is doing to improve behavioural standards across the sector?

Mr STREET - Thanks for the question, Mr Shelton. I recognise that many local councils are frustrated by the damage being done by the persistent poor behaviour of a minority. The community rightly expects the state government and the sector to work together to not only reduce it, but hopefully eliminate it altogether.

All councillors should behave in a way that represents community standards, which is why, earlier this month, I announced the commencement of a new code of conduct process. This will bring into effect the provisions of the *Local Government Amendment (Code of Conduct) Act* from last year, which was passed in September. These changes modernise and improve the code of conduct framework by implementing a single code of conduct which now automatically applies to all Tasmanian councillors. The code itself has been adjusted to include provisions to make clear that councils must not engage in prohibited conduct in accordance with the *Anti-Discrimination Act of 1998*.

Being a former councillor, I also understand the importance of ensuring that only genuine conduct matters are subject to a formal complaint. Through the amendments we've made, the government has introduced provisions aimed at supporting councils to manage disputes and behavioural issues at a local level. This includes requiring all Tasmanian councils to introduce dispute resolution policies within the next year and improving the initial assessment process of a code of conduct complaint. While I recognise that many Tasmanian councils do their best to manage behavioural matters in- house, it is important that there is a consistent approach across the sector. The Office of Local Government and the Local Government Association of Tasmania have worked with the sector to produce a model policy that councils can choose to adopt.

To complement these improvements, our government will bring into parliament amendments to the *Local Government Act* to clarify the obligations, duties and powers of council, the mayor, other elected members and senior council staff under our work health and safety legislation. New provisions included in the *Local Government Act* will define behaviours that constitute serious misconduct and will establish new offences with stronger sanctions for managing them. The potential role of TASCAT in investigating and enforcing the serious misconduct provisions will also be considered. The community should have confidence that their councils are delivering for them where it matters, and that their local councils are representing their interests and upholding appropriate standards of conduct.

I want to emphasise that point about TASCAT. There have been a number of different suggestions of how we can deal with the most egregious levels of behaviour of local government. One council I went to suggested that the Local Government minister just be given the power to dismiss people from council unilaterally.

Ms BURNET - You wouldn't want that, would you?

Mr STREET - Did you say I would love that?

Ms BURNET - You wouldn't want that.

Mr STREET - I absolutely made the point, be careful what you wish for. Though I used this example with the Legislative Council committee yesterday, I'll use it again. I think the council where that was suggested was West Tamar and I was sitting next to Geoff Lyons. If I got into a position where I had to dismiss Geoff from local council, the automatic story and assumption would be that a state Liberal minister has dismissed a former Labor federal member of parliament from council.

Ms WHITE - Shame.

Mr STREET - Exactly. So, at this stage, TASCAT looks like the best possible approach for putting a legal framework around this. There needs to be appeal rights and there needs to be a sturdy legal framework. If we're going to be dismissing people from elected office, that's a really serious process that needs a legal backing behind it. That's what we're looking at, at the minute. We're not completely there, but it's something we'll be looking at legislatively potentially next year.

Ms DOW - You've talked a little bit about how you plan to address the culture, but right now in local government, there are cultures across councils that are absolutely toxic, which I'm sure you're aware of. I don't think those changes can wait until the new year. This government has had 10 years to address the culture across our local government in this state, and arguably it's got worse in those 10 years. It's fair to say that not only extends across elected officials, but it also extends across workplaces in some instances.

The reason why I'm so concerned about it is, as someone who was formally involved in local government, it deters people from being involved in what is a very important level of government for your community. It diminishes the reputation of councils. It diminishes trust and confidence that communities have in their councils. It absolutely needs to be dealt with, minister. I'm not satisfied by you saying that you're going to do something in the new year. You've done this extensive review process which really didn't even touch the sides of the cultural issues across local government, which is something that needs to change in local government if we are to have a good solid foundation of local government across Tasmania into the future.

Why are you waiting till next year to start implementing some of these changes? The evidence is there, you know what the situation is. At the moment, why would anyone run for local government in Tasmania?

Mr STREET - We have made changes to the code of conduct process already, which I've just outlined -

Ms DOW - Which are very minimal.

Mr STREET - But important. We acknowledge that there are issues with culture at some councils and we're determined to work with the sector to make sure we improve it. But it requires buy-in from elected members and staff in the local government sector as well. We can put in all of the changes we're talking about -

I'm more than happy to have a conversation with you offline about other changes, or any member of parliament, anybody who has an interest in the local government sector, about what they think we can do to improve the behaviour and culture. Part of it is about the elected

members actually respecting the position they've been elected to and the role they are there to play. There's any number of legislative changes that we can make, but if we don't get buy-in and better behaviour from local government representatives, we're not going to change the culture without their help.

Ms DOW - You have to start somewhere.

Mr STREET - We do have to start somewhere. When I say next year, I'm talking about introducing legislation next year. That means the work that needs to be done to formulate that legislation is happening right now. But again, I cannot stress enough that some of the issues with culture in local government can be sheeted entirely back to the individuals within that sector and the way they behave. They need to take responsibility and ownership for that. That goes for all four corners of the state, Ms Dow. I think, without putting words in your mouth, you would agree with me that - how long have you been out of the local government sector?

Ms DOW - Six years.

Mr STREET - Yes, so I've been out since 2016. The behaviour in local government meetings has deteriorated immeasurably since I was a member of the local government sector.

Ms DOW - Why don't you go back then?

Mr STREET - You're sick of me?

Ms WHITE - You're one of the better ones.

Mr STREET - There is a number of factors at play here. When I was a member of local government, meetings weren't televised, for a start, you could act like a clown or you could misbehave and nobody would see it. I think there are people now who are playing to the camera, I've got to say as well, and actually want their behaviour to be publicised.

I think social media has been a terrible thing for politics at every single level, but local government is the closest entity to the people, which means that social media, I think, probably has the worst effect on that level of government as well.

There are legislative changes that we want to make, but I cannot stress enough that we need the help of the sector itself and the people within it to change the culture of local government. And you're right -

Ms DOW - As you've said, the majority of people involved in local government are there for the right reasons and want to represent their communities. I'm absolutely certain that they would be looking to their government for leadership and to actually put some things in place that will better support them in their role, but also give them a better framework to refer to and to protect them in their roles.

Mr STREET - That's exactly what we're looking to do as well.

Ms DOW - Just one last one on that, please, Chair, around working with vulnerable people. This is something that comes up and is raised with me as shadow minister a lot. I just wanted you to just update the committee on the government's current position on that matter.

Mr STREET - I completely understand why people look at the Working with Vulnerable People card as some sort of panacea.

The government's position hasn't changed that a mandatory requirement to have a Working with Vulnerable People card for those that serve in local government isn't what it was designed for. The application for a Working with Vulnerable People card is a point-in-time assessment; it doesn't have ongoing investigative processes behind it. So, we're reluctant to go down that path, you might want to add to that as well in terms of the advice that the department's given me about -

Mr MOGRIDGE - I think you've nailed it. I don't think the design of that particular policy is about a general character test to be a barrier to democracy per se. I suppose what will be good to explore with the sector, when they come forward with that formal recommendation for discussion, is what is the problem we're trying to solve and is the problem, going back to some of our earlier discussion, how responsive our current frameworks are to core conduct when it is identified. If that is the problem we're trying to solve, then let's make sure we get the right tools for that. I think that's just at an overarching level - some observations around the idea of using that as a general character test.

Mr STREET - Cards have been cancelled simply from an allegation that's been made before it's even been investigated. I'm not sure that we want to get into a position where elected members of any sphere of government can't perform their duty simply because an allegation has been made against them before it's been tested and examined thoroughly.

Ms BURNET - Minister, I'd really like to talk some more about that, but we only have an hour, so it's very frustrating that local government only has an hour. I just want to put that on record.

Mr STREET - I'm happy to put on record that I'm more than happy to have a conversation offline with you about that issue as well.

Ms BURNET - Yes, thank you. Perhaps we can have a local government interest group. There's plenty of us here.

Mr STREET - Parliamentary friends of local government.

Ms BURNET - Minister, there was considerable concern during the local government reform process about planning powers being stripped from local councils, and minister Ellis is still threatening the introduction of development assessment panels. Yet, we know that another component of local representation dear to the hearts of many Tasmanians is having their voices heard, especially when it comes to potentially inappropriate unsympathetic development.

What are you doing to ensure that planning decisions remain with local councils who are close to their communities?

Mr STREET - I'm afraid that's a matter for the Planning Minister, Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - I thought you might say that but I thought I'd ask anyway. I just want to talk specifically around council land, decisions around council land and uncertainty for communities and councils that are likely to lead to frustration, particularly when considering

what might happen with public land that might be council-owned. We could talk about the stadium development proposal or even the proposed High Performance centres. I want to focus on Kangaroo Bay. After eight years, Chambroad's hotel development proposal in Kangaroo Bay is still before the Supreme Court, costing Clarence ratepayers thousands of dollars.

Minister, given the legal matter is not resolved, do you agree any move towards an assessment as a major project is inappropriate, and will you support the local community and Clarence City Council who want their land back?

Mr STREET - That's a matter for the planning minister and for Clarence council.

Ms BURNET - It is certainly an issue.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, I've been informed about a new housing development in Huntingfield in the south of the state, which includes blocks as small as 130 metres squared. In contrast, other local governments still require much larger minimum block sizes, for example, City of Launceston general residential zoning is 325 metres squared. I am wondering if you're having any discussions with local councils about reducing block size requirements for new developments to help boost housing supply and increase multi-dwelling developments?

Mr STREET - That is a matter for the planning minister. The development at Huntingfield is being conducted by Homes Tasmania, and I know that they have an integrated approach to that entire development, so there is a suite of different block sizes to accommodate a range of different developments. I only know that because I was the housing minister for a while, so I won't go any further than that and tread on Minister Ellis's toes.

Mrs PENTLAND - You don't have those conversations with local council about the sizing of their blocks?

Mr STREET - Again, that's a planning matter.

Mr SHELTON - I raised the cost of living just a while ago, but again, I'm sure all members around the table understand that many Tasmanians are experiencing challenges associated with the cost of living. One of the things that is hitting people hard is the increase in council rates. Can you please advise what the government is doing to support Tasmanians?

Mr STREET - I recognise there are many Tasmanians in our communities who are facing cost-of-living pressures, and among them are increases in council rates. We hear this a lot from older Tasmanians. Through the Budget, one of the commitments our government has made is continuing to deliver the Pensioner Rates Remission Scheme to provide financial support to many Tasmanians in need. To be eligible for the rates remission you must hold a Services Australia Pensioner Concession Card, a Services Australia Health Care Card or a Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Card with certain endorsements.

These eligible pensions are entitled to the lesser of 30 per cent of their rates or the prescribed maximum amount. This means that for this financial year, the remission is set at a maximum of $379 if you're a TasWater client, or $559 if you're not. The difference is due to TasWater clients being able to access to the state government funded discount on their water and sewerage bills.

I am pleased that this program is continuing, with just over $21 million allocated in this year's budget. The rate remission scheme is funded by the government and administered by local councils. Each Tasmanian council has information available on their website, and I encourage Tasmanians to reach out to their local council if they have any questions about eligibility for making an application.

These remissions are an important part of the assistance we offer Tasmanians, but I know the bigger issue can be council setting huge rate increases. Local government is a separate and independent tier of government, and councils are often required to make complex and difficult decisions as part of their responsibility to their communities. Part of this responsibility is to provide essential services to their municipal area and they need an appropriate level of funding to deliver that.

The setting of rates is a matter for councils and, as Minister for Local Government, I'm unable to intervene in these operational matters. However, it is critical that the community understands where their rate dollars are going and have the ability to assess their council's performance against other jurisdictions. That's why it was recommended in the Future of Local Government Review that we seek to bring in new minimum requirements for rate notices to improve public transparency, accountability and confidence in council rates.

While many councils already provide this information to their ratepayers, I know a consistent approach across the sector will create a sound comparative for Tasmanians to see more clearly the administration of local government in our state.

Ms DOW - Minister, one of the things that gets raised with me when I meet with general managers and mayors is the appointment and recruitment of general managers. I wrote to you recently about a standard template contract, and I'm pleased to see that's been released by the government. I'm sure local government will welcome that, but it is one of the processes that councils raise with me - the lack of consistency across each local government area around that process. If the relationship between a mayor and a general manager breaks down, it makes it very difficult around that appointment and recruitment process as well.

I'm interested in any improvements that you're going to make to that process - whether you've had that feedback yourself, and what you're going to do about it.

Mr STREET - We have had that feedback, and a new regulatory framework applied to the recruitment and performance assessment of council general managers is being implemented in July of this year as part of our second 100-day plan.

This complements the reforms achieved through the Local Government Amendment Bill we passed last year. The changes introduce a legislative requirement that councils appoint staff based on a merit-based assessment, and the changes also require councils to seek applications for general manager vacancies in most instances.

The framework released under the ministerial order provides the local government sector with guidance on how best to do that. The guidance materials created to guide councils were developed in conjunction with the Office of Local Government and the Local Government Association of Tasmania, and I'd like to thank them for their ongoing support.

Whilst I recognise that most councils meet these requirements already, this baseline requirement will support best practice across the local government sector. The recruitment and performance assessment of general managers is among the most challenging functions of councillors and mayors, who must complete these tasks without their ordinary means of professional and administrative support.

The order introduces the following: requires an appropriate framework to manage conflicts of interest in the recruitment of general managers; sets guiding principles; requires councillors to obtain professional support, and establishes an annual performance review cycle based on agreed success measures. The implementation of these measures will lead to enduring benefits for Tasmanian communities, and is an important part of our government's ambitious reform agenda for local government.

This is absolutely an area of local government that needs to improve. Most councils were doing it well; there were councils that had deficient processes that needed to be brought up to speed.

Ms DOW - You spoke about the staged-out process that will follow your local government reform once you hand down your response to the final report, but right now, you have four councils in the Mersey-Leven region that want to work collaboratively together. They've signed an MOU; they've called it a strategic alliance. How are you going to work with them, and are you going to seize this opportunity? It's taken a great deal of collaboration and change between those councils to get to that position. You don't want to lose that, minister.

Mr STREET - No, we don't. Like I said, once we release our final response to the recommendations, that will basically open the three-phase process that Mike outlined before. We would welcome those four councils in the Meander Valley putting something together and being part of the initial assessment process in terms of coming to the Office of Local Government.

Ms DOW - Another question I have is around rate capping. You previously made some comments in the media around your government giving consideration to rate capping, or that you were looking at it as part of some legislative reforms. Can you elaborate on that for me, please, minister?

Mr STREET - I stand to be corrected, but I don't believe that I've made any public comments on looking at rate capping. I know that LGAT has been very fierce in their position on rate capping. It's not something that we are actively looking at, I don't think, and certainly not from the Office of Local Government's perspective either.

Ms BURNET - I'll just go back to the issue around bullying and harassment in councils. It obviously seems to be on the increase both between elected members, staff to elected members and the general public. It's probably becoming more threatening and more frequent, and since the October 2022 election, there has been a significant number of resignations from mayors, deputy mayors and councillors. Of the 19, it's highly likely that there is a significant number of people who have been forced out because of this issue.

I conducted a survey recently, which was a just over 25 per cent sample of elected representatives. They say that when asked the question, 'Is bullying and harassment an issue in your council?', 41 per cent of those respondents said yes. This is just unbelievable, when you're

thinking you're in that sort of situation. 56 per cent of the respondents felt that the code of conduct was not effective. It was considerable concern for councillors. I'm wondering how you will measure the effectiveness of changes to the code of conduct and these reforms?

Mr STREET - Measuring the reforms is going to be through observation over a reasonable period of time as to whether what we're doing is working or not. Also through feedback from the local government sector, we'll quickly find out whether it's working or not. I know the Office of Local Government is currently engaging proactively with LGAT councils and WorkSafe Tasmania to develop guides material that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of elected representatives and council staff in providing a safe workplace. As Minister for Local Government, I'll fully support the provision of safe and appropriate workplaces for everyone, not just for elected members, but for staff, and for members of the municipality who come in to use the council chambers as well.

We're developing the statewide Local Government Learning and Development Framework, implementing the agreed reforms to the code of conduct, exploring targeted legislative reforms to clarify work health and safety responsibilities for councils, and providing additional powers to respond promptly to serious misconduct. I admit that it's concerning that over 40 per cent of the people that you've surveyed feel that bullying is an issue in the workplace. It's another deterrent to what Ms Dow was saying about attracting people not only to run for council, but to work in local government as well.

Ms BURNET - I've been involved, as have other people at this committee table, probably, in ALGWA, Australian Local Government Women's Association forums for getting people, particularly women, interested in running, so that there is greater diversity. Unfortunately, those people who are likely to leave, or don't even consider council, because of poor remuneration, or the culture and the reputation that goes before them, won't even stand. How can you specifically say to women that you will be addressing some of these issues so that we do have that real diversity and a culture that is acceptable?

Mr STREET - I don't know how much was provided, but we did provide money to ALGWA before the last local council elections for forums to be run right across the state, encouraging women to run. But I agree, if the workplace that they're being elected to is unacceptable, then we've got a more fundamental problem than just encouraging women to run for local government. My commitment isn't just to women, it's to men as well, that we will do everything we can to improve the culture and the standard of behaviour in the workplace of local government, but it's going to take time. I think you would agree: there is no silver bullet to fixing this particular problem, as much as we would like to.

Ms BURNET - No, but presumably places like South Australia - they seem to have quite a good code of conduct framework. I'm just curious as to know how borrowing from other jurisdictions is likely.

Mr STREET - I know that South Australia in particular is an area that the Office of Local Government is looking at at the minute in terms of the processes that they have, because they do seem to be working better. The Office of Local Government is working across jurisdictions on this.

Mr HEALEY - The Office has certainly recognised the increasing concerns about the behaviour of a minority of councillors. As the minister pointed out, it's getting worse and the

office's attention to that issue has escalated significantly over the years. The code of conduct has received some complaints, but at times it has also worked. People have been suspended for their behaviour. The director has taken the unusual step, on two occasions now, lodging a code of conduct complaint against councillors. So, the office is escalating its response and the office is also working really closely with councils around how we utilise the provisions of the work, health and safety legislation to also remind all people within the workplace that they have an obligation to keep the workplace safe, including from psychosocial harm.

So, as the minister pointed out, we are continuing to escalate our response. We are looking very closely at the South Australian code of conduct system and we'll keep doing whatever we can to try to get on top of the issues.

Mr STREET - It coincided with me coming into the portfolio rather than being a direction from me, but the Office of Local Government has become significantly more proactive in these issues rather than waiting for them to come to. As both Mike and Matt have said, the office has become more proactive at responding to initial complaints and trying to nip stuff in the bud as well, rather than letting it get out of hand.

Ms BURNET - I might just say one last thing if you don't mind, but sometimes codes of conduct aren't lodged because there is a lack of confidence by elected members that it's going to be effective.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, I've observed, just in general, that there are times when councils, particularly small ones - obviously they can be quite inconsistent in sort of procurement, you know, activities and very small ones, obviously there's a lot of conflict of interest in the community, councillors and things like that. Is there some action happening in this space to improve support in that area for small councils?

Mr STREET - The second priority that I spoke about at the LGAT conference was about driving a high-performing transparent accountable sector and that goes basically to what you're talking about - the processes that councils have in place for things like procurement, like you said, but also, we were talking about with general manager recruitment as well. But it's also about driving a higher level of the data that these councils are required to provide as well to hold them accountable.

When I was talking in the Legislative Council to Kerry Vincent about it, he made the comparison from being in the sector about comparing apples with apples and the fact that the Auditor-General brings out a report every so often that compares councils across a number of different metrics, but then there are councils that sit there and look at that report and feel like tearing it to pieces because they see where they're judged and they know that they're doing the right thing. Then they see councils who are judged on a graph against every other council that have outperformed them, when they know that it's because the data and the processes that they've got in place are hiding deficiencies that they've got within the management structures of their councils.

We absolutely need to drive better procurement policies for councils, more consistent, but it's about doing it right across the sector as well. Local smaller councils obviously have a harder time with these things. It's why there was a discussion in the Legislative Council again yesterday about shared services when it comes to asset management or internal audit panels et cetera, and there are things that we need to look at as well.

Regardless of the amalgamation process that goes on, there are going to be bigger councils and there are going to be smaller councils and we need to make sure that we're assisting those smaller councils, that what we're doing to drive better performance in the sector doesn't have a detrimental effect on their operations as well, to the point where we're putting so much work on them that they're not able to perform the duties that they're actually put there to do for their municipality as well. So, there's a balancing act to be had there.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, many Tasmanians are not aware of how their council rate payments are used by their local council. Does the government have any plans to require councillors to be more transparent with the community?

Mr STREET - As I was saying, in terms of driving transparent and accountable sector, one of the things that we want to do is have a renewed Local Government Strategic Planning and Reporting framework that will be established for all councils, underpinned by more consistent and higher quality data.

The framework will establish new streamlined strategic planning reporting requirements, which will be supported by clear guidelines for the collection, recording and publication of council datasets. Guidelines will also be developed to ensure overall data consistency and integrity for all councils across the state.

In consultation with the sector, we will seek new minimum requirements for rate notices, like I was talking about before. Given the cost-of-living pressures many Tasmanians are experiencing, we feel it's critical that the community understands where their rate dollars are going and have the ability to assess councils against one another in a number of key areas.

To further increase the level of transparency within the sector, we'll introduce a legislative requirement for all councils to have an internal audit function, which is what I was talking about before. This isn't about red tape; it's about reflecting the responsibilities the sector has for managing significant public assets and brings councils in line with state government agencies. All Tasmanian councils should be striving for continuous improvement in delivering on what matters most to our communities.

I do want to make it clear, again, like I was just saying to Mrs Beswick, that we understand that there are going to be bigger councils and smaller councils regardless of the process that we go through. It's not about playing councils off against one another either, because we know that smaller regional councils provide a different level of service and different services than urban councils do, but we do want a more transparent sector in terms of how councils are operating.

Ms DOW - Minister, if you're going to expect councils to do all of these things, and you've outlined the fact that there is currently - for many smaller councils - an imbalance in meeting all of their regulatory requirements and actually being able to provide services to their community, you're going to need to address the critical workforce shortages that we have across local government.

It's pretty clear that individual council workforce plans and a whole-of-sector workforce plan is required for local government across Tasmania. There are critical skills shortages, as I said; there is high turnover and an ageing workforce. What is your government doing about

that? You've had lots of representation about this, I understand from LGAT and the Australian Services Union (ASU), but what is your plan to address some of the workforce challenges?

Mr STREET - We understand that we need to drive workforce development within the local government sector. The point that's always made to me is that if one council gains a new head of planning, the chances are that a nearby council very close to them has lost their head of planning as well. So, we understand that it's a problem.

Mr HEALEY - It is certainly a key issue that was raised in the Future of Local Government Review. So, it's an issue that will need to be considered as part of the recommendations and the response to the recommendations of the Future of Local Government review. It is certainly not lost on anyone that there is a skills shortage for local government as there is in many other parts of the economy and perhaps there needs to be some different solutions to how councils access resources through shared services and other arrangements to enable them to maintain the capability that they need to deliver the core services to the community.

Mr STREET - Having them in front of me, I think one of the 29 recommendations did focus on workforce development.

Ms DOW - Minister, the Minns government in New South Wales has funded 1300 new apprentices and trainees across the local government sector in recognition of the need to develop their workforce. Does your government have any plans to roll out any initiatives like that?

Mr STREET - Look, I can't make a commitment about that today. I can say that there are incentives within the system for the employment of apprentices in terms of payroll tax rebates and what have you for private businesses. Whether we need to look at something for local government as well, I'm not making a commitment today, but it's going to be an ongoing issue. As you said, we do have an ageing workforce in local government and we're only going to solve that by bringing people in at the other end, whilst we've still got those people with experience available to pass the skills and knowledge on that they've got as well.

Ms DOW - As part of that, obviously local government is such an important regionally employer across many rural and remote communities in Tasmania as well. So, it's absolutely essential for local economies that there is a workforce plan around local government workforce as well. I look forward to your further iterations of that, minister.

Another question that I have relates to recommendation 37 of the review, which talks about the Tasmanian government partnering and better supporting councils to build capacity and capability to plan and respond for emergency events and climate change impacts. How do you intend to do that? Given this recent spate of weather events that we've had, and the detrimental effect on many communities across the state, it puts significant cost on local government and on communities. Can you outline your plan for that?

Mr STREET - That goes across more portfolios than just Local Government. I'm happy to defer to Mike.

Mr MOGRIDGE - I just observed that one of the elements of the future role of local government is expressly naming up the responsibility of councils in relation to being responsive

to climate change. I think we're seeing that in part play out through councils' participation in things like the Climate Change Action Plan more recently, which is work that will be continuing with ReCFIT. Underneath that role in the development of associated strategic plans and so on, we would see the responsibility of councils being developed in support of the government.

Ms DOW - Do you envisage more resources being provided to councils to do that role?

Mr STREET - I'm not going to commit to that at the table right now. It'll be an ongoing discussion. You've seen with the recent weather events that we've had the state government stepping in with payments and what-have-you to assist with people who've been affected. Whether we need a more consistent approach to rolling out support like that is an ongoing conversation that we'd be having with local government.

Ms BURNET - On a similar theme, there is often cost shifting to local government. When we're looking at these, as you've just recognised, more frequent extreme weather events, bushfires, floods, how can the local government sector be assured that they won't be picking up the pieces of the road and infrastructure rebuilds? There has to be not only that response as a partner with state government with the fixing, but also that response to action on climate change.

Mr STREET - Again, that's about clarifying each level of government's roles and responsibilities in relation to dealing with climate change. I spoke in the Legislative Council yesterday that the biggest complaint I get from the local government sector when I visit councils across the state is being used as the service provider of last resort. As the sector closest to the people, local government is the one that gets the first lot of complaints, whether it's a state or federal responsibility.

That doesn't just deal with issues like climate change. We've got councils across the state that are providing GP services at the minute - a federal government responsibility. That takes significant municipal resources out of small councils that they can ill afford. Part of the response to the review is about clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each sector of the government, to be clear about what local and state responsibilities are. We should be clear now. We will make sure that it's clearer. We'll work with the local government sector on that.

Ms BURNET - Resilience building is another key element for people and communities to be ready for those impacts of climate change. I know that there have been a number of pilots in relation, like Sparking Conversations. That's a program with four of the greater Hobart councils which has been building resilience so that people are ready for when that bushfire comes over the hill. What is your government doing in relation to funding communities and local governments to building that resilience? It's just so important. LGAT did a fantastic forum on resilience building. I'm wondering what your answer is in relation to that.

Mr STREET - Mike can talk about Resilience and Recovery Tasmania.

Mr MOGRIDGE - Sorry, I'll pass to Matt, the Deputy Secretary, on this one.

Mr HEALEY - Members might be aware that over the last decade or so, the Department of Premier Cabinet has built quite a significant capability in Resilience and Recovery

Tasmania. This is a significantly larger capability than the state has seen before, focused on supporting local government, supporting building of resilience for disasters in Tasmania.

Tasmania is probably a little ahead of the pack in terms of mapping hazards and informing communities about the potential hazards, including those that are impacted by climate change. We're working really collaboratively with the Commonwealth, for example, on investing heavily in drought resilience at the moment, preparing communities to be better prepared for drought. We are significantly advancing those discussions, including with local government. We are working pretty collaboratively with the Commonwealth on funding arrangements to prepare communities and to support communities to recover from some of these emergencies.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates for the Minister oforLocal Government has expired. The committee will resume at 1 p.m.

The Committee suspended from 12.05 p.m. to 1 p.m.

The Committee met at 1 p.m.

CHAIR - The time being 1 p.m., the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Sport and Events will commence. Welcome, minister, and would you introduce persons at the table?

Mr STREET - To my right is Craig Limkin, Secretary of State Growth; to my immediate left, Tim Lovibond, my chief of staff; to his left Anne Beach, CEO of Macquarie Point Development Corporation; and to Anne's left is James Avery, the CEO of Stadiums Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you. The time scheduled for the Estimates is 2.5 hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask that question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister. I remind everybody that, for the benefits of Hansard, not to speak over each other and to mind thumping the microphones when shuffling papers around.

Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Mr STREET - I would. I'd like to start by saying I'm proud to be the Minister for Sport and Events. I'm pleased to be able to talk today about a Budget that includes significant initiatives to boost participation in sport and active recreation, our strong support for the event sector, as well as commitments that represent strong investment in infrastructure across the state.

This government has a clearly stated aim to get as many Tasmanians as possible involved in their choice of sport and active recreation pursuit. We want sport and active recreation to be accessible and inclusive, and we want the facilities and supports to be in place to ensure that, whatever your age or wherever you live, that you have the chance to get out there and be active doing something you enjoy.

We know what a vital role sport and active recreation has in preventative health. The sense of camaraderie, friendship and release that can come from being involved in sport can make a world of difference to many people. It's for these reasons that this government made a decision at the election to back in our sports clubs so that they can continue building participation across the age groups.

I'm pleased to say that this Budget contains $86.5 million over the forward Estimates to support active initiatives, sporting organisations and community supporting infrastructure across the state, projects that help Tasmanians feel part of something bigger than themselves. And the same can be said for events right around our state.

The Tasmanian government has always been a strong supporter of the event sector, providing funding to attract, retain and grow events that drive economic growth, tourism and jobs in every corner of our state. Events are fundamental to our visitor economy, both creating the reason people visit and ensuring that they also have a fantastic experience that makes them want to return time and again.

Our government is aware of the importance of stimulating our regional economies through events, particularly during the winter shoulder season. In line with the Tasmania Government Event Strategy of 2023-2027, we aim to grow visitor numbers through a regionally and seasonally balanced calendar of events, resulting in social, economic and brand value.

This Budget delivers $68 million in support to events over the next four years to support their ongoing success. We've also made a provision to support new event opportunities with $5 million over this year and next year as announced during the election.

Importantly, too, we're investing in the enabling infrastructure to bring our event sector to life, and that includes the redevelopment of Macquarie Point and the construction of our stadium. I'm proud of this development [inaudible] and I'm excited by it. I'm pleased that we provide the sport and event sectors with the support that we do as a government and I'm now keen to take questions.

Mr WINTER - On 22 August I held a media event at Mudbar Restaurant in Launceston, where Don Cameron poured his heart out to the media about the business conditions he was facing. In a *Mercury* article that appeared later, he reported a popular Launceston restaurant had laid bare as to the extent of the struggling hospitality industry pending a desperate call for more TT-Line sailings. He described the last 12 months as the operation's worst in 40 years, saying that Tasmania could not afford to forget its main economic engine room was tourism.

Minister, following that article, an event was cancelled in his restaurant the day afterwards. Are you aware of the circumstances and why the event which was to be held by the Hawthorn Football Club in concert with the Tasmanian government was cancelled?

Mr STREET - I believe it was held in concert with Stadiums Tasmania, so, I'll pass to James Avery.

Mr AVERY - My understanding is ultimately that event was cancelled given the industrial action that was taking place at the time around the venue. So, the Hawthorn Football Club was unable to attend as there was a shift in the slot of when the game was being played

and they were required to attend to the changes that were necessary in relation to that fixture change.

Mr WINTER - On Thursday 22 August, though, I understand that Mr Cameron received a phone call to say that the event had been cancelled. Are you or your office aware of why that event was to be cancelled the next day?

Mr AVERY - No. Again, my understanding is that the event was going to still go ahead. After that, it was ultimately cancelled as a result of the Hawthorn fixture change.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I want to ask you again about this. My understanding is that Mr Cameron was told that, because of his participation in a media event with the Labor Party and because of the comments that he made in the *Mercury* newspaper, that the event would not go ahead.

Mr STREET - I'm not aware of that. I was going to attend that event and then pulled out because of ill health. I will pass to James.

Mr AVERY - As I say, I understand you didn't attend, minister, because of health reasons. My understanding was the event was going to go ahead and, in the end, Hawthorn was the one who cancelled it, given the fixture change.

Mr WINTER - You can categorically state that at no point did your government seek to cancel the event because of his participation in a media event with the Labor Party?

Mr STREET - I'm going to take that on notice as to whether my office had any knowledge of that or not.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I wrote to you about this on the 27 June and I haven't received a response. Prior to your government announcing the stadium project, the ministerial statement of expectations for the Macquarie Point Development Corporation clearly articulated what your average person would consider to be reasonable elements regarding the spending of public money on a piece of public land. It said, and I quote:

> 3.3 commercial activities.
> The minister expects the corporation to only carry out commercial activities that are:
>
> 1. Consistent with the corporation's principle objectives and functions;
> 2. Appropriately costed and carefully managed with the objective that, in the absence of a higher priority, the activities deliver a commercial return acceptable to the board; and
> 3. Compliant with the government's competitive neutrality principles.

Now, after announcing the stadium in July last year, there was a new ministerial statement of expectations written by minister Barnett, and it completely deleted this entire section. It's just absent.

So, minister, do you expect the Macquarie Point Development Corporation to abide by these principles, to act consistent with its act to ensure commercial activities are appropriately costed and carefully managed and to meet your cost-neutrality project principles?

And is it because of the stadium project and the risk and the reckless decisions that that had to be deleted?

Mr STREET - As you pointed out in your question, these ministerial directions were given by a previous minister.

My understanding is that the department is drafting new ministerial expectations for Macquarie Point Development Corporation at the minute, so I'll pass to the secretary of State Growth.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you minister. You are correct, the Department of State Growth supports the minister in the development of ministerial expectations for a number of companies. Macquarie Point Development Corporation is one of those. The department is currently working on an update to the statement, normally their financial years. The next one will be 2024-25.

We have made a deliberate decision to wait until the project of state significance was lodged so that we can provide the minister with the most timely and accurate advice in the development of that ministerial statement, which is currently underway and my expectation will be completed shortly.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, would you expect to put those important principles back in? I note that the current ministerial statement of expectations has already expired, so, the corporation is currently operating without one as we speak. Despite the fact that there are these really critical decisions and actions being taken, is it your expectation that those principles to act consistent with the act to appropriately cost and manage expenditure and to be compliant with cost neutrality will be in the ministerial of statement of expectations?

Mr STREET - Again, I'll take advice from the Department of State Growth in terms of the draft of those ministerial expectations.

Mr BAYLEY - Why wouldn't they, minister?

Mr STREET - As I am just being informed, they have to comply with those anyway.

Mr BAYLEY - That begs the question, why would they be there in the first place if they're superfluous? Because you'd have to abide by them and live by them already. Why would they have been deleted simply because the stadium project was announced as opposed to a more community-accepted redevelopment proposition?

Mr LIMKIN - Mr Bayley, I can't talk about previous ministerial statements of another minister. All I can articulate to you is that the department will ensure that the current ministerial statement complies with the Macquarie Point act, the relevant laws, plus also the government's current policy direction for Macquarie Point Development Corporation. I will also indicate that as part of this process, we do have to consult with the corporation and the board, and the minister has to consider their feedback. Ultimately, we will give a number of options to the

minister to consider and prepare a position forward, and we hope to be in a position to provide that policy advice shortly.

Mr BAYLEY - They're pretty fundamental -

CHAIR - Mrs Pentland.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, in terms of return on investment, how does the Hawthorn partnership compare with other major events? What is the return on investment with the partnership with Hawthorn?

Mr STREET - In terms of the return on the investment, I'll go to Craig. We went through a number of events in the Legislative Council Estimates committee yesterday that talked about return and investment. Hawthorn wasn't one of them that was listed, but we will get that information for you. The return on investment isn't in the brief. The team will get that information and we'll get that to you.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, premier Hodgman, in 2018, announced a multi-sport indoor facility to be built in the northern suburbs of Hobart. That was in 2018. It's now 2024. When are the basketball, netball, volleyball, futsal community going to get any information or any awareness around the building of a new facility?

Mr STREET - As you would expect, I received this question in the Legislative Council Estimates committee yesterday from the member for Elwick as well. When the commitment was made in 2018, it was made without a site identified.

We went through a process. I was a staffer at the time and Wilkinsons Point was chosen as the site at that time. This was prior to the JackJumpers coming into existence. When they came into existence and the need for a high-performance facility was identified, we made the decision to combine both of those facilities into one, hoping that we would end up with the four-court community facility, but also the two courts for the JackJumpers for community use as well.

It became clear through working with Glenorchy Council that the expenditure on development issues outside of the actual facility itself at Wilkinsons Point was going to make it cost-prohibitive for the budget that we had and, so, we had to make the decision to split the two projects, again. Obviously, the JackJumpers are at Kingston and we're doing due diligence at the minute on sites in the northern suburbs.

Like I said in the Legislative Council Estimates yesterday, I absolutely accept the frustration of people who have been waiting six years for this facility. We are very close in terms of the due diligence to be able to choose a preferred site for that facility and the commitment I made in the Legislative Council Estimates yesterday is the same one that I make today. We will get a DA lodged and get work started on that facility as quickly as possible once the site has been announced.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, it was 2020 when the then premier, following premier Hodgman, premier Gutwein, announced the site and announced support and the JackJumpers landscape was aware then. How can anyone - when you say you're going to get it done as quickly as possible - that's what was said back in 2020.

Mr STREET - And I understand that, and the only commitment I can give at the table is my word, Mr O'Byrne, which is that we're very close to having a site selected in the northern suburbs with designs. We're doing consultation at the minute with the stakeholders that will be using the facility as well around the site selection and we will have a site selected very soon and we will commence work as soon as possible.

CHAIR - Mr Shelton has the call.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, can you please inform the committee of the progress to deliver the Macquarie Point Precinct Plan, please?

Mr STREET - I can, Mr Shelton. I thank you for your question. I'm pleased to be able to provide the committee with an update on the status of the Macquarie Point Precinct Plan. The Macquarie Point redevelopment provides a unique opportunity to deliver something special for the people of Tasmania. The precinct plan provides a layout and guide for how the site will be developed to deliver a mixed-use precinct. If I can provide a brief history of the development of the Draft Precinct Plan, it was informed by over 2000 survey responses and written submissions, along with meetings with more than 100 individuals and organisations. Following this consultation, Macquarie Point Development Corporation released the Draft Plan in October 2023 and further consultation was undertaken. Importantly, members of the public and organisations were encouraged to provide feedback on the plan and input into its implementation.

Last week we achieved a significant milestone in relation to Macquarie Point Precinct with the Australian Government accepting the Tasmanian government's Precinct Plan. The federal government has committed $240 million towards this exciting development, including that of Tasmania Stadium for Hobart. I thank the federal government for their investment in this project that will transform Hobart and specifically the Macquarie Point Precinct. I'd also like to thank the Macquarie Point Development Corporation for their hard work in developing the precinct plan. The federal government's acceptance is a milestone of the funding agreement between the state and federal governments. The federal funding agreement supports the delivery of the urban redevelopment of the Macquarie Point Precinct and speaks to housing, transport options, wharf redevelopment and stakeholder engagement.

Moving forward, a key priority for the partnership between the Australian and the Tasmanian governments will be the development of a housing plan to inform the development of the Residential Development and Public Foreshore Zone, along with the Antarctic Facility Zone and Complementary Integrated Mixed-Use Zone and Aboriginal Culturally-Informed Zone. For the benefit of the community, I'd like to table a copy of the precinct plan today - and it's also publicly available from today on the Macquarie Point Development Corporation's website.

Mr WINTER - Minister, back onto the issue of the big dinner that was cancelled following Don Cameron's media appearance. I accept you've had to take on notice the question about whether your office was involved in the cancellation of that dinner. I can tell you that Mr Cameron was told that the dinner, which was being co-hosted by the Tasmanian government and the Hawthorn Football Club, was being cancelled because of his statements in the media. Do you think it is appropriate that your office or the Tasmanian government would start cancelling events because the owner was critical of your government?

Mr STREET - Again, I have to take this on notice, Mr Winter, I understand the question but I'm taking this on notice to clarify the matter with my office.

Mr WINTER - Perhaps you can also take this on notice. Did your office say words to the effect that the government won't be spending a cent at that venue this weekend?

Mr STREET - I'll have to take that on notice as well.

Mr WINTER - Was the Premier or his office aware of this cancellation or involved in the cancellation?

Mr STREET - Again, I would have to take that on notice. Mr Winter.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act* is really explicit in outlining the functions of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and that's why we were so alarmed to see that the corporation act is inconsistent with its functions in the Ministerial Statement of Expectations. To read from the act, clause 7 says functions of the corporation: the corporation has the following functions -

> c) To redevelop and maintain or ensure the redevelopment and maintenance of (2) a corridor allowing transit through the site by means of public transport.

We have helpfully received a copy of the precinct plan, but I can't see a transit corridor for public transport through the site. Are you confident? How can you say that this finalised Macquarie Point precinct plan is actually consistent with the *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act*?

Ms BEACH - Through the minister, there were a number of things that we considered in developing the precinct plans. As the minister noted, there were extensive consultations. We had over 2000 submissions and just over 100 meetings with local businesses and individuals and organisations and we also looked at a number of compliance things. One of those was with our act and some other things were some of the requirements of the Commonwealth. As the member noted, there are some requirements in our act around the specific things that our site needs to be able to do. There is the northern access road that sits to the north of the site that comes through and there's a strip of land that continues on and connects out towards the Tasman Highway, which is a mixed-use area, so that allows for a continued transit connection. We do meet that requirement as set out in the act.

Mr BAYLEY - For public transport? What will run through that corridor? What public transport will run through that corridor, through you, minister?

Ms BEACH - Through the minister, it meets the requirements to have that transit connection.

Ms BAYLEY - According to who? Sorry, through you, minister. Ms Beach, who has done that assessment? It hasn't been discussed in parliament. The act is very clear. The act was clearly written and passed through parliament, when it did, with the vision of having public transport go through there. It is very clear. A corridor allowing transit through the site by means of public transport. Can you point to me in this precinct plan as to what public transport goes

through the site because I cannot see any that actually necessarily goes to the site apart from coaches dropping off at the bus mall, and then they turn around and go back out again, don't they?

Ms BEACH - As noted, it does allow for that transit through - the way the site is laid out is for that to be provided for in the future and for that connection to continue. It is set out on our title to require that connection we have provided for that in the way the site is laid out. As I noted, there is that mixed-use corridor that connects through to the Tasman Highway -

Mr BAYLEY - I am sorry, but again, which public transport mechanism or mode is going to be passing through there?

Ms BEACH - It is a road; the connection there, and that leaves it open for future connections.

Mr BAYLEY - But a road is not public transport.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr BAYLEY - With respect, Chair, a road is not public transport. A road is a public asset upon which a whole range of different users can use. Public transport is a bus or a light rail or a train. Which mode is going to go through that transit corridor because it explicitly says 'a corridor allowing transit through the site by means of public transport'.

Ms BEACH - Through the minister, it is a corridor allowing for transit and it is a site plan. We do not provide the services; we provide the space for those services.

Mr STREET - Just before you go on Mrs Pentland, the return on investment for Hawthorn in 2023-24 was five-to-one.

Mrs PENTLAND - Great, thank you. So, Hawthorn's partnership has been successful for UTAS and we know that the contract expires next year. It would be great to extend the contract for 2026-27, given that 2026 is going to be the 25th anniversary for Hawthorn playing in Tasmania. Minister, Cairns has established a partnership with Hawthorn's AFLW side and it is my understanding that they want the men's football as well and are prepared to pay big bucks for it. Is Launceston at risk of losing its valuable partnership with Hawthorn?

Mr STREET - Look, from my discussions with Hawthorn, they are very keen to maintain a relationship with Launceston as well. I am aware of the relationship with Cairns that you are talking about. You have indicated that we have a deal with Hawthorn for next year, for 2025. There is obviously then a two-year gap of 2026 and 2027 before the Devils come into the competition. We have already started discussions with Hawthorn about what that deal could potentially look like.

At the minute the deal with Hawthorn has game attraction in it, but it also has a sponsorship element in it. There are discussions about whether having the Tasmanian sponsorship element is still appropriate with the Devils coming in as well, and it will include the Devils in that conversation as well because we want whatever we are doing with Hawthorn to complement and not override whatever work that the Devils are doing to promote themselves in 2026-27 in terms of coming into the competition. We are very keen to do a deal for 2026

and 2027 and I have already had informal discussions with Launceston City Council about the fact that they are very keen to see a relationship with Hawthorn beyond the Devils' introduction into the competition as well.

Mrs PENTLAND - Can you just confirm that the UTAS Stadium being in limbo between Stadiums Tasmania and the Launceston City Council is holding up the new deal with Hawthorn?

Mr STREET - No, it is not.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, back to the northern suburbs multi-sport facility, it is nearly getting close to four, maybe five years, between when the announcement of the commitment was made to where we are now and I take at face value your commitment and your drive to get this done, I do appreciate that, but how do you explain nearly four years of nothing?

Mr STREET - It is difficult to explain, it is uncomfortable to explain, like I said, it is the change in plans that we have had on a couple of different occasions for that facility as well. I admitted in the Legislative Council yesterday and I am happy to admit today that the delays have been unacceptable and that there are frustrated stakeholders in the northern suburbs who require access to these four courts. We put money into the Moonah facility, but it was just repatriation work to try and keep that facility going.

What they need is more courts; that is exactly what we plan to deliver. I understand people's scepticism around me sitting here saying that we will get it done. I will commit to getting the work done as quickly as possible because the delays are undeniable but that is all I can do, Mr O'Byrne, is giving my commitment that I will get this project moving as quickly as possible.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, if past behaviour is a predictor future behaviour. How can people be confident that, beyond your commitment, you've got a department that is incapable of delivering what is a significant project?

Mr STREET - I'll pass to Craig.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you minister, and through you, the Department of State Growth only became accountable for this project within the last 12 months. Prior to that it was the former Department of Communities. Since this time, the department has really focused on delivering the original plan by the government to have it delivered at Wilkinsons Point. Since the government's decision to decouple the project, if I call it that, between the JackJumpers, the gymnastics -

Mr O'BYRNE - Well, they walked away out of frustration, let's be clear.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr LIMKIN - and the four courts, we have really focused on site selection. We have identified 17 sites with the council -

Mr O'BYRNE - That's fantastic, you've narrowed it down to 17 sites.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr LIMKIN - and key partners. We have narrowed that site selection down, Mr O'Byrne, to two and three.

We are currently undertaking geotechnical works in preliminary approvals do that when the government makes an announcement there is certainty for the community that this can be designed and delivered. I promise you that this is imminent in being finalised and we will be able to provide policy advice to the government shortly for the government to consider that and make further decisions. The minister has tasked the department to prioritise this because of the long lag from the community and that is exactly what the department is doing at the moment.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, I believe that Ticket to Play has been extremely successful in making sport and active recreation pursuits more affordable for families since it was introduced by this government in 2019. Can you talk us through the Ticket to Wellbeing program and how it will assist older Tasmanians access to activity to help them stay active and become more connected to the community?

Mr STREET - Thanks for the question. You're absolutely right about Ticket to Play. In the 2023-24 financial year just gone, a record 12,465 Ticket to Play vouchers were redeemed by Tasmanian families to help with the cost of participating in sport and active recreation. That's increased from $10,799 in 2022-23. I'd like to point out that this Budget has provided an additional $250,000 per year for the next three years to provide for a further expansion of the program. Active Tasmania has been opening Ticket to Play up to more sports progressively over the years so that it now includes activities like Scouts, learn to swim program and circuit sports, and this new funding will allow for an expansion of the eligibility criteria. It will mean that families who receive the Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement in the previous financial year will be able to access two vouchers worth up to $100 each to go towards club membership and registration fees for children aged 5 to 18 years.

Previously, the program was open to those children listed on Services Australia Healthcare or Pensioner Concession card or in out of home care, and this expansion is expected to mean that something like 2500 more families will be eligible for Ticket to Play. Ticket to Play has been so successful that it's inspired a brand new pilot program for older Tasmanians that, in consultation with the Council, on the Ageing, we've called Ticket to Wellbeing. Ticket to Wellbeing will offer vouchers of $100 to people over the age of 65 who are listed on a Services Australia Healthcare or Pensioner Concession card to use for registration and membership costs.

At a time when cost of living pressure is making extracurricular activities harder to afford, this pilot program will support older people getting involved in sport, active recreation and wellness activities by making them more affordable. The intention is to make sure that things like yoga and bridge can be included in the program along with traditional sports and we'll be seeking activity providers to register with Active Tasmania over the next few months so that they're set up and ready to go once the program starts in the new year. Chair, I'm pleased to release the guidelines for Ticket to Play and Wellbeing today. The program won't open until early in the new year, but it's important to get the guidelines out so that providers can understand the process from their side well before the program goes live and, so for the benefit of the committee, I'll table those guidelines, which I've got just here.

Mr WINTER - Minister, to go back to my line of questioning, the issue is that a local restaurant, Mud Bar in Launceston, was to hold an event between the Hawthorn Football Club and your government the day following a media appearance with myself. The information that I have is that because of the negative comments they made in the article, they were told their dinner was getting cancelled by the Hawthorn Football Club. Do you understand that an attempt like this to inflict maximum financial damage on a business because they were critical of your government would constitute potentially a breach of the law?

Mr STREET - Look again, I understand the line of questioning. I'm asking for you to allow me to take these questions on notice so that I can clarify the position with my office as to what actually occurred.

Mr WINTER - The *Anti Discrimination Act,* for example, has discrimination on grounds of attribute: a person must not discriminate against another person on the grounds of any of the following attributes and any political activity. Potentially, we're talking about a breach of the *Anti Discrimination Act* on the basis of somebody's political activity. This is quite serious. Do you think you'd be able to come back to the committee before the end of this hearing?

Mr STREET - Look, I'm not sure whether we will be able to or not. I'm asking to please allow us to take this matter on notice so that I can consult with my office and find out exactly what happened from their perspective.

Mr WINTER - The Ministerial Code of Conduct also prohibits the improper use of information obtained within the course of official activities. Wouldn't the knowledge of the location of the dinner with the Hawthorn Football Club be information that could only have been obtained through your official activities? Wouldn't using this information to punish the business for speaking out negatively against your government constitute improper use of information under that code?

Mr STREET - Mr Winter, these are accusations that you're making and I'm asking to take the matter on notice so that I can clarify with my office their opinion on exactly what happened.

Mr WINTER - The problem I've got is that this is a -

CHAIR - Mr Winter, it has been agreed to be take on notice. The call goes to Mr Bayley.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I'm keen to get completely up to date on the costs associated with the Macquarie Point stadium. It has been acknowledged, I think by the corporation, that a number of different costs weren't included in the original budget including $48.4 million which takes the figure ultimately up to $823.5 million for the stadium and there's an additional $6.8 million for CCTV costs that weren't included. As you know, $830 million is the figure that's been discussed for the last few days.

On top of that, there's a number of costs in the WSP transport study that don't seem to be factored into the capital cost estimate despite being essential infrastructure for the stadium. One of these is $33.9 million for the northern access road and just to confirm that that's not included in the $775 million estimate. That takes it up to $864 million. Regardless of whether or not this was a pre-existing commitment, the transport study calls it the most essential supporting project

for the multi-purpose stadium transport solution. There's no stadium without the northern access road. How can you not include it in the costs of the stadium?

Mr STREET - I'll go to Anne first and then come back to Craig as well.

Ms BEACH - The northern access road was identified in the Hobart City deal which is dated 2019 and that was identified to support the Antarctic sector. Currently the Port of Hobart is supported by access by Evans Street and in working with some of those key [inaudible] it was identified that as a single point of failure; Evans Street as the only access to the port represents some risk going forward into the future. The northern access road was identified primarily to support the Antarctic sector, which is worth around $185 million to the Tasmanian economy each year. In working through the precinct plan, aware of that commitment we looked at opportunities for that existing planned road to connect in and support the development of Macquarie Point. That was part of our thinking as part of our engagement.

TasPorts were part of our project steering committee as part of developing the precinct plan. We work through the connection of that and their likely alignment to understand any opportunities to align with that road. Should the stadium not proceed, that northern access road would be required, so, as you noted, it isn't included in the project costing because it's not specific to that project.

Mr BAYLEY - But you acknowledge that it is considered the most essential supporting project for the multi-purpose stadium?

Ms BEACH - It is an important transport project to facilitate the development, but it is not specific to the stadium.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, you were absent on Thursday last week in the Chamber when I asked the Premier the question regarding the release of why the WT Partnership quantity surveyors report was not publicly available on the documentation lodged by MPDC on Wednesday last week. The Premier, I believe, took it on notice. It's still not available. Are you able to table the WT Partnerships quantity surveyors report today?

Mr STREET - Thank you for the question. I understand this is an area of interest for members and for the community. I've asked the Macquarie Point Development Corporation to work with WT Partnership's consultant expert quantity surveyors to prepare a summary of the cost plan as at the time of the concept design that can be released.

I'm advised it is not appropriate to release the detailed cost planning appendices as the detailed breakdown is commercial-in-confidence. This is because it may undermine our ability to seek competitive bids when going to market for the construction of the stadium, as it sets out the individual costings of the project, including contingencies, margins and trade works, which effectively provides the market with details on our pricing assumptions and may lead to inflated bids and less competition in responses. It also includes the methods the consultant firm uses to cost individual elements, which is the company's intellectual property. But I have asked the Macquarie Point Development Corporation to work with WT Partnership to prepare a summary of the cost plan at the time of the concept design that can be released and we -

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you have a time frame when that will be released? It's a critical document to understand the cost-benefit analysis and the KMPG report.

Ms BEACH - We should have that ready for the end of the week.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, on the urgency to sign a new deal with Hawthorn for 2026-27, given you acknowledge Cairns could be a rival bidder and the clock really is ticking, how soon could a new arrangement be sealed? And you say that the standoff between Stadiums Tasmania and the Launceston Council isn't getting in the way, but who exactly is involved in negotiating a new deal?

Mr LIMKIN - I want to be clear that it's the Department of State Growth through our Events Tasmania team who are currently having conversations with Hawthorn. I'll come to Stadiums Tasmania in a second, but whether the stadium is owned by Stadiums Tasmania or continues to be owned by Launceston City Council, we are in negotiations with Hawthorn to extend that deal at this stage.

Given Stadiums Tasmania is the proposed future owner of the stadium, subject to council agreeing to transfer the asset, which is, I understand, in final negotiations between Stadiums Tasmania and Launceston City Council, we are also involving Stadiums Tasmania in those conversations as the future owner to make sure that we are able to partner and deliver with the future owner. But I do want to make it clear again that the negotiations through the Department of State Growth are completely separate to whether the stadium transfers or not. It's been a consistent agreement between the state and Hawthorn, even when it's been in council ownership.

Mrs PENTLAND - When can we expect the deal to be sealed?

Mr LIMKIN - Negotiations have started. We are looking to finalise them as quickly as possible for a decision by government. I'm of the understanding that the Hawthorn CEO reached out to my team last week to continue those conversations. Those conversations have already happened. We waited until the season had finished because they were focused on finals football but we will continue to do that as quickly as possible.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, late last year, the government announced a partnership with DarkLab to deliver the Southern Tasmania Events and Festivals Infrastructure Audit and Strategy. Through the election, it was announced an equivalent northern strategy, which, as I understand it, is being delivered in partnership with Visit Northern Tasmania. Can you please outline the need for these strategies and what we hope to achieve and gain through them?

Mr STREET - Festival and event spaces are key to the success of our events sector and a key to events aligning with the Tasmanian brand.

I'm happy to say that through the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, our government committed to the development of a culture and festivals infrastructure plan in the north of the state.

It will align with the work being undertaken by DarkLab towards a Southern Venue Strategy, which will collectively give a statewide blueprint of the needs of the sector. This is an important step for our events industry, which we know plays a significant role in growing Tasmania's visitor economy. It is key that we explore the needs of the events and festival sector so that we can forecast opportunities for growth and support events that all Tasmanians can enjoy and that will attract visitors to our state.

The purpose of the strategy is to develop a strategic analysis of forecast opportunities for festivals and major events growth, together with the infrastructure, design, commercial and operational requirements to maximise upside and minimise risk.

Visit Northern Tasmania will manage development of the northern strategy in collaboration with Events Tasmania. A key part of developing the plan will be bringing together a steering committee from across the events and festivals, tourism, hospitality and infrastructure sectors as well as representation from the local government sector.

I expect this development work will include an audit of the current event and festival venues in the north of the state in consideration of opportunities to encourage more events. Importantly, it will analyse proposed developments and their cultural, social and economic impacts and fit within and for the region. If we want to attract and retain vibrant and healthy events and festivals in the north and across the state more broadly, we need to make sure the infrastructure is there and that's what we're examining.

I expect the Northern Culture and Festivals Infrastructure Plan will be completed in the next 12 months and I look forward to making a formal announcement when the work is completed.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I wanted to ask you about the stadium. There's been some confusion about the costs, what's included and what's not. I know a lot of these questions have been dealt with, but I've been following along and trying to understand exactly what the government's position is here. I wonder if you can tell me the total cost of the stadium as you currently understand it, including each item. In fact, could you itemise the components that add up to, I think, you're saying $775 million?

Mr STREET - Part of that work is in relation to Ms Johnston's question about the breakdown of that $775 million, so we're working to put together something that we can release publicly. Anne, if you want to add further to that.

Ms BEACH - The budget that we're working through includes the delivery of the stadium, which includes all resourcing, consultancies, it's the physical build, it's their approval costs involved in that - trade works, headworks, resourcing, the whole package. That includes the work that we've done to date; it is part of that project budget.

Mr WINTER - I understand that answer. I'm interested in the private sector component of this. Which of the components of either the stadium build or the stadium precinct build, more broadly, do you see as having the potential for private sector investment?

Mr STREET - I'll go to Craig on that as State Growth has been doing the preliminary work on investment attraction.

Mr LIMKIN - Mr Winter, as the Premier outlined earlier this week, and also as part of the government's election commitments, they have asked for advice on how to do market testing. Market testing can be multiple methodologies. There's market testing, where you can take unencumbered land to market to just sell it; you could take a proposition like a public-private partnership to market; you could take pre-approved DAs to market to do that. What the Department of State Growth is doing in partnership with DPAC, Treasury, Macquarie Point and Stadiums Tasmania is currently preparing advice for the government to fulfil their

commitment and consideration on how they undertake market testing and the options that are available for market testing to occur. The Premier has indicated to the committee on Monday that following consideration of the policy advice from the department and our agency partners, the government intends to do market testing by the end of the year.

Mr WINTER - Of the components of the Macquarie Point site that you are currently committed to building, what, if any, of those components do you believe would be right for private sector investment?

Mr STREET - I think that there are any number of different opportunities within the stadium and the precinct itself for private investment, but Craig might want to add to that.

Mr LIMKIN - The Department of State Growth and government have received multiple approaches from the private sector on a variety of different propositions that could do, Mr Winter. Some of those propositions could be the build and operations of the stadium, the northern access road, some of the key transport projects. The private sector has indicated to the state that it would be interested in building some or all components, or a variety of components. There are private sectors that have indicated that they would be willing to build the stadium and a different proposition at a different site as well. What we're doing is trying to work through what is the best way to engage with the private sector to ensure that the state has competitive tension through that process. We intend to give that advice to the government shortly for them to be able to make some policy decisions on which way to take the market testing forward as per the Premier's commitment.

Mr WINTER - One of the things you mentioned as part - Chair?

CHAIR – Mr Bayley

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you Chair.

Mr WINTER - I think I get three, don't I Chair?

CHAIR - You've had three.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, we will respectfully disagree around the Northern Access Road, no matter when it was proposed. It's described as essential supporting infrastructure for the stadium and, according to the transport study, it is currently unfunded. Unless you've got the federal government, TasPorts, or perhaps the AAD funding it, it's clearly something that you are going to have to stump up for. On top of that, there's the Event Bus Plaza, which is essential for the 31 per cent of patrons who are forecast to be taking the bus, that's $11.15 million and that wasn't included, so that takes the cost to over $875 million. There's also a pedestrian bridge across Collins Street identified as essential supporting structure for the stadium, priced at anywhere between $44 and $56.5 million, that's not included in the capital cost, so that takes the cost to over $919 million or potentially up to $931 million.

The transport study also shows that there's a number of essential and highly recommended minor works to make the stadium functional and accessible to pedestrians and also a travel behaviour campaign. These are works costing around $1.2 million, that's not factored into the cost. That makes it sit at $933 million, which is getting very, very close to a billion dollars as everyone has been saying. It's also a fact that that then makes a funding black

hole, no matter how you argue it, of $303 million. Do you accept that there's a funding black hole of well over $300 million here?

Mr STREET - No, I don't accept that. We have been clear from the very start of this project that we will require private investment to make this stadium project work and we're very confident that we will attract that private investment.

Mr BAYLEY - Up to $300 million, probably well over $300 million. Do you honestly believe the private sector's going to do that? Their own modelling shows that the stadium itself is a loss-making venture, naming rights and other private investments for stadiums elsewhere go for the tens of millions, not the hundreds of millions. How on earth are you going to make this work? What is it that you're willing to give away? And, is the private sector - if you're going to shift this to the private sector, is the private sector going to be responsible for every single dollar of cost overrun because that is what the Premier signed us up for in the AFL deal.

Mr STREET - I'll go to you, Craig.

Mr LIMKIN - Through you, minister, Mr Bayley, as I said earlier on, we are currently preparing advice for the government on market testing. At this stage, I cannot give you a definitive thing of what the private sector commits to. To do that the government has to undertake market testing. The government has said they will look at that. The example we can use is Perth, where a PPP was used and there was a significant saving to the government based on the public sector comparator completed at the time. My understanding is that is on the web.

I want to talk about some of the transport projects you talked about earlier on, if that's okay, minister. A number of the transport projects that you talked about are identified in the Keep Hobart Moving plan, which is a government document that has been out for some time. Or, as Ms Beach said, a number of those projects were originally identified in the City Deal. The Department of State Growth, in our Budget paper, on page 350, there's a section called Urban Congestion Fund; that funding has planning work through a number of these key projects in there, including the Northern Access Road, rapid buses, some of the pedestrian pathways that you talked about. There is funding allocated in the Budget in partnership with the Australian Government consistent with the original City Deal for us to progress those key activities. They are outside the stadium -

Mr BAYLEY - But they're all described as essential infrastructure for the stadium. They are kit and kaboodle with the stadium and the stadium doesn't function safely - the transport study talks about safety issues and needing to take a lane out of Davey Street, for example, for safety reasons if bridges aren't built. These are critical bits of infrastructure for this stadium to operate, if ever it is built, and there is no denying that they need to be incorporated into the overall cost of the budget for the stadium.

Mr LIMKIN - My policy view, Mr Bayley, is that a number of these transport projects are required by our city to deal with urban congestion. That is why the Department of Strate Growth started these projects a number of years ago, has been working on these projects, and is, in the case of the rapid buses and the Norwood Growth Corridor, we're in the process of completing a strategic business case. So, a number of these projects have been established and identified as utilising the fixed urban congestion to enable movement to the stadium. My understanding is part of the reason the original site was selected was that these projects were already occurring that would actually be beneficial to that.

I will comment that my transport team in the Department of State Growth worked very closely with Ms Beach's team and also the consultant in developing the transport study, which is why stage one of the Keep Hobart Moving was the base case for that attachment that you were referring to.

Mr BAYLEY - That document was written after the stadium was proposed?

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, I want to follow up an answer from your secretary who said that the northern suburbs facility had only transferred across to DSG 12 months ago. My understanding that it was transferred to DSG in 2021.

Mr LIMKIN - I will have to seek some advice on that. The advice I had, Mr O'Byrne, was 12 months ago, but I will clarify that and if it is wrong -

Mr O'BYRNE - It is on the 2022-23 Budget papers under DSG.

Mr LIMKIN - If it is wrong, I will correct the record, but I will seek some advice from the team who provided me that information.

Mr O'BYRNE - Just quickly then, on that last question there, how much has been spent on Wilkinson's Point trying to deliver that multi-sport indoor facility to date?

Mr STREET - We will check the number and bring it back to you.

Mrs PENTLAND - You have confirmed today that the Hawthorn deal provides a 5:1 return on investment. How does that compare to other investments in sports and events? What would rival that?

Mr STREET - That is a fair question.

Mr LIMKIN - We do have those in our return on investment, minister, that we can get.

Mr STREET - Do you mean for other sports events or for other events in general?

Mrs PENTLAND - Both.

Mr STREET - We will get those numbers and read them into the committee for you.

Mrs PENTLAND - A question about the high-performance venues. I know there as been a lot of back-and-forth between Rosny and Kingston. Why would you not put a high-performance centre in the one place where both the AFL and basketball could facilitate in that one place, when, you have a shortage of physiotherapists, sports psychologists - in the whole range of background services that you would need to obviously service those teams?

Mr STREET - I understand the question and your logic behind it, but there are a number of complex matters that need to be taken into account when deciding the location for the high-performance centre for the AFL team. We announced Rosny as the preferred site last year but, when we did so, we made it clear that Kingston had qualified on all the criteria as well and we committed to do due diligence at both sites so we had both options open for us. That work is still ongoing. We are very close to making an announcement, but there is more to it than just

whether locating it with another high-performance centre makes sense. I understand why you see that logic, but there is more to it than that in terms of the due diligence that has been done by State Growth, the AFL, and the Tasmanian Devils in choosing the site for the high-performance.

Sorry, before we go to another question, the return on investment for Hawthorn, as we said, was 5, the Netball Australia partnership was 3, in North Melbourne, AFL is 0.1, the return on investment for the supercars is 6.

Mrs PENTLAND - And they your lead events, then?

Mr STREET - Look, that is a range. In other events, Race Tasmania was a 4, the Hobart Airport Marathon that we sponsored with $130,000 had an 8:1 return, Hockey Australia Championships for which we have a million-dollar contract over five years has a return on investment for that is eight. The Tasmanian Wine Festival, as another example, is an event with a 4:1 return on investment.

Mr SHELTON - We know that Tasmania is known as an event state and that comes down to how well events market themselves. What is the government doing to support events to market themselves and, in doing so, market the state?

Mr STREET - The Tasmanian government's a strong supporter of the event sector, providing funding to a range of events through multiple funding programs to Events Tasmania. Each program has a defined eligibility criteria and a set of grant guidelines to ensure events aligned with the Tasmanian Government Events Strategy 2023-27, resulting in social, economic and brand value to the state.

Events Tasmania's objectives are aimed at increasing the number of people coming to Tasmania, getting visitors and locals travelling around the state, and getting people talking and sharing about Tasmania through their own networks. Through Events Tasmania there are funding programs that are designed to focus specifically on marketing activity of events held in Tasmania that have achieve marketing outcomes while promoting events and maximising attendance.

The Event Marketing Tasmania Grant is designed to cater to both large and small events with two tiers of funding providing options for events with either intrastate or interstate visitation targets. Grants of up to $10,000 are available to assist event organisers with the marketing and [inaudible] activity for an established Tasmanian event. Applicants must be able to demonstrate how this funding will add value to their existing marketing strategy that is targeted to markets outside of the region in which the event takes place or outside of Tasmania.

In 2024, a total of 34 events received grants through the Event Marketing Tasmania Grant program, totalling $260,000. These events were held statewide and are listed below:

- Spring in the Vines
- Good Gumnuts Festival
- Festival of Flowers
- The Devils Cardigan
- King Island Imperial 20
- The Think Big Run Bridge

There's an array of other events as well that received grants Mr Shelton.

In addition to support our commitment to the event sector in winter this year, a special round of Event Marketing Tasmania Winter 2024 was open to support events between April and September. The success of the Marketing Tasmania program is why we ran a special round of this program. A total of 11 events received funding through the winter edition of the marketing program, totalling $99,099 in funding.

Mr WINTER - Going back to that answer around what components the private sector might be looking to invest in, I'll just pick one thing that was said, which was the road. Can you explain to me the arrangements? I'm not asking to go into commercial confidence, but in broad terms, why would someone look to invest in the road and what is the general approach to that?

Mr LIMKIN - Mr Winter, I can't talk about specifics in relation to each one because the private sector wouldn't want an individual package. What they're looking for is a broader package. As I said earlier, we are working with our agency partners to provide some policy advice to the government on this. As part of that, the value proposition, if we use that language, will be explored and tested so that we can provide policy advice to government to make some decisions.

Mr WINTER - The concern that I have, and heard it expressed, is that when you're talking about a PPP that you could be looking at an arrangement where the private sector provides you with the upfront capital, then the state pays it back. That is effectively a really expensive way to finance a project. Can you rule out a PPP like that?

Mr STREET - We won't do a deal that isn't in the best interest of Tasmanian taxpayers. When I met with Professor Gruen, who's doing the report on behalf of - I don't even know how to - the former JLN members. He made it clear to me that there are good and bad PPPs. We didn't have an opportunity at that meeting to expand on that, but I imagine that his report will identify what sort of arrangements are beneficial for these sorts of developments and what sort need to be avoided.

Mr WINTER - Can you rule out entering into a PPP that is effectively a financing arrangement, and what I mean by that is a financing arrangement where you're paying a higher rate of interest than if you financed it through TASCORP?

Mr LIMKIN - Mr Winter, maybe I can talk about a process for a PPP - maybe that will help. I'm not saying that's how the government will go or how the advice will go.

These are set - if you look at Victoria's guidelines and the New South Wales Treasury guidelines, or even Infrastructure Australia or Australian Treasury guidelines, one of the things you have to do is a public sector comparator. A public sector comparator is basically where you look at and identify the cost to government. If you look at the Western Australia stadium, for example - my understanding is it's on the web now because the deal has been completed - they did a public sector comparator that said if the state was to do this, what would be the cost that the state would have to incur to deliver this? That is the basis that market bids are then evaluated off to ensure that the government is able to demonstrate value for money.

As I said, my understanding is that for the Western Australia stadium, the private sector offering compared to the public sector comparator was $321 million better off over than the life of the contract. Should the government make a choice to do a PPP, we would prepare a public sector comparator to enable the assessment panel to evaluate the PPP and the market offering, and then that would normally be released publicly to the community following a deal being done. You wouldn't want to do it during a deal process because that would be limiting or impacting the state's commercial ability.

In the case of Western Australia, or even in the case of some of the New South Wales public/private partnerships - the northern beaches, the entertainment centre - that type of information were publicly released following the finalisation of the transaction to be able to be very clear with the community what the benefit is for that transaction.

Mr STREET - The Premier gave that commitment to Mrs Pentland in a question that she asked in the House the week before last.

Mr WINTER - Sorry, what was that commitment?

Mr STREET - That we would be completely transparent about the terms of the deal once it was done so that the Tasmanian public could see -

Mr WINTER - I appreciate that additional information that was provided, but it didn't really answer my question, which was will you rule out signing up to a deal that is essentially more expensive than a loan that could be obtained through TASCORP?

Mr LIMKIN - Ultimately, that is a policy decision for government, Mr Winter. Should the government choose to do a market testing through a PPP - because, first of all, the government has to make a choice about what form of market testing they would take - they would be given the policy options to be able to do it.

I believe part of the challenge at the moment is that the department with our agency partners is still working through what type of market testing would be done, so at this stage we haven't provided any advice.

Mr WINTER - I understand that, but the question was really for the minister. You're right; it is a matter for government. Will you rule out signing up to a deal that is essentially more expensive than you could finance through TASCORP?

Mr STREET - I'm not giving guarantees or ruling things out.

Mr WINTER - I don't understand why you couldn't do that. It's a very basic -

Mr STREET - What I'm saying is that the government would have no interest in doing a deal like that.

Mr WINTER - Okay, that's good. I appreciate that.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, it's a statement of fact that there was no plan to move the Goods Shed prior to this stadium. Is there any possibility you can build a stadium without moving the Goods Shed?

Ms BEACH - We've gone through a precinct planning process where we've looked at the key projects that we were looking to deliver on site and what the best way is to deliver those. That's set out in the Precinct Plan.

Mr BAYLEY - Can you build it without moving the Goods Shed, though?

Ms BEACH - The location of the multipurpose stadium, as you can see in the Precinct Plan, is where the Goods Shed currently is, which is why we've proposed the relocation of that.

Mr BAYLEY - If the Goods Shed is only moving because of the stadium build and you can't build the stadium without doing it, why isn't the cost of moving the Goods Shed part of the cost of building the stadium?

Ms BEACH - The Goods Shed in its current state would need refurbishment for it to be activated and provide a full multipurpose space for the community, so that's something the corporation would be looking to manage anyway.

Mr BAYLEY - Isn't that just a disingenuous way of excluding costs from the stadium? You can't build this thing. It's at centre half forward. You can't build the stadium without moving the Goods Shed. You've agreed to move it; you want to move it. You're not even incorporating it into the plans.

Ms BEACH - We've looked to integrate the Goods Shed as part of the design for the stadium. It will remain as a standalone facility, so it will be able to [inaudible] in its full structure for its heritage values and be able to be utilised as an individual, functioning space.

Mr BAYLEY - That's not the question. Are you proposing to use heritage funds that are in the Budget like heritage funds, for example, to do this relocation?

Ms BEACH - The corporation will be managing the relocation of the Goods Shed.

Mr BAYLEY - And paying for it?

Ms BEACH - Yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Your primary purpose as it stands at the moment is to build a stadium. I don't understand how that isn't considered part of the cost. Surely it's part of the cost.

Ms BEACH - The corporation's primary purpose is the remediation and redevelopment of the site and delivering a mixed-use precinct. This is one of our responsibilities and one of the redevelopments we'll be leading onsite.

Mr BAYLEY - How much will it cost?

CHAIR - I'll go to Ms Johnston.

Mr LIMKIN - Sorry, I want to correct the record for Mr O'Byrne. My advice is that it was 2022 when the Department of Communities was transferred into DSG, and that is when DSG became accountable for the project. I apologise for getting my dates wrong.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you.

Ms JOHNSTON - The WT Partnership Quantity Surveying report is critical to understand the veracity of the KPMG report, which is the cost-benefit analysis. It's a critical part of understanding the economic viability of the stadium project. You've indicated in your previous response that a summary report would be made publicly available. Will the full detailed report be provided to the Tasmanian Planning Commission and also to Dr Gruen so that they can make a full assessment?

Ms BEACH - As the minister noted, there's a number of things we need to consider in that. Firstly, the submission we've made to the Planning Commission is a planning application. We're not seeking funding approval; we're seeking planning approval. The reason that the costs have been considered to a point - and it is at a point, the concept design point - is to inform the economic analysis, because that's part of the integrated assessment. There's the integrated assessment, there's a social benefits financial impact report and the cost-benefit assessment. To inform those, the indicative costs at the point we are at was required for KPMG to do their assessment.

As has been noted in some of the hearings during the week, cost planning is a dynamic process. It will continue to change as we go through the design process. While we've made the submission to the Tasmanian Planning Commission in parallel, we'll continue the detailed design process, and at the end of that process we'll have a different number to what we have now. We're working through a finessing process. We've allowed for contingencies in our current estimates, and the snapshot that's been included is a point in time. We've already identified value management since identifying that process.

As the minister already noted, there are some challenges with that full articulation. The detailed analysis in the cost planning includes things like trade works and identifying our specific contingencies. If we were to make that available, we're effectively telling the market all of the details of our costings. They can then inform their bids based on those, and it removes the competitive nature of going to market for the construction.

That is a commercial challenge for us, but also, the way that they're costed is essentially the quantity surveyor's intellectual property. There'll be different ways that quantity surveyors estimate the individual line items, so it isn't appropriate for us to release the detailed information. That is why, when the minister asked us what we would be able to release, we looked at what we would be able to produce as a summary. Similar to what's in the business case, there is a summary in there, and similar to what was tabled in parliament in 2022, we're making sure at least that level of information is available.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, with all due respect, though, the TPC has been tasked with doing an economic assessment. That's a component of the total assessment they're going to do. How can they possibly do that if they're kept in the dark about critical information, particularly around contingencies and components of the construction? How do they do that assessment if they only have the high level? They're tasked on behalf of Tasmanians to do an assessment of the economic impact.

Ms BEACH - The capital cost of the project is one input into the economic assessment.

Ms JOHNSTON - A very important part, though.

Ms BEACH - It is, but it is one input. There will be a number of inputs that have gone into that assessment, and it is the assessment that we've put forward for their consideration.

Mr O'BYRNE - There's lots of conjecture about the use of various facilities and stadiums that we currently have. What is the future for Bellerive Oval now?

Mr STREET - It's a good question, and it's an open question to be perfectly honest. When the stadium at Macquarie Point is built, the need for Bellerive Oval to host high-attendance sport is negated, and Cricket Tasmania has made it clear to the government that it doesn't see its future there in terms of using that as a base for its high-performance programs. It is a question that we have to answer going forward, along with conversation with Stadiums Tasmania, because initially that was one of the five assets that were being transferred to Stadiums Tasmania as well. That will be an ongoing conversation with Cricket Tasmania, with Clarence Council, which owns the land, and with Stadiums Tasmania for where they see their organisation fitting in terms of the future of Bellerive Oval.

Mr SHELTON - The stadium is a big project and there are a lot of questions around it, but the Budget goes to a lot of other areas. I'm more interested in some of the little things that the Budget is doing to have big impacts on families. How is the Budget helping children with complex family and care situations get involved in sporting activities?

Mr STREET - The government has been supporting Reclink with funding since 2021-22 to provide evidence-based, innovative sport and active recreation programs that engage some of our most at-risk and disadvantaged young people. I'll acknowledge that Mr O'Byrne has participated in their fundraising football matches on a couple of occasions where I've gone along and tossed the coin and then vacated the field as quickly as possible. I'm pleased as part of this Budget that we've committed to providing an additional $150,000 per year over the next two years to this important community-focused organisation, bringing its total funding to $317,000 per year for the next two years.

Reclink delivers more than 40 sport and recreation activities and partners with over 100 member organisations in Tasmania including the Migrant Resource Centre, Anglicare, the Salvation Army, City Mission and Colony 47. Its work is focused on engaging young Tasmanians from complex backgrounds including those experiencing poor mental health; drug, alcohol and gambling harm; domestic and partner violence; homelessness; long-term unemployment; social isolation; and socio-economic disadvantage.

Our funding of Reclink has helped deliver rapid growth in participation and ever-increasing engagement and partnership with government schools. Reclink has identified and nurtured young talents across cricket, netball, basketball and other sports through its community series, providing assistance to access pathway level sport through local clubs via its scholarship program. For many, involvement with a Reclink program is their first opportunity to be part of a team.

If I may, I'd like to share a testimonial from the principal of Bothwell District School, Ryan Kinder, who wrote to Reclink following the school's involvement with one of its programs. Mr Kinder wrote:

> We all very much appreciate the organisation, dedication and drive that you show to give our kids the chance to meet other students, build their

> conference in unfamiliar social settings and to compete against other students in a non-threatening environment.

That's a ringing endorsement for Reclink's work in a regional community, and that's why we've provided Reclink with additional funding in this Budget. I'll just add to finish that at the first of those Reclink football matches that I went to, I met the Victorian manager. At the time Reclink in Tasmania was running basically off the side of the Reclink Victoria manager's desk. We're really proud of the support that we've been able to provide to establish Reclink in all three regions of the state. The organisation itself needs to take a hell of a lot of credit for its growth and for the programs that it runs, and the reach it has expanded in a relatively short amount of time.

CHAIR - We might pause and have a five-minute break.

The Committee suspended from 2.13 p.m. to 2.19 p.m.

CHAIR - Welcome back, everybody. Mr Winter has the call.

Mr WINTER - Minister, have you had time over the break to come back with an answer about the cancellation of the event at the Mudbar as yet?

Mr STREET - I understand your concern.

Mr WINTER - That's fine. I'll move on if you haven't.

Mr STREET - I'm asking for you to allow us to take it on notice. There were multiple organisations involved in organising that. I want to get straight exactly what happened from our perspective and then we'll come back to you.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the AFL deal that has been signed has a bunch of time lines that need to be met. The first is the training facility, which must receive all approvals by the end of 2024, which I think you'd accept is impossible, you are not going to be able to do that. The stadium must have planning approvals by 30 March next year. There's a bunch more in the next nine months. Have you sought to amend the deed, or is there any form of agreement with the AFL around the slippage that you've seen so far?

Mr STREET - Regarding the high-performance centre, the AFL are on the steering committee that's doing the due diligence work on that. They've expressed no problems with the time frames that we're working towards. Acknowledging what you've said, we would still hope to be able to make a decision and have a DA lodged by the end of the year still, regardless of the tight time frames we're working to. Whether we've got approval or not is subject to council processes of whichever site we choose. I don't know whether there's been a discussion around the planning approval clause. Craig?

Mr LIMKIN - The AFL is also on the project steering committee for the stadium, which I chair, and they have not raised any concerns regarding any of the clauses in the deed.

Mr WINTER - When I read the deed, as I understand it, it says that these are triggers that the AFL can give 60 days notice of intention to terminate the deal, which obviously nobody

wants. Are you looking to amend the deed or are you just moving on by agreement that there's going to be slippage and there aren't going to be any issues raised?

Mr LIMKIN - I've not had any indication from the AFL of any concerns or any of those clauses happening, Mr Winter. I meet with them regularly outside the process to make sure that they are happy with the progress of each of the elements of the club funding arrangement deed and they have not indicated any concerns. I will indicate that they are across every element of that deed plus every element of where we're up to. We are being fully transparent with both them and the club because they are key partners and ultimately that does affect them. From my experience, in conversations, there have been no issues raised.

Mr WINTER - Can you run us through the latest timetable that you have for both the TA and the stadium in terms of when you're looking to have planning and building approval for both facilities and when you're looking to have both of them completed?

Mr STREET - We'll go to the stadium first and I'll throw to Anne and then come back to me for the high-performance centre.

Ms BEACH - The TPC has up to 12 months to undertake the assessment and as you'd be aware, we've submitted our planning application for the integrated assessment through the Project of State Significance process. Once they've completed their work, it then goes to the minister responsible for that act, which is the Premier, and it's then tabled in parliament. It needs to go through both Houses of parliament.

Mr WINTER - What's the expected time?

Ms BEACH - Twelve months from last week is when the report would be due. Upon receiving that planning outcome, we'd be seeking building approval with a view to commencing work at the end of 2025 so that we're completing works at the end of 2028.

Mr WINTER - Completing the works on the stadium at the end of 2028?

Mr STREET - I keep saying the due diligence work is going on at both sides. So are architectural designs and what have you. Planning applications for both are being developed at the same time as well. Once we make a firm decision, we'll be in a place to submit a DA almost immediately once we've made the final decision on the site.

Mr WINTER - And the rest of the time line on when you look to commence construction and have it completed?

Mr LIMKIN - At this stage, Mr Winter, once we have a site, we'll be able to have a confirmed time line. I don't want to give you a time line at this stage because there are different time lines for each site. But what I can say to you is under both scenarios we will be able to deliver the facility by the requirement under the deed, which, my understanding is, to be complete by 31 October 2027. I have no concerns regarding the ability to meet that at this stage.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, back to the Goods Shed, what are the cost estimates for moving the Goods Shed?

Ms BEACH - We have had this question through hearings during the week and, as I've noted, there are a couple of things we need to consider here. There are a couple of ways we can relocate the Goods Shed.

One is it can be disassembled and then reassembled on site in the location we have identified in our Project of State Significance application. The other option is we have had indications from approaches suggesting it could be moved in one, so as a solid structure. So, we'll need to go through a process to work out the best way to do that, the most cost-effective and the most appropriate to protect heritage.

In terms of the cost, it would depend on the response to taking that to market to test the most appropriate way. As I noted earlier in the week in the hearings with the Premier, it would be inappropriate for us to indicate costings for that because we do need to get the best possible value when we go to market.

Mr BAYLEY - And, so, there are no guarantees that it can be moved or will be approved to be moved. The Heritage Tasmania works guidelines explicitly say that relocating a significant structure will, in most circumstances, be unacceptable. What conversations have you had with the Tasmanian Heritage Council or Heritage Tasmania, what's the process and what are the prospects for having this approved to move in the first place?

Ms BEACH - We've met with Heritage Tasmania and as you'd be aware -

Mr BAYLEY - Who's that? Sorry, I just missed that.

Ms BEACH - Heritage Tasmania. As you'd be aware, the Heritage Council has undertaken assessment, supported by Heritage Tasmania, as part of assessing the Goods Shed and listing it on the State Heritage Register.

So, we have an engagement through that process. As part of the Project of State Significance process, the guidelines are in the *Cultural Heritage Act*. So, it is part of the integrated assessment through the Project of State Significance process, so the Heritage Council has been identified as a relevant agency.

Now that we've made our submission, they will have an opportunity to review our submission and provide feedback directly to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, raise any concerns or flag any questions that will then feed through to us to provide any further information. We've engaged with Heritage Tasmania, they're aware of our proposal and our thinking around that, and it'll be part of the integrated assessment of project.

Mr BAYLEY - Which begs the question, minister, if there are no guarantees this will be approved, whether it's the move of the Goods Shed or whether it's the Planning Commission POSS process, full stop, as it stands at the moment, the stadium is currently the biggest risk to the AFL team because no-one had any control over it - no-one really, not Premier Rockliff, not anyone could agree to build a stadium there because it has to go through a whole range of steps to get approved and funded. I mean, what are you going to do if the Heritage Council, for example, or the Planning Commission rejects this and says no, you can't build it and you can't build it on this site?

Mr STREET - I am not going to deal in hypothetical questions as this stage, Mr Bayley. I've every confidence that with the work that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation's put into the POSS submission that we will be successful in getting planning permission.

Mr BAYLEY - Does that not amount to political pressure on the Planning Commission though? I mean, you are building - and the Premier, every member of your government is building - this expectation that it gets approved and it will happen.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr STREET - That is why I am trying to be careful in my comments now that the POSS submission is in, because I don't want to be seen to be leaning on the on the TPC. We want the TPC to do the work that's necessary to assess it and to produce the integrated assessment report, which I think Ms Beach indicated to me would take probably three or four months. Absolutely, we want them to be free to assess the POSS process. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation put a lot of time and effort into that submission and we want it assessed on its merits.

Mr BAYLEY - How can they truly be free if there's so much political pressure on this?

CHAIR - Mr Bayley, you've had your allocation. Mrs Pentland.

Mr STREET - Just before going on to Mrs Pentland, Mr Limkin has an answer to Mr O'Byrne's question about the money spent at Wilkinsons Point.

Mr LIMKIN - I am advised it is $2.35 million for the entire project. A lot of the money that we have already spent will be able to be reused as the decoupling of the project. So, that includes the design work that is transferable to the JackJumpers site, the new four-courts site. We're using the redesigns as much as possible. A number of the elements on the funding we've also spent has been about road improvement to the MyState Bank Arena, which the department would be doing anyway because of the commitments and the work happening at Wilkinsons Point. So, while the total cost spent to date is $2.35 million on all the components, most of that we'll be able to reuse on various other components that we've now split out from the original proposal.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, given we're spending $130 million upgrading the UTAS Stadium, an investment I fully support, is four games of men's AFL enough annual top-level content? And, given the Macquarie Point Stadium will be desperate to attract content, how can you guarantee Launceston will continue to get its fair share of top-tier sport?

Mr STREET - I met with the Launceston City councillors the other day, Mrs Pentland, and they asked exactly the same question. We are committed to four games in Launceston when the Devils come into the competition, but we do acknowledge as well that the AFL controls the fixturing.

It would be fair to say that it's the reason that we're keen also for the deal with Hawthorn and the relationship to continue as well, to expand on the Devils' four games to potentially Hawthorn games on top of that, to increase the men's AFL content at the redeveloped stadium. But I think what needs to not be lost in this as well is the fact that AFLW, the VFL team that supports the AFL team, the VFLW team will also be playing across the state and we would

expect that a reasonable level of that content would be played in the north - and, hopefully, in the north-west as well at Dial.

I don't know whether, James, you want to add to that from a Stadiums Tasmania perspective in terms of the redevelopment.

Mr AVERY - I think there's been some conversation about AFL content. We also need to look further afield than just AFL content: the ability to continue to attract significant cricket content into the venue, but not just sport as well, other events, live entertainment. The redevelopment is going to be a catalyst for attracting other events there - business and conferencing events which don't happen at the venue at the moment because the facilities don't cater for that.

So, there's a huge opportunity for more content through there outside of event days, if you like, and Stadiums Tasmania is confident that with an integrated stadium model, with one entity eventually operating all venues, you'll have cost efficiencies and better purchasing power to be able to drive content across those venues, and that includes UTAS Stadium.

Mrs PENTLAND - Has the A-League been mentioned at all?

Mr AVERY - Stadiums Tasmania has had conversations with all the key major sporting codes in relation to a number of the projects, whether it be the Macquarie Point project or the redevelopment at UTAS Stadium, and we have engaged Football Australia, the A-Leagues, Football Tasmania, Rugby Australia, the NRL. All have expressed an interest in both projects and are very keen to see what those redevelopments look like.

Mr STREET - We had an opportunity with the Melbourne Storm a couple of years ago that we ended up having to turn down, but it would be fair to say that they're very interested.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, thank you for the answer on the $2.35 million. I'm a bit sceptical about how much can just be reused. I think that's wishful thinking.

What is the budget for the new facility and when will it be built?

Mr STREET - It's in the Budget as a total line item of $49.7 million but that includes the JackJumpers high-performance facility as well. There's $15 million for that. The budget for the four-court facility in the northern suburbs is $30 million.

But there is also money within that $49.7 million for gymnastics, which was going to be catered for in the facility at Wilkinsons Point, which now won't be. We're in discussions with whatever gymnastics club is based at Brighton, which was looking to relocate to the facility at Wilkinsons Point. We're working with them on using that money and some money that they've already had set aside, initially for for a new gymnastics' facility at Brighton.

Mr O'BYRNE - Just on that $2.35 million, Chair, if I could just finish this line of questioning. You talked about some work that was performed or done at Wilkinsons Point and I understand the LK Group leased that and they have responsibility for that. So, when you say you did some work out there, what work did you do?

Mr LIMKIN - We looked at further internal roads to support MyState Bank Arena, the movement around there, also the new movement to the new ferry terminal at Wilkinsons Point that the government has announced, which is further down that period of time.

Mr O'BYRNE - But what work?

Mr LIMKIN - It was really preliminary design work on potential new road access and access that was originally for the Wilkinsons Point complex, the sports centre, the JJ site, the four courts et cetera. We're looking at how do we reuse that work at the moment to make it easier for access.

Mr O'BYRNE - If those facilities aren't built there, then you'll have to start again, won't you, because the design will look something different.

Mr LIMKIN - My understanding, Mr O'Byrne, is some of that work was regarding how do you create a better entry way into the entire facility because of the additional users moving into it. Some of that work, as I said, will be able to be reused to ensure movements into that facility to support MyState Bank Arena.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, as an old sportsperson, without too much emphasis on the old, I'm very much a supporter of the government's initiative of getting as many Tasmanians as possible involved in sport and active recreation, particularly our young kids, to get them off the screens and outside and running around. Can you please provide an update on the participation data - actual data on how many people are out there, and any information on what you're doing to promote active recreation outside of the traditional sports area?

Mr STREET - Thanks for the question, Mr Shelton. We're working very hard to increase opportunities for Tasmanians to be active, whether that be through our funding of traditional sports or our investments in the likes of walking tracks, cycle paths and even playgrounds right around the state.

One of my key messages as Minister for Sport and Events has been that I'm agnostic about how we get people active as long as we get them active. That means giving them a variety of different options and that's because we know that non-traditional sports and activities play a really important role in achieving our aim of ensuring all Tasmanians can access the sport and active recreation pursuit of their choice.

The latest figures from Ausplay, a large-scale national survey conducted by Sport Australia, showed nearly 60 per cent of Tasmanian adults participate in sport or physical activity three or more times a week, which is a slight increase from the previous year of 59.8 per cent. I've got to say that I fall outside of that. I'm letting the team down at the minute.

The data show that there is a trend towards participation in non-sport-related activities such as walking, going to the gym, jogging and bushwalking. In fact, Ausplay figures show that walking was the most popular activity for Tasmanian adults, which is one of the reasons why, as part of my Local Government portfolio, we committed $5 million towards the local government Open Spaces infrastructure grants.

Through this program, administered in partnership with the Local Government Association of Tasmania, councils have been able to improve walking paths in places like

Bridgewater and Devonport, and playgrounds in Dorset, Waratah-Wynyard and the Northern Midlands.

In the 2024-25 Budget, we're continuing our support of sports outside of the mainstream codes, providing $30,000 in funding for the Deloraine District Anglers Club and committing $190,000 to a cycle path in Lilydale.

I take this opportunity to talk about the government's support of services for people who face particular obstacles when accessing sport and active recreation. Our state grants program administered by Active Tasmania provided $17,000 this year to work and get out to support the LGBTIQA+ community access sport and active recreation through the Everyone Can Play initiative. Everyone Can Play helps sport organisations embed LGBTIQA+ inclusive policies and practices, including through the appointment of inclusion officers or champions.

Another organisation to benefit from funding through the state grants program is New Horizons Tasmania, which received $60,000 to help Tasmanians living with a disability to access sport by working in partnership with sporting bodies, clubs, schools and community organisations to build more inclusive and equitable communities.

I'm really proud as Minister for Sport and Events that this government is helping Tasmanians across the board to build participation and that we're getting results.

Mr WILLIE - I've been following along in my office downstairs. There's been a good discussion this afternoon. I hope Mr O'Byrne doesn't mind me jumping in here, because the community courts are something that I'm very passionate about too, and it is in my electorate.

The traffic management solution you were just talking about, I think it was about an $800,000 tender. It was my understanding that you had to do that work because you need enough car parking for both venues to be operational at the same time. How do you reuse that work?

Mr LIMKIN - As I said, Mr Willie, there is a large amount of development going to happen on the Wilkinsons Point site. The Department of State Growth is working with the LK Group as part of that. We will look at how we reuse some of that information -

Mr WILLIE - But car parks aren't required.

Mr LIMKIN - As I indicated, we are in the process of decoupling the elements of the original commitment and we will look to reuse as much available work that we have already done as part of that commitment to ensure value for money for taxpayers.

Mr WILLIE - It seems strange to me. Minister, on this topic, you had $30 million in the Budget. Was there any thought to being a bit creative? I know there's been some work done by Claremont College in Glenorchy Basketball Association; you've got Hobart Phoenix, which is a club of nearly 1000 registered members, they've got no facility. Was there some thought to maybe splitting this funding up and delivering a number of solutions? You've also got the New Town Netball Precinct, which basketball is played at as well. That needs some work on it.

Mr STREET - I understand that. You're not the first person who suggested potentially splitting the money and building two facilities or reapportioning the money. I think the very

least that I can do after the delays that we've had is maintain the commitment to spend the $30 million on the four-court facility for the northern suburbs.

That's not to say that we don't acknowledge that we've got more work to do, particularly in central Hobart in terms of a new facility. We've talked to Hobart Phoenix and to the Hobart City Council about land availability as well.

I'm not, by any means, sitting here and saying that building the four-court facility in the northern suburbs is the end of the work that we need to do in terms of court provision in southern Tasmania. We need to build more facilities as well and it's going to be my job to advocate for that money in future budgets.

Mr WILLIE - What I'm saying is you could have, with some creative thinking, delivered some courts in the northern suburbs and maybe fixed some solutions for more user groups with the money.

Mr STREET - Look, I don't want to be too cynical, but I think it would have been painted as us walking away from the commitment that we made to the northern suburbs back in 2018 to build the four-courts facility if we'd done anything but keep to that commitment.

Mr WILLIE - I think the basketball community would celebrate more courts because they're desperately needed.

Mr STREET - I understand that.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, Ms Beach said before that they didn't want to share certain sensitive information about moving the Goods Shed. I can understand that and I take your point, but can you confirm that you actually do have cost estimates to move it?

Ms BEACH - We've looked at a couple of different scenarios and we will need to - the relocation of the shed as a whole is a newer concept. We've dismantled -

Mr BAYLEY - A what concept, sorry?

Ms BEACH - A newer concept. We've dismantled a couple of sheds on site in the last 18 to 24 months, so we have a good feel about those sorts of costings. But relocating it as a whole shed is something we would need to test the market to get an understanding for, so we do need to explore that.

Mr BAYLEY - Isn't the admission though that you've done some costings and you need to go out to market to cost this and that it will cost the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, in itself, an admission that the $375 million that the Premier has capped Tasmania's expenditure to is a complete furphy? It's a newer concept, it wasn't in the original concept and it's clearly going to cost additional and over and above the $375 million.

Mr STREET - Look, I don't believe so. I believe that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation's role was to remediate the site and get it ready to build the stadium and removing the Goods Shed is part of that.

Mr BAYLEY - Part of the original cost, as in contributed by the federal government, the $50 million that was given many years ago and so forth, is that what you're saying? That it can be paid for by that money?

Ms BEACH - The government has invested money for the corporation to prepare the site, ready for development, and that includes putting infrastructure in place to enable that and interim permit activation. We'll use the existing funds that the government has invested in the corporation to prepare the Goods Shed for that activation for the community.

Mr BAYLEY - That, then, is an additional cost, surely, in relation to the stadium.

Ms BEACH - It will use the existing funds that the corporation has.

Mr O'BYRNE - Further to the line of questioning from my colleague, member for Clark, for a number of years, netball, volleyball, futsal, basketball, a whole range of codes have been calling out for an overarching strategy of facilities for them across the state, not just in Hobart but Dowling Street and across the north-west coast.

Your government has previously announced having a facility strategy that all codes could have input into, could see and support and then potentially raise a range of funds to assist in the delivery of those - federal government funds, local government funds, whatever. That has been promised for a number of years, minister; where are we at with that?

Mr STREET - That work is ongoing.

Mr O'BYRNE - Like the basketball courts?

Mr STREET - The Tasmanian government aims to provide and support high-quality, well-planned sport and active recreation facilities to enable Tasmanians to be physically active. To support this objective, the government seeks to capture information on the current provision of sport and active recreation facilities, with a focus on identifying gaps and opportunities for strategic investment in new and/or upgraded facilities.

We are currently working with existing infrastructure data sets of state and local government, state and national sporting organisations and the Department for Education, Children and Young People to help inform an infrastructure gap analysis. This complex piece of work will complement the regional Sports Facility Plan for Northern Tasmania, which was commissioned by those five councils back in 2023.

Combining facility plans and other data sets will enable the Tasmanian government to best understand current and future demand for facilities. I don't think it would be a stretch to say that it has been a complicated piece of work pulling those data sets together and also getting it into a form where we don't want it to just be a point-in-time analysis; we want it to be something that evolves and grows so that it informs decisions five and 10 years from now as we put more data into it as well, but the work on the audit is ongoing.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, I take at face value your commitment to it; I know from talking to you personally, you believe this is a good thing to do. Does your department just not believe it's important because we have delays in infrastructure delivery, we have commitments to work on programs, we are collating information? Year in, year out, people are hearing the same

things from your government and your department; they are getting pretty close to the end of their tether, minister.

Mr STREET - I understand. Craig?

Mr LIMKIN - Mr O'Byrne, I acknowledge that it has been a long time for this to happen. I have prioritised resources within the department since becoming secretary to enable it to be done; if I need to prioritise more resources to enable it to happen quickly and in an efficient way, I am more than happy to do that. As you said, this is really important and the department has been asked to prioritise it by the minister, but if we need to prioritise it further and look at other things we can stop, I am more than happy to do that.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is the threshold piece of work, because without this work being done, every federal and state election cycle, if you don't have a coherent strategy, you are not going to attract the funds.

Mr STREET - No, I completely understand that. I would never be critical of public servants who work hard every day to enact government policy. I think it would be fair to say that Community Sport and Recreation sitting within Communities Tasmania as a department worked in terms of the programs that they delivered, but probably didn't work in terms of having the expertise within the department for infrastructure delivery, and that is unfortunate.

I think we have now, with Sport, with Active Tasmania sitting within the Department of State Growth in line with Infrastructure Tasmania, a far better opportunity to deliver those projects on time and at a reasonable rate going forward, provided I do my job as sport and rec minister in isolating funding for projects that we know we need to build.

We know that Moonah and Clarence indoor sports facilities, even though the money has been spent on them to basically remediate them, are at the end of life. They were built with a federal government program in the late 1960s, both of them just like Elphin. We have investment that we need to make across the south of the state; the north of the state, I have to say, is starting to look better, with the $25 million that we are investing in Devonport with the council project up there for a six-court facility, I think it is, in conjunction with their development. We've got the community and sporting facility at Mowbray that will have four dedicated netball courts for the first time for the NTNA to have a home; three multipurpose courts within that as for basketball, futsal, volleyball -

Mr O'BYRNE - It's predominantly federal money, isn't it?

Mr STREET - No, there was a fairly significant commitment by state government, $27.5 million of state -

Mr WILLIE - The contributions kept growing.

Mr STREET - There was a significant state government contribution. That started as a Launceston City Council project as a community facility; we saw the opportunity to partner with them and perhaps deliver something a little bit more than just -

Mr O'BYRNE - But they led it.

Mr STREET - No, they led the initial -

Mr O'BYRNE - The threshold work?

Mr STREET - It's $27.5 million from the state, $15 million from the Australian Government and $1.1 million from the city of Launceston. We've also made the election commitment around Elphin as well, and that'll add three courts at that facility. Across the north-west and the north, we feel like we're getting there. We acknowledge that we've got some work to do in the south in terms of indoor facilities.

Mr SHELTON - Minister, it was a shock to everybody that Dark Mofo took a hiatus from their full program this year. It highlights just how important events are for our tourism and hospitality industries through the winter. I'm hoping you can provide an overview on what the government did to support events over the last six months.

Mr STREET - We know events are crucial to boosting the Tasmanian economy in the winter months and we always make this a priority. The hospitality sector had a tough June with low occupancy, but the sector itself puts the July rebound down to our Events portfolio, and that's quite genuine. It's a tribute to many of our events such as Beaker Street, Festival of Voices, Huon Valley Midwinter Festival and the Tassie Scallop Fiesta held across the state. Hobart also hosted the Australian Hockey Men's Masters Tournament, which welcomed more than 4000 competitors for the event - an enormous event for the city of Hobart.

In the absence of a full-scale Dark Mofo event this year, the Tasmanian government, through Events Tasmania, committed to seeking event content that could be hosted across Tasmania in the winter months of 2024 to boost visitation numbers, including mass participation events, entertainment, sports products and touring groups.

From April to September 2024, the Tasmanian government will have supported 57 events across the entire state. An uplift in funding was also provided to two existing winter events, those being the Festival of Voices and the Beaker Street Festival. The uplift in funding allowed both of these events to undertake additional event activations and to boost their interstate marketing with the aim to attract more visitors to Tasmania during the winter period.

A further $100,000 was allocated to support events with their marketing activities through the Event Marketing Tasmania winter 2024 edition grant program. As I mentioned earlier, the aim of this program is to assist event organisers with interstate marketing activities that target visitors from outside of Tasmania for events held between April and September of 2024.

I'm proud to say that 11 events received funding through this program, many of them new events. That's huge for the winter shoulder season, and so many communities will feel the benefits of all these events being held across the state: the Christmas in July Extravaganza, Tasmania's Fungi Festival, Tasmanian Autumn Festival, Wilderfeast, the Moonbird Festival on King Island, the Truffle Festival celebrating 25 years, Tasmanian Fashion Festival, residence at Dorney House, Glow Tour at East Coast Natureworld, Bicheno Beams and the Winter Challenge.

Our government continues to remain committed to this event sector and as you can see, we're providing lots of support to events during the cooler months this year.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, I might ask you a couple of stadium questions; I've asked plenty in the last couple of years. I heard before that you're not interested in entering into an arrangement that's not in the best interests of the state, that is a borrowing arrangement that's at a higher rate than TASCORP's. We have a very robust financial management system. It's a fairly modernised act. Can you commit to complying with the financial management framework, including Treasury instructions, entering into contracts?

Mr LIMKIN - Through you, minister, as I said earlier, the Department of State Growth is working with the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Stadiums Tasmania and Macquarie Point Development Corporation to provide advice on the best way to undertake a market testing. As part of that, our Treasury colleagues will make sure that we comply with the *Financial Management Act*, any Treasurer's Instructions or any other relevant matters. We will be engaging with them through this process.

Mr WILLIE - My concern here is that there's a political risk that you ignore some of that *Financial Management Act* framework. We have seen it in other areas, whether it is a ticketing system for Metro, that's been discussed this week, where Treasury instructions were ignored. It would be good to get a commitment that you will comply with that.

Mr STREET - I can only follow Mr Limkin's advice that in preparation to go to market, we will be working in conjunction with not just Treasury but with DPAC as well to make sure that we comply with all of those requirements.

Mr LIMKIN - Through you, minister, the Department of State Growth doesn't always comply with requirements in relation to the ticketing matter. There are exemptions under the *Financial Management Act* and also the Treasurer's Instructions for particular matters. As I gave evidence the other day in the transport sector, the then secretary made a determination that a direct procurement was enabled. The requirements under the Treasurer's Instructions actually enables an assessment of that to happen in certain circumstances, and I have assured myself that those circumstances were completed recently.

Mr WILLIE - When Stadium 2.0 was announced, you seemed quite open to that proposal. The government since has made stronger statements against that proposal. I understand it's in an unsolicited bid process with the Coordinator-General. They do have Capella Capital involved now, which is a pretty serious outfit. They've got a history of development across Australia, whether it's the Darwin Convention Centre, the Darling Harbour Convention Centre, a whole list of major roads and hospitals. Why isn't the government taking that proposal more seriously?

Mr STREET - As you indicate, it is part of an unsolicited bid now and I need to be careful about what I talk about. I met with the proponents of Mac Point 2.0 - I'm trying to think how long ago it was now - and I had a follow up meeting with them as well. We have since said that we are concentrating on our proposal at Macquarie Point. However, they are part of an unsolicited bid process at the minute. I certainly am not in a position to talk about it now that it's part of that process. I don't know how much more Mr Limkin can add to what I've said.

Mr LIMKIN - The unsolicited proposal and policy guidelines were updated in 2019 and these guidelines provide a transparent and consistent assessment process to allow the government to fairly consider unsolicited proposals received for the private sector, to determine whether they align with government strategic policy and determine if the proposal will provide

a benefit to the public. The government would not normally comment on any unspecific unsolicited proposal other than those that are set out in the guidelines as key milestones.

In relation to the Stadium Precinct Consortium, sometimes referred to as 2.0, the proponents have publicly stated that they have submitted an unsolicited proposal for the AFL stadium and a mixed-use precinct in front of the regatta grounds at Macquarie Point. Accordingly, I can confirm that the proposal has been received by the Office of Coordinator-General from the Stadium Precinct Consortium and is currently being assessed by a specific formed assessment panel. The assessment panel will make a recommendation to Cabinet through the minister as whether the submission meets the guidelines and should be taken to stage 2.

While I cannot comment on the information provided, which must remain confidential and would reasonably be assumed to contain commercially sensitive and proprietary information, I can confirm the assessment panel has been established and an independent probity adviser has been appointed. The assessment panel has been through all the materials submitted and met recently as part of its assessment process. Once this has completed its assessment against the guiding principles and the key criteria, it will provide its recommendation to Cabinet for its consideration. As this is a commercial-in-confidential assessment process, which is at an arm's length from ministers and the government, I cannot make any other comment at this stage.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, if that process is worked through and there is a positive recommendation, do you see some value, given that both are in the planning phase, that there is some competitive tension between the two projects to get best deal possible for Tasmania?

Mr STREET - I'm not trying to avoid the question. I'm not at liberty to be able to comment on that while the proposal is being assessed.

Mr BAYLEY - The *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act* was enacted in 2012. We've been through a pretty long and torturous process that included MONA and a truth and reconciliation proposition, culminating in a master plan a couple of years ago that your government started to contract out. In fact, it even paid out a Melbourne developer to not build there after the announcing the stadium. Was it ever the intention of the government to leave Macquarie Point vacant?

Mr STREET - You're talking about a time when decisions were made that I wasn't even in Cabinet.

Mr BAYLEY - Going forward, would you leave it vacant? Putting the stadium aside, would you leave it as a vacant site? Or has it always been government's intention to develop that site?

Mr STREET - I believe it's a prime piece of land for development that can enhance the City of Hobart.

Mr BAYLEY - I completely agree. I asked the question because the cost benefit analysis, when it assumes a base case scenario when it's trying to analyse the benefits to the state, assumes and I quote:

> No stadium is developed and therefore the state remains vacant and undeveloped.

Is it reasonable that a cost benefit analysis for one of the country's prime brownfields development sites, that we all agree should be developed and could enhance this city, should model an alternative where it is left vacant? Do you think that's a reasonable proposition to underpin a cost benefit analysis?

Mr STREET - It's probably a matter for Anne.

Mr BAYLEY - It's really a matter for government, with respect, minister. It's your government's policy. I accept that there's a stadium there at the moment. The question is, if the stadium wasn't to be built - prior to the stadium, there was a proposition around developing that site. If for some reason the TPC doesn't approve the stadium, I hope and expect the government would progress some sort of stunning urban renewal development there. Is that not correct? Is that not an unreasonable expectation?

Mr STREET - We went through this earlier in terms of being a hypothetical. We're committed to the stadium project. You're drawing me into supporting the stadium project and then you are criticising me for stepping on the TPC's ability to assess it -

Mr BAYLEY - No, I just -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr STREET - We are committed to the project and the redevelopment of Macquarie Point.

Mr BAYLEY - But, the cost benefit analysis, as it needs to do, contemplates a situation where the stadium isn't developed. In this context, the cost benefit analysis assumes that the site remains vacant. I know from my meetings with people like Nicholas Gruen, he seems very interested in the notion of cost benefit. We had an established master plan for the site prior to the stadium. We've got a stadium-based masterplan now. Do you think it's reasonable to do a cost benefit analysis assuming that it will stay a car park over the longer term if the stadium doesn't get built? It seems to me to underpin a flawed analysis in relation to the cost benefits.

Mr STREET - I do not agree but I will pass to Anne.

Mr BAYLEY - That is what is says, minister, it says no stadium is developed, and therefore the site remains vacant and undeveloped.

CHAIR - Order, Mr Bayley.

Mr STREET - I answered your question and I'm deferring to Anne.

Ms BEACH - The cost benefit analysis needs to establish the base case. This is base case that's been outlined. Given the current status of the site, this was comparing it to that. If the stadium development were not to go ahead, noting that we have the precinct plan in place, it would require us to review and look at an alternative arrangement. It seemed a reasonable assumption for this assessment.

Mr BAYLEY - Wouldn't a more reasonable assumption be to compare it to the previous master plan that was agreed and that the government started to contract out to developers? That was the vision for this site prior to what effectively was an imposed stadium by the AFL. Surely that would be the most appropriate comparison. We all agree we're not going to leave that site vacant. We hope you don't leave that site vacant. How on earth is it reasonable for a fundamental piece of analysis that the TPC has to put into its considerations, to consider it less than a car park? To be honest, less than a car park is a vacant block of land.

Mr STREET - I think Anne answered that question, but I'm happy to defer to her again.

Ms BEACH - The Precinct Plan in our ministerial direction that was issued in May 2023 notes that the Precinct Plan for the purpose of our act is a site masterplan, therefore, we are bound to use that Precinct Plan to implement the redevelopment of our site. It outlines the stadium development and that is the proposal we have in front of us.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, in answer to a question from Mr Shelton, you referred to Reclink. Reclink is a great organisation and they really do build community and work with a whole range of cohorts who are in desperate need of that kind of support and diversion from other activities. In your previous role as minister in the community service, you talked about trying to get certainty of funding. You said that there's a two-year allocation, the ask from Reclink was for a three-year allocation. So, if they are to build sustainability, if they are to build a program of work, could you explain why a three-year arrangement wasn't allocated to Reclink as opposed to two?

Mr STREET - I will pass to Mr Limkin. I understand, as well, what their budget request was. Obviously, decisions have to be made in the context of a tight budget. I was able to secure two years' funding, which they were delighted with. Obviously, they'd have been happier with three. I acknowledge that going forward organisations, not just like Reclink, but state sporting organisations as well, require certainty of funding. That's something we talked about at this table before and something that we're still trying to work on, to be perfectly honest.

We've upped the funding for state sporting organisations by using some of the increase in the Community Support Fund this year. The problem we have with that is that we can still only do it on one-year contracts because the CSL goes up and down. Under the guidelines that we have, we can't lock organisations into five-year contracts basing it on a funding pool that moves, so we're still doing some work.

Mr O'BYRNE - [inaudible] attached to that?

Mr STREET - That is exactly right. We used the Community Support Fund this year to be able to get the boost. We have to work on how we secure that funding ongoing for those state sporting organisations and Reclink would be one of those organisations that we'd be looking at as well.

Mr O'BYRNE - Are they able to deliver on the programs that they've submitted based on the money you've provided them? I would say that they would struggle.

Mr STREET - As part of the 2023-24 Budget, we continued the funding of Reclink, finding $167,000 per annum over three years from 2024-25. As part of the 2024-25 state Budget, we've committed an additional $150,000 per annum to support Reclink, taking its total

funding to $317,000 for the next two years, a pretty significant uplift in funding. But, recognising the work that they're doing, the fact that they're expanding all the time, we're having ongoing conversations with Reclink as well, like we do with any growing organisation. It would be great if they can find some funding sources from somewhere besides the state government as well to complement what we're doing, but we certainly don't want a lack of funding to be a reason that they can't reach as many people as possible with the programs that they run.

Mr SHELTON - It has been mentioned the government is providing funding directly to support the sports clubs through this year's Budget, but can you explain how the government is also helping municipal councils and, therefore, ratepayers, with the upkeep of their sporting facilities?

Mr STREET - The government works very closely with Tasmania's 29 councils and enjoys a productive relationship with the local government sector. As Local Government minister, I'm acutely aware of the pressure that local councils have by having these sporting facilities on their books as well. That's why we're so keen to support them because we know how important these facilities are to the local communities. We also know that there are a number of councils who are struggling to provide all the services that are expected in the municipality as well.

We've committed $5 million to the Glenorchy City Council for the immediate repair and upgrade works at the Glenorchy War Memorial Pool, which will bring that pool back online. It'd be nice if it was for the for this summer, but I'm not sure about the schedule of works to be perfectly honest. I note that the Glenorchy Mayor recently went on the record to say that this funding would provide swimming facilities for the Glenorchy community for the next 7 to 10 years, which is terrific. This was a great example of the council listening to its community and the government stepping in to provide support following the unfortunate situation where the pool had to be closed for an extended time.

In Devonport, we have been working similarly with the City Council on its Building a Sporting Legacy project, and I have talked about the $25 million that we have provided to help bring this vision to reality. After substantial consultation, the Devonport City Council has been able to bring together football, basketball, cricket, netball, cycling and athletics so that they are all on board with the plan to build a new facility that will include four indoor community courts and a two-court show court and function centre. Anybody who has been involved in sports administration would know that getting those six or seven sports altogether to agree to the one plan is a phenomenal effort from the Devonport City Council.

We have worked closely with the Sorell Council in the preparation of this budget and have committed $447,000 in my portfolio of projects in the municipality. Thanks to our support, there will be $100,000 spent on improvements in equipment at the Sorell BMX Track, safety netting at Pembroke Park and the Dodges Ferry oval will be installed through a commitment of $131,000, and the outdoor courts at the south-east sports complex will be enhanced through $22,000 worth of funding for the construction of shelters.

We have also committed $144,000 for viewing platforms for Carlton and Park Beach, improving amenities at those popular surfing beaches. On the Tasman Peninsula, we are providing $30,000 for the fencing at the Taranna tennis courts through a grant to the Tasman Council and we have also made a $500,000 commitment to sport facilities owned by the Burnie

City Council. This will provide $400,000 for the much-needed resurfacing of the Burnie netball courts and $100,000 into work towards a plan to upgrade the Burnie basketball stadium.

These commitments to municipal councils in the Sports portfolio are terrific examples of the Tasmanian government working together with local government to deliver improvements to community facilities where they are most needed to boost participation in sport and active recreation across the state, Mr Shelton.

Mr WILLIE - I will not let the minister try to rewrite history on the Glenorchy Pool there. Your government and the council ignored the community for nearly a year and it was only Ella Haddad and me who offered a circuit breaker and then you try to make out like you were saving the pool. You can try to rewrite history, but it is not the facts.

Mr STREET - Okay.

Mr WILLIE - The question is about the high performance centre on the eastern shore. Do you think that has been handled well, minister? You have a community that is deeply divided, they have been put through an elector poll, you have the Clarence mayor saying all sorts of things about the government and you. When will they have some sort of certainty?

Mr STREET - Like I said earlier today, we are almost finished doing the due diligence at both the Kingston and Rosny sites to be able to make an informed decision. I have to say that I disagree with some of the commentary around the process. It has been important to do the due diligence at both sites. Even in December last year when we announced Rosny as the preferred site, we made it clear that Kingston had qualified on all the relevant criteria as well and that we will continue to do due diligence at that site as well, as we went through this process.

The Devils and the AFL, along with State Growth, are both on the steering committee that is doing the work to make sure that we get this choice right and, if I can quote Grant O'Brien from the other day:

> It is a process that is taking the right sort of steps, not being done in haste, being done with the right processes and the right information being sought and what will result from that will be a high performance centre in the right area, with the right sort of work having been done to decide where that goes.

That is from the chairman of the club whose home this will be, who is very comfortable with the process that we have undertaken. That is not to say that we don't acknowledge the tight timeframes that we are working to. I note that there has been some criticism of the department's role in the steering committee process as well so I want to give Mr Limkin an opportunity to add to my answer.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you, minister, and through the minister. The department has been working very hard since the sites were announced last year, really looking at undertaking geotech, cultural tests, native value tests, et cetera. Unfortunately, on the Glenorchy site, sorry, the Rosny site, I am sorry.

Mr WILLIE - You will upset some community here!

Mr LIMKIN - It has been a long week. On the Rosny site, we received an updated report from the council in February this year, which would have actually been helpful when we were undertaking the original site selection and helped to remove some of that. The report was dated April 2023. Had we received that report earlier on, it would have saved the government significant amount of work in doing that.

I also indicate that I corresponded with the general manager in late August and I received a response from the general manager of the City of Clarence on 20 August. At no time during that time did they indicate in that correspondence, or any other correspondence, that they were concerned about the project or had any concerns about the way forward.

The Department of State Growth continues to work with both councils and, also, as the minister said, with the Devils and the AFL to finalise site selection as quick as possible. One of the things we need to do is to make sure that we provide full advice to the minister and the government on the risks and opportunities of both sides. That, unfortunately, does take time. We've had a significant amount of work being done on boreholes, on environmental values, on social and economic. We've also done preliminary testing of architectural designs during that period of time. I want to indicate that while we've been working on a site selection, the team has also been working on the next steps in the process concurrently to make sure we deliver this really quickly.

Mr WILLIE - Just to be clear, you're responding to criticism from the mayor, not me in terms of the department.

Mr STREET - Yes.

Mr STREET - In fairness, I think you were pretty critical in the question you asked in the House the other day as well.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, of you, not the department.

Mr STREET - Right, okay.

Mr WILLIE - We're all accountable as elected members.

Mr STREET - The buck stops right here, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, and the community is wondering what's going on.

Mr STREET - I understand that.

Mr WILLIE - Do you acknowledge that it will be a massive kick in the guts for that community if it's now removed as the preferred site? Also, and I'm happy to be corrected here because I've heard from a good source that, because of the gradient of the site, there's significant issues with retaining walls, up to $10 million for retaining walls for the ovals.

Mr STREET - Where?

Mr WILLIE - At Rosny.

Mr STREET - Mr Limkin would be able to confirm that better than me. I'm not going to deal in hypotheticals around a community's reaction to a decision we haven't made yet. I will acknowledge that both the Kingston and Rosny communities have invested a lot of time and effort in lobbying for this facility.

Mr LIMKIN - The department is currently undertaking geotechnic works on both sites. Those geotechnic works will confirm a design. Part of that includes a number of boreholes on both sites, preliminary designs on both sites, arborist work on both sites. We are progressing those designs and that will be a part of the decision that will be provided to government to help them make a call on which way to go.

Mr WILLIE - It could be a cost factor that means there's a change of site?

Mr STREET - There could be any number of issues that need to be taken into account but, certainly, cost is being taken into account across both sites.

Mr WILLIE - You haven't disputed the $10 million for retaining walls.

Mr STREET - I haven't confirmed it either. I'm not on the steering committee. The next time I will hear from the steering committee, outside of getting progressive updates on the work they're doing, is when they make their recommendation to me on which site.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you think the results and findings of the cost benefit analysis are important and relevant?

Mr STREET - They are an element in decision-making processes on projects like this.

Mr BAYLEY - Decisions of the planning commission?

Mr STREET - No, again, please don't try to draw me into talking about the Tasmanian Planning Commission, and its delivery -

Mr O'BYRNE - You'd be disappointed if we didn't try.

Mr STREET - and its deliberations. I'm steering away from that. I made it clear earlier and I'll make it clear again: I want the Tasmanian Planning Commission to analyse the POSS process that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation has put so much work into on its terms.

Mr BAYLEY - It's going to come to us, as parliamentarians. Surely, you agree that it's going be important and that it's relevant. I put to you again -

Mr STREET - Mr Bayley, when it comes to the parliament, there wouldn't be anything that could be presented to the parliament that would make you vote for -

Mr BAYLEY - No, because we don't support the spending of this amount of taxpayer money, a billion dollars - over, because it's going to blow out. It's already blown out. We haven't even got to the contracting stage.

Mr STREET - You were talking about returns on investment. I don't think there's any return on investment that would lead you to support the stadium.

Mr BAYLEY - There's probably not, but we certainly wouldn't be judging that based on the facts that the site would stay vacant. Minister, this is the site that we all agree is a great opportunity that has had 10 years and millions of dollars put into it to work up a plan, that had a plan for the escarpment, for the precinct, for the gateway, for the promenade, for the Goods Shed, for the underground, for the Truth and Reconciliation Park, and yes, that's been junked for the stadium and we've just had a stadium imposed. Surely -

Mr STREET - Not just a stadium. It is an integrated precinct plan as well.

Mr BAYLEY - A minor element of it when you compare it to the previous precinct plan. The Antarctic gateway element, it's a fraction, it's a shadow of its former self. Shouldn't at least a cost-benefit analysis be measured against the previously agreed master plan for the site, the site development plan? Surely? This is never going to be vacant land and we would hope it would never be vacant land.

Mr STREET - I think Anne answered that question before, but I'm happy to defer to her if you would like to add anything more.

Mr BAYLEY - Through you, minister, if we're going to go to Ms Beach, maybe she could outline what kind of conversations were had with this consultant about the constraints. Did you ask the consultant, through you, minister, to model a cost-benefit analysis against a vacant land scenario?

Ms BEACH - Through you, minister, the appointment of all the consultants that made that round of nearly 4000 pages that support our POSS submission were appointed through tender procurement processes. The larger consultancies, including this one, were undertaken through a tender open market process. Some of the much smaller ones were done through our request for quotation process. KPMG was selected through testing the market. They've used their models, their process to undertake this work. You'll note that in these reports they've consciously noted a conservative approach in some of their assumptions around things like some of the event profiles and some of the returns. There are elements where we think that this assessment is quite conservative.

Mr BAYLEY - With respect though, did you show them the previous master planning development? Did you show them that and say this is what we were going to do, this is now what we are being asked to do? Could you model a cost-benefit or did you ask them to do it against a vacant land scenario?

Ms BEACH - It was up to the judgment of the consultants to establish the base case.

Mr BAYLEY - Did you ask them though? That's the question.

Ms BEACH - We didn't direct them to use a specific base case.

Mr BAYLEY - Did you suggest to them that they use a specific base case that's vacant?

Ms BEACH - It was up to their judgment.

Mr BAYLEY - Did you ask them - did you have this conversation about what is the base case scenario? Through you, minister.

Ms BEACH - Through you, minister. As I noted, it was up to their judgment to establish the suitable base case. We certainly had conversations, but we did not direct them to use a specific base case one way or the other.

Mr O'BYRNE - I'll ask one question on the high performance. The high performance centre is not just a building. It is a crucial step in delivering an AFL team, but it's also a crucial step in ensuring that we can attract and retain players, that it will become a genuine community facility where young Tasmanians from a whole range of codes will be able to use the facility. The community will be able to use the facility. I understand you are bumping up against not only cost pressures but also time. Are you aware there is significant concern in the football community about the decision that may move it away from a central location, being in the Clarence community in Rosny?

Mr STREET - I haven't been approached by any members of the local football community who've expressed that concern to me. That's the first that I've heard of concerns of the local community about -

Mr O'BYRNE - Locally and nationally.

Mr STREET - having a preferred location. You raising it right now is the first time I've heard that concern.

Mr WILLIE - I will keep going on this too. Is the location and how it will appeal to the players a major factor in this? Clarence is more central, it's close to the services, closer to the stadium.

Mr STREET - Of course it will be. I imagine it's an element of the decision. Again, that's probably more a question for Craig who is on the steering committee. He's working through the set of criteria that were initially used to choose Rosny as the preferred site and is now working through, I imagine, a defined set of criteria to make a decision on the final -

Mr WILLIE - Before we go to him, I can add to that. Is player retention being considered in this decision as well?

Mr STREET - Absolutely, it is because it's critical.

Mr LIMKIN - As the minister indicated, the project steering committee identified original criteria. It's a multi-faceted type of criteria. It includes costs, it includes timing, it includes those elements that the AFL club brought to the table, as well as the AFL, including player retention, the community interaction, the community benefit. If we look at some high-performance centres around the nation, for example, Brisbane, even the Sydney Swans example - and yes, I'm mentioning both in the grand final, they have that community aspect. They have both community use and player use, they're places of community gatherings and coffees, and those types of things.

It was a multi-faceted criteria analysis that was done in the original example. We are continuing to do that using those similar criteria as we update the information on both geotech costs, time and delivery risk.

Mr STREET - Without wanting to provide too much personal commentary, there are examples of both across the AFL, where clubs have chosen to reinvest in their old home, like Optus Oval for Carlton, at a central point. Brisbane went the exact opposite way and have used their development out at Springfield, outside of the city to base -

Mr O'BYRNE - They didn't have a lot of choice. For the Gabba, it's a bit constrained.

Mr STREET - Yes, but what I'm saying is, they chose not to go centrally in the city. They chose to use their development, basically, as a stimulus to develop a whole new suburb, so there's a multitude of different ways of doing this.

Mr WILLIE - Spoken like a Brisbane Lions supporter.

Mr STREET -I did get the opportunity to go and visit.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, people are sceptical that you're going to deliver this in the timeframe. It is a mess. There's division in the community. You have to have the development application lodged by the end of this year. You have to have it completed by the end of next year. Are you confident that if you don't meet those timelines, the AFL will accommodate that?

Mr STREET - We were talking about this before you came into the room. The AFL and the Devils are both on the steering committee. They are comfortable with the process we're going through and the timelines that are in place. Obviously, they want it to happen as soon as possible. We want it to happen as soon as possible. We're confident that we can still get the site selection done. As Mr Limkin was saying, they've been working through designs for both sites so that they're ready for development application lodgement basically as soon as we make a call on the site. So, we're confident that, yes, while the timeframes are tight, we can meet the AFL and the Devils' expectations around the development of this facility. I note, as you keep saying, how important it is that it's not just for retention of athletes once they get here; it's for attraction of athletes who are potentially looking to come here.

Mr WILLIE - Like Geelong's done so well attracting farmers and surfers, and things like that.

Mr STREET - Exactly right. It is going to be a selling point, hopefully, an asset to attract people to leave their established clubs and come to play for Tasmania because of this facility.

Mr LIMKIN - I have been advised that I can describe the criteria for the committee's information. There are four criteria with a number of outcomes under each one. I won't go under the outcomes. I will just keep at a very high level. The four criteria are:

- Physical qualities and functionality of the training and administration facility that will be able to be developed at the site within the allocation of the budget.
- Qualities of the site to support the objectives of the Tasmanian AFL club.

- Community and environmental benefits and impacts.
- Development and delivery risks and opportunities.

Under each one of those, there are individual considerations, but they are the four high-level criteria that have been used and will continue to be used on the finalisation of a site selection.

Mr WILLIE - Given the time, I might use my last question on a different topic. I've asked you this before but I don't think there was a satisfactory answer. The state government has provided money to the Tornadoes women's program but you have not provided it to the Hobart Chargers women's program. The state government has a history of being fair and equitable across the NBL1 sides, and I'm interested to know why you haven't extended that same opportunity. Isn't it effectively creating an unfair playing ground?

Mr STREET - The Tornadoes have been an important part of the Tasmanian basketball landscape for decades. They've been successful both on the court and in the community. NBL1 is requiring the Tornadoes and Northwest Thunder to come together under one licence for the north of the state from 2026. I've been heartened by the willingness of all parties to work towards an outcome that will not necessarily be ideal in the eyes of every supporter, but will hopefully allow both organisations to continue playing in the NBL1competition. It's vitally important for the pathway for young basketballers in the state who aspire to make it to the NBL or WNBL, either with our championship winning JackJumpers or other teams.

The Tasmanian government is committed to developing women's basketball in this state from juniors right through to NBL1, and any suggestion that this is not the case is simply not true. The government has been a long-time supporter of the Tornadoes, the Thunder and the Hobart Chargers and their men's and women's programs through our funding of Basketball Tasmania, which delivers equitable funding for all of our Tasmanian NBL1 clubs.

The commitment made to the Launceston Tornadoes was primarily intended to fund a media and advertising campaign designed to lift participation by women and girls across the sporting landscape. I've been advised that the proposed campaign will aim to educate girls and their parents on the role of sport to improve health outcomes, promote the positive connection that team sport can provide and the benefits of team sport in the areas of mental health and wellbeing, and promote positive role models in sport for young girls and women.

The funding was the result of a clearly articulated vision for the promotion of the importance of women's and girls' sport by a community sporting organisation.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the previous master development plan for Maquarie Point quite proudly says underneath the listing of all those various elements - the escarpment, the Truth and Reconciliation park, et cetera - that these precincts are specifically designed to underpin the planning scheme's framework. Do you accept that a stadium at 54 metres high is non-compliant with the planning scheme as it stands at the moment?

What do you say to stakeholders such as the RSL, who have long enjoyed the protections of the planning scheme to protect the values of the Cenotaph for sightlines and reverential ambience and who are now confronted with the loss of those values, as has been demonstrated in the diagrams that have been released as part of this proposition?

Mr STREET - I'll go to Anne in a second to talk about the sightlines. We are committed to working with the RSL and all stakeholders on the development of this stadium. We believe that when it's completed, we can have a stadium and a development that enhances the Cenotaph rather than detracts from it. I understand that that's not necessarily the view of the RSL executive. However, you would be amazed at the number of returned servicemen who have written to me to -

Mr BAYLEY - You would probably be amazed at the number of Liberal Party members who don't support the stadium. Come on. That cuts both ways -

Mr STREET - It does cut both ways. I'm old enough to accept that there are varying views on this project. All I'm pointing out to you is that there are returned servicemen who've written to me who believe that this stadium won't detract from the Cenotaph or its ambience, that it will actually -

Mr BAYLEY - That's not the finding of the heritage assessment. It says the impact is very high -

CHAIR - Order, Mr Bayley.

Mr STREET - enhance the Cenotaph. We're committed to continuing to work with the RSL to get to the best possible outcome for all stakeholders involved in not just the stadium development but the precinct.

Mr BAYLEY - It's probably not necessary to go to Ms Beach, although I have a question that I think probably only Ms Beach could answer. It's in relation to the master plan and event day public transport coach. It says coaches will connect regional Tasmania to the stadium and offer private charters for groups, sporting clubs and communities to attend events. To accommodate coaches, Queens Domain is the preferred drop-off, parking and pick-up area, with a walking route via the Bridge of Remembrance.

We all know the Bridge of Remembrance; we know the Domain is the swimming pool and so forth. Where is that drop-off point, the parking and the pick-up area on the Domain?

Ms BEACH - I believe the member is referring to the Precinct Plan, so that includes the mode analysis. The mode analysis is what informed our initial mapping out of the different modes that would inform the ways that different people would move. Then, through our project of state significance application, we've furthered that work through the transport study, which has included an origin study. We've mapped through looking at 2030 as a base case, so how the network is coping at that time and then mapping event periods through that.

As the member noted that we've considered people that are travelling locally but also know there may be people who are travelling from regional areas who, rather than using a local bus service, would potentially be using chartered coach services, so we've differentiated coach from bus. We've looked at different options. For coach drop-off, one of the options was considering using connections up on the Domain and also looking through, now that we've worked through the more detailed work of connection in through the bus connection to the north-east of the site as well. We've mapped those through in the transport study. I'd need to refer to the transport study to highlight the exact area, but we could provide that to the member.

Mr BAYLEY - Are you willing to take that on notice?

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Minister for Sport has concluded.

Mr BAYLEY - Can I just check, Chair, if the minister is willing to take that on notice? that seemed to be an offer to provide the committee with details of the drop-off, parking and pick-up area.

Mr STREET - We're happy to do that.

CHAIR - Thank you, everybody. The committee will adjourn until 9.00 a.m. tomorrow.

Mr STREET - I thank Craig Limkin, secretary of the Department of State Growth, Anne Beach, CEO of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, James Avery, CEO of Stadiums Tasmania, and all the department staff who are sitting behind in the preparation of everything for today.

The committee adjourned at 3.36 p.m.

Turn 31

Turn 32

Turn 33

Turn 34

Turn 35

Turn 36

Turn 37

Turn 38

Turn 39

Turn 40

Turn 41

Turn 42

Turn 43

Turn 44

Turn 45

Turn 46

Turn 47

Turn 48

Turn 49

Turn 50

Turn 51

Turn 52

Turn 53

Turn 54

Turn 55

Turn 56

Turn 57

Turn 58

Turn 59

Turn 60

Turn 61

Turn 62

Turn 63

Turn 64

Turn 65

Turn 66

Turn 67

Turn 68

Turn 69

Turn 70

Turn 71

Turn 72

Turn 73

Turn 74

Turn 75

Turn 76

Turn 77

Turn 78

Turn 79

Turn 80

Turn 81

Turn 82

Turn 83

Turn 84

Turn 85

Turn 86

Turn 87

Turn 88

Turn 89

Turn 90

Turn 91

Turn 92

Turn 93

Turn 94

Turn 95

Turn 96

Turn 97

Turn 98

Turn 99

Turn 100

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Roger Jaensch MP

Friday 27 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Wood MP (Chair)
Mr Josh Willie MP (Deputy Chair)
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Ella Haddad MP
Mrs Miriam Beswick MP
Mr Rob Fairs MP
Ms Helen Burnett MP
Ms Rebecca White MP
Ms Cecily Rosol MP
Mr Simon Behrakis MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. ROGER JAENSCH MP
Minister for Children and Youth, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

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

Steve Gall
Director, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Shane Gregory
Associate Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Courtney Hurworth
Chief Reform Officer, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Jenny Burgess
Associate Secretary, Department of Children and Young People

Craig Woodfall
Director Community & Custodial Youth Justice, Department of Children and Young People

Sue McKerracher
Acting Deputy Secretary, Children and Families, Department of Children and Young People

Claire Lovell
Executive Director, Children and Families, Department of Children and Young People

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

CHAIR (Mr Wood) - Thank you. The time being 9.00 a.m., the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Community Services will commence. Welcome, minister and everyone.

Mr JAENSCH - Good morning, Chair. Committee members, good to be with you this morning at the table. I have with me Mellissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform at DPAC, and Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director, Community Partnerships and Priorities in DPAC.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Community Services is 1.5 hours. Just to note, the resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister.

Also, I remind everybody to be careful of the microphones as it can be sometimes difficult for Hansard to hear. I ask that members speak one at a time and not over each other again to assist *Hansard* with their job. Minister, would you care to make an opening?

Mr JAENSCH - I would. Thank you, Chair, and thanks again for committee members' time this morning.

The Tasmanian Government is supporting the community sector to deliver essential services needed to improve the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The 2024-25 Budget addresses the needs of Tasmanians here and now as well as supporting longer term structural improvements, including the development and release of some significant strategies and action plans by 30 June 2025, including a refreshed and extended Carers Action Plan, an Older Tasmanians Action Plan, Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy, Volunteering Strategy, LGBTIQA+ Framework and Action Plan and a multicultural action plan.

This Budget eases hip pocket pressure for Tasmanians through energy bill relief payments, half price bus fares, and healthy lunches in schools. We're providing NILS, a No Interest Loan Scheme Tasmania, with $2.1 million over three years to deliver up to 2000 additional interest free loans a year for Tasmanians on low incomes and $500,000 a year for the next four years to extend the Energy Saver Subsidy.

We're investing $9.1 million to deliver food relief and develop food resilience for Tasmanians, including $1 million to continue all increased emergency food relief funding for 2024-25: $5 million for capital upgrades, including $2.5 million towards cold storage upgrades for Loaves and Fishes Tasmania; $120,000 over the next two years for each of our food vans, Gran's Vans in the north-west, Mission Beat in the north and Loui's Vans in the south; $75,000 for a vehicle for Eat Well Tasmania; $200,000 to develop a new whole-of-government Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy. The important Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy will be developed in partnership with stakeholders and will be completed in time for the 2025-26 budget.

We're investing $18 million in our neighbourhood houses to continue delivering outcomes for local communities across Tasmania, including $50,000 a year in additional operational funding for each house for the next three years, $6 million in new capital funding over the next three years, the continuation and expansion of the place-based Community Connector Program with a total of $6.6 million over four years, $150,000 in 2024-25 for the Hood in the Hub Community Garden initiative at the Warrane/Mornington Neighbourhood Centre. I thank our neighbourhood houses for supporting Tasmanians, particularly those been affected by recent extreme weather events. I visited a number of houses during the relief effort and witnessed first-hand the work being done, providing hot meals, warm refuge and a place to come together and recharge batteries, actual and social for people who had been displaced by the weather or the lack of power in their homes.

We're investing $2.1 million to support our 71 Men's Sheds across the state as a place to meet and share and connect for men, including $200,000 a year for the Tasmanian Men's Shed Association for the next two years, $175,000 a year for the next two years in competitive grants programs, $1 million for a capital investment program and one-off funding for a number of sheds themselves.

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

We're continuing our commitment to the LGBTIQA+ community by providing supports and services through provision of $250,000 each year over the next two years. I look forward to the release of the new LGBTIQA+ Framework and Action Plan 'Proud and Equal'.

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

We're also building our support to our multicultural communities by providing over $2.1 million over the next two years, including $500,000 to support social connection and a sense of belonging for migrant and refugee people and communities with $200,000 for an inclusive grants program. $400,000 over two years for a new grant program for multicultural small businesses with up to $5,000 to help finance projects that build capacity and new skills. $175,000 a year for the next two years -

Ms ROSOL - Excuse me, Chair, I was wondering how long this is going to be? It's been a very long time already.

CHAIR - I'm sure the minister is very close to wrapping up. We are here all day, thank you, Ms Rosol.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. I note that there's quite a bit to talk about in this area. I wanted to cover the key points.

Ms ROSOL - I have lots of questions to ask also.

Mr JAENSCH - Our multicultural community, though, is very important to us. I'd like to read through a few more of these items where we're investing public money to support them - $80,000 over two years to establish a new multicultural small community festival grants program; $75,000 a year for the next two years to the Moonah Multicultural Hub; we're also committed to funding the Festa Italia Festival, the Estia Street Festival, the Chinese Lunar New Year Festival and the annual Diwali Festival; and $50,000 over two years for a multicultural liaison role within the Mersey Leven region.

Our government's aware of the importance of indexation for community sector organisations and that's why we've announced, for the first time, the indexation rate that will apply for the next four years. The rate of indexation will be 3.5 per cent in 2024-25 and 3 per cent for the remaining three years, compounding each year. This commitment to indexation will invest an additional $25.97 million into the community services sector over the next four years. This will uplift the base each year, which ensures real growth for funding to these community sector organisations. This provides certainty and supports longer term planning.

In 2023, our government committed to longer term funding agreements for our community sector organisations. Longer term agreements, where appropriate, will provide certainty for organisations and assist with recruitment and retention of staff. We'll also be implementing an outcomes framework that will link to the new Tasmanian wellbeing framework that's currently under development. With the development of an outcomes framework, we will look at the current reporting requirements and what can be simplified and consolidated to reduce administrative burden on both community sector organisations and the Tasmanian government agencies that work with them.

This Budget, Mr Chairman, supports Tasmanians when they need it, while at the same time helping to develop strong communities and enhancing our regions through longer term strategic action. I'm happy to take the committee's questions.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Ms Haddad.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you, Chair. Thank you, minister, that was a very comprehensive opening statement. We have questions on lots of what you've mentioned.

Mr JAENSCH - Good.

Ms HADDAD - Short output - I want to start with longer term funding agreements. I know that it was a welcome commitment that you made at the TasCOSS budget briefing and in public that you will be moving to five-year funding agreements.

Mr JAENSCH - In answer to your question even.

Ms HADDAD - Yes, thank you for taking my question at that forum. The point I'm trying to make is this work's been ongoing since 2015-16. Do you have a timeframe for when organisations will transition to five-year funding agreements? Can you indicate how many staff you have in your department specifically working on this task?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Gray to be ready to answer you on staff. In the meantime, yes, we want to make sure that we have the right sorts of funding agreements in place to deliver the outcomes that we want for Tasmanians. We are aware that there have been a number of community service organisations in Tasmania which have had very similar fixed-term grants for many years in a row and we might be better off for them to have longer term agreements based on outcomes and with things like indexation recognising the changing cost of delivery over time for them.

There are over 400 agreements with community organisations across the various agencies of government. There is a range of business models in the community services sector as well, so it's not one-size-fits-all. We also have a Treasury that is used to four-year outlooks, not five-year outlooks, and so there's work going on with them as well. My hope is that by the end of the 2024 calendar year, we will have the models set out and over the first half of next year we will be able to go to the community sector organisations who fit different models and talk to them about how we make the transition to a longer term agreement.

I need to take advice about Treasury's instructions and probity and other things about how we can change agreements mid-term. If our aim is to cut down on transactions and uncertainty, I would prefer it if we didn't wait for the current agreements to expire and go through that again.

Ms HADDAD - They'll all be expiring at different dates across different agencies.

Mr JAENSCH - They will all be expiring at different dates, that's right, so I'd rather us make this transition as soon as we are able. Not all organisations and not all things that we fund will be amenable to longer term funding agreements, but the principle would be that where we've got recurrent or continuous or permanent service delivery -

Ms HADDAD - It's about providing certainty for them isn't it? Their operations, being able to employ staff, and so on.

Mr JAENSCH - That's right.

Ms HADDAD - The second part of the question was about -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - One of the other things for us to get right is working out how we overlap the processes, so at the end of an agreement, regardless of how long it is, we have the next agreement lined up or certainty about whether there is going to be one. Some overlaps, say at the end of year four, we'll be providing some certainty about how a new five-year agreement might come about. That means you don't have staff six or 12 months out from the end of their contract moving on.

Ms HADDAD - That is welcome news as well because not knowing is tricky for community organisations. They can assume, but without an ongoing agreement they don't know if they need to be making provisions for redundancies and winding-up. That overlap will be welcome, then. The other part of the question was around how many people are working on this task.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Gray if she'd like to comment on that.

Ms GRAY - I will start by acknowledging that this has been a matter of interest for the committee member for some years, purchasing for outcomes as well, and thank you for your interest in this really important thing.

We're developing the model and working on guidelines in consultation with the community sector and co-designed with the sector as well. Because the contracts just sit with DPAC, it also involves liaising with a lot of government agencies - DPAC, the Department for Education, Children and Young People, Health, Justice, Homes Tasmania and also Treasury. In our core team there are about three FTEs working on this, given the tight timelines, but there are also people in all of those agencies who are our key contacts.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. Ms Gray answered the next question I was going to ask, which was exactly that. The work is more complex now because of the various departmental restructures. I know how challenging it is to get buy-in from departments across the public sector, so it's good you have those key contacts. Are you confident you'll be able to implement this model for all community-service organisations because it doesn't matter to them which government agency their funding stream is coming from. They need to know that they have certainty of funding and some consistency around funding arrangements across the sector.

I'll quickly put the second part of that question on the record and I put it on notice if it's necessary. Could we have the number of agreements that are funded under your portfolio and a number broken down by how long each organisation's agreement is? I know some people have moved, some organisations have had to move to one- or two-year agreements. If we could have a breakdown of the contracts within your purview and how long their current funding agreements are.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. I'll ask the department and advisers to confer on what information we have to hand on that and or take on notice.

Ms HADDAD - It doesn't have to be the names of the organisations, just a tally.

Mr JAENSCH - In relation to the other question, the commitment we made didn't refer to departments, it referred to government contracts with community-sector organisations. We have a policy that applies equally right across government. We'll come up with the mechanisms for that and work with Treasury and all relevant agencies to ensure that it's rolled out in a consistent way.

We do know that in the period between the end of last financial year and now that agencies have dealt with the bridging period in slightly different ways. When it comes to things like the application of the indexation, we are in a position to make that effectively back-paid, so everyone gets the benefit of a 3.5 per cent indexation this year. Nobody misses out on that and that should equalise across the board regardless of what individual departments have paid out.

We will still have short-term agreements, but they'll be for short-term activities. Where we have recurrent business-as-usual work, it should not be a short fixed-term grant.

Ms HADDAD - Yes, that's the point. It's the core funding that needs to be secure. Everyone understands there will be short-term contracts that come in and out for project-based work, but it's the uncertainty around core funding agreements and that they're, I would argue, too low, that puts pressure on the sector. Do you want me to put that second part on notice because I know that time's rolling on?

Mr JAENSCH - Do you want to speak to that at all now?

Ms GRAY - Yes. We have the number, but not the length, the term of agreements.

Ms HADDAD - You can take that on notice.

Ms GRAY - Yes, that would be great. Thanks.

Mr JAENSCH - I think I'm meant to say yes, I'll accept that on notice. I'm just following the instructions from the Chair. He's very strict and I don't want to get it wrong.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, would you be happy for me to put that on notice?

Mr JAENSCH - I would be. Thank you very much.

Ms ROSOL - You just mentioned indexation, minister. I have some questions on that because community services are vitally important and provide essential services. The indexation offered to the community sector by the Tasmanian government hasn't kept pace with CPI for 20 years. While it's good to see the indexation increase in this Budget with 3.5 per cent for this year and 3 per cent in following years in the forward Estimates, it doesn't go far enough because community services have been underfunded for years. They've said they need approximately a 4.8 per cent uplift in indexation. I note the government's managed to find hundreds of millions of dollars for a stadium. Why have you ignored community services, please, for the funding they need to provide their vital services?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for the question, Ms Rosol. We haven't ignored the sector. We've heard them loud and clear that they want certainty and that they want to see that there is growth built into their their funding over time. We've provided certainty by announcing proper compounding indexation of payments with a four-year outlook, which they can plan around and plan for within their business. It's set above Treasury's forecast CPI curve for Tasmania. It is in line with public sector wages across the same period, as well as benchmarks to guide the level that we've struck. In total the value of the indexation alone over the next four years will be nearly $26 million to the sector in growth.

There is a number of factors that drive costs for the cost of doing business for community sector organisations. Some of them will be shared across the sector, some will affect different types of organisations differently, depending on their size, their staffing structures and those sorts of things. We will continue to have a discussion with the sector about the sustainability of their funding and their resources, just as we have had a conversation with them over the last few years around their workforce and development. As a continuing investment in our sector development plan, we'll work with TasCOSS and their member organisations to ensure that we're addressing these sorts of issues. In the meantime we're providing certainty that they never had before, and $26 million additional funding over the next four years.

Ms ROSOL - I guess the community organisations are still saying that that's not enough for them to keep providing the services they need to. They're saying that they've had to cut back on programs and that the indexation that's being provided won't be enough for them to continue to provide things. If they're looking at cutting services, what services are you suggesting that they cut? What's acceptable for them to cut, if they're not getting the funding they need to provide the services?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm not suggesting that anyone cut services. Where we have organisations that have received short and fixed term grant funding within the last couple of years, the expectation for those would be that the cost of delivering the services were factored into those agreements at the beginning. For those organisations that have longer term agreements, the indexation and some of the additional payments that have been made over recent years have aimed to meet those additional costs, or growth in costs, of delivering the services.

Where we want to get to next is with longer-term funding agreements that are based on outcomes - one of the reasons for doing that is we don't lock in one way of doing things in a fixed contract with a line item by line item itemised budget that we've funded, that people need to report and acquit against. The focus will be on delivering an outcome and freeing those organisations up to find the best way to do it, to use their resources efficiently and well, to partner, to innovate. That's another way of ensuring efficient use of funds as well. It will reduce the administrative burden of managing short-term contracts with lots of reporting and acquittals processes. We believe we can save further percentage points on costs of doing business, improve outcomes, and keep talking with the sector and with individual organisations about their needs to continue operating and delivering the services that we're purchasing from them.

Mrs BESWICK - The needs of community have been changing over time. We have significant concerns around mental health, family breakdowns, and lack of connection in the community. How are you and your department developing contracts and services which deliver flexibility - you have touched on that - for the community, but also allow for measurements to ensure best value for money?

Mr JAENSCH - One of the things that we want to introduce, as I've touched on, is an outcomes framework for the sector, so that we have a rolling conversation with the various organisations and their peak bodies, and the community more broadly, about what it is that's most important. Some of these strategies and action plans that I've listed in my overview statement will help guide that, for volunteering for the ageing, for digital literacy and inclusion and those sorts of issues. Then we have a procurement process which is based on achieving those outcomes the best way we can. That's the way we keep relevant, and we can measure what we're achieving, not just what we're delivering. That's good for efficient use of public funds, but also should give the sector some flexibility in how it delivers those outcomes. Does that answer your question?

Mrs BESWICK - In a vague way.

Mr FAIRS - Can I talk to you about our volunteering strategy? As you and I both know, without volunteers, nothing gets done.

Mr JAENSCH - Correct.

Mr FAIRS - I'm sure the committee agrees with that, no matter what area it is. Can you share how the government is addressing the future of volunteering here, following the state of volunteering report, which revealed a shift in the way people want to volunteer these days?

Mr JAENSCH - I was briefed recently by the new CEO and the new chair of Volunteering Tasmania on the 2023 State of Volunteering Report. The report gives us a better understanding of the complex and changing nature of volunteering in Tasmania. I thank Volunteering Tasmania for commissioning the report, with support from our government. It found that 332,000-odd Tasmanians - nearly 70 per cent of us - gave their time to volunteer in 2023 - you're one of them, I reckon, Mr Fairs - volunteering - not you personally, but collectively - 89.4 million hours of their time.

Volunteering is good for us individually, as well as the communities that we that we work with and the people we help. We also realise that it's changing, though. More people are choosing to volunteer in casual ways; fewer volunteers are participating in more formalised and organisation-based activities.

We need a strategic approach to address this changing nature of volunteering. That's why we're investing $150,000 this year for development of our first volunteering strategy. We've listened to the sector's calls to resource the strategy. A strategy and a five-year action plan will be developed with Volunteering Tasmania and the sector they work with. We'll consult with a broad range of stakeholders across the sector, to understand the challenges and opportunities they face as well. We recognise the work that Volunteering Tasmania does. We want to recognise that and support it, with $520,000 a year for the next two years for their peak body funding, and also to run the Tasmanian Volunteering Awards, which recognises the positive contribution of volunteers right across our state. I look forward to attending the awards ceremony and meeting this year's recipients in November.

Ms HADDAD - I don't want to get into the weeds on indexation, because you have already covered quite a bit of that in answer to Ms Rosol's question earlier. The point I want to make - and the question I want to ask you - is that what I'm hearing back from the sector is that while their commitment to indexation is welcome, it's being applied to core funding amounts that have been too low for a number of years. It won't keep up with the demands of other cost pressures that are rising for all not-for-profits and businesses - power, insurance, rents, and so on - so they are either going to have to cut services or staff, or both.

My question is: will you commit to a review of those core funding amounts, outside of the model that you're working on with indexation ? Will you commit to a review, at least of the contracts that are within your control, of what their core funding dollar amount is, and if it's sufficient to actually fund the services that you're purchasing from those organisations?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for your question. I understand where it's coming from, as well. Whenever we enter into new agreements, the agreements have to be reasonable and they have to be agreed by all parties as being appropriate to what we're agreeing to deliver. I'm not going to pre-empt any across the board shifts there, but my understanding is that when we enter into an agreement between parties to deliver something, we do so in full knowledge of what's being asked for, what it takes to deliver that. We need to be a willing buyer, willing seller of services agreeing on reasonable terms to these things. We'd take that approach. I'd take that approach into any future agreements that we have with community sector organisations.

Ms HADDAD - My next question is going to a different topic. You mentioned the work that your department's doing to support LGBTIQA+ Tasmanians. I know that's something that both of us care about. I know that this question is going to overlap a number of portfolios, but that's, by its nature, often the case when there are these whole-of-government strategies supporting cohorts of our community.

The question is specifically around conversion practices legislation. The government committed to introducing conversion practices legislation to protect LGBTIQA+ Tasmanians from the very real harm that these dangerous and discredited practices inflict. There was a draft bill released for consultation. There's widespread concern in the community that the draft bill didn't reflect the TLRI report's recommendations and could have the counter-intuitive effect of increasing the likelihood of people being subjected to conversion practices in this state.

My question is a quick one. Will you have conversations with your colleagues, the Premier, and the Attorney-General to revise that draft bill to make sure that a final bill can reach the Chamber that does what's intended, which is to stamp out these dangerous pseudo-science practices in Tasmania?

Mr JAENSCH - It's important upfront for me to confirm that legislation is the responsibility of the Attorney-General on behalf of the government. In terms of questions around it specifically, I'd have to refer them through to him.

Ms HADDAD - I know that.

Mr JAENSCH - However, the whole purpose of releasing draft legislation and discussion papers and points is to get feedback from the community. I encourage all stakeholders with an interest or concern or information on this matter to take full advantage of the public comment period and make their case very clear. The government puts documents out like this to hear the feedback and to take it into account before finalising legislation. Then we have the opportunity to debate it in our parliament. I'm confident that that process is designed to enable a full exploration of all the issues relating to these topics.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. I know that community advocates and members of the community are doing that. They are providing that feedback. My question really is to you as the responsible minister for the whole-of-government, LGBTIQA+ framework. Will you make those representations to the Attorney-General on behalf of LGBTIQA+ Tasmanians as well?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll listen to everyone. It's important that we have evidence. It's important that we have the sentiments of the community, the lived experience of individuals, as well as the opinions of experts in the law to ensure that we get legislation right. I'll play my part in that process.

Ms ROSOL - Yesterday in minister Street's hearing we heard that the community support levy has $1.23 million unspent in the bank. I know that Mr Street is responsible for the CSL, but while the community sector is desperate for funds, particularly those who are dealing with the fallout from policies - how is this money unspent? Did you lobby for these funds to be allocated to community services? If not, why not? There's money that's available there that could be used for community services. Did you lobby in any way for that?

Mr JAENSCH - There was a range of priorities put forward in our election process and through our budget process as well, many of which I listed at the opening of this session today. That's what we're able to secure from the budget process. In terms of what funds remain in areas that other ministers are responsible for, that's a matter for them. I'll continue to advocate for the sector I'm responsible for to secure budget for what we need.

Ms ROSOL - Are you saying that, given there's that desperate need for funding in the community sector, that money is available there, the $1.23 million as a result of that levy? Are you saying you will lobby for that on behalf of Community Services?

Mr JAENSCH - That's funding which is gathered through a levy and held for specific purposes, whether it's been fully expended through existing grant rounds and programs, or whether it is being held over for the next grant random process. Certainly, we will be encouraging organisations and putting forward submissions of our own to make sure it's put to good use, within the guidelines and the purpose it's collected for.

Ms BESWICK - Looking through the budget papers, there are very few outputs and measurements in this portfolio. How are you going to ensure the department is delivering effectively?

Mr JAENSCH - One of the features of this portfolio, which I've only been back in since the election, is that it's not mainly about government doing the delivering. It's about government purchasing and funding community sector and non-government organisations to deliver a range of programs and services.

Where we're going next, I've mentioned a couple of times, is the development of an outcomes framework. That means that we're not just year on year providing funding with indexation or without it, with top ups, with or without, et cetera, for various organisations to continue to exist and do the work that they're good at. Rather, we have an agreement with them and across government, about what it is that's most important to do and how we're going to measure whether we're delivering that or not. That'll be used to frame the funding agreements that we have with those organisations. It'll also enable us to better track and measure what's being delivered and achieved against those outcomes.

Mrs BESWICK - From a government point of view and department point of view, how are you measuring that they are doing their jobs efficiently and effectively?

Mr JAENSCH - How the government is?

Mrs BESWICK - How the department manages these outcomes, that makes the contracts, that does these strategies. How are you making sure that they are done in the time, fashion and effectively as they can be?

Mr JAENSCH - Maybe I could ask Ms Gray to speak to that, and how the KPIs work in agreements, and where they apply to government's role in those agreements.

Ms GRAY - We manage individual contracts and agreements with the funded community sector organisation. There are significant key performance indicators in those agreements and milestones that need to be met before sometimes payments are staged across the agreement. There's quite a rigorous contract management process. As the minister has said,

and there was some discussion in another committee as well, as we move towards the outcomes measurement framework and align that with the 0 to 99 wellbeing framework, that's also being led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, there will be an opportunity to revisit some of the KPIs, some of the performance measures as you outlined, that are currently in the budget paper, which are more output focused rather than outcome focused.

Mr JAENSCH - Is that covering it?

Mrs BESWICK - Not really. I realise that there's contract management stuff going on, but how do you make sure that - I've been on a board where it took two-and-a-half years into a five-year program to finally get their grant approved. How do we make sure that that sort of delay is not happening?

Ms GRAY - We do really return to client management. That, I acknowledge, is a significant delay. Without knowing the circumstances of the individual case, I couldn't really speculate as to what may be happening there other than to say that over the past few years we have worked under the TasCOSS Community Services Industry Plan to ensure that we have a sustainable and viable industry.

As the minister's already commented, some of that work has involved really listening to some of the significant challenges that the sector has in relation to granting and funding agreements. We are streamlining, where we can, the number of agreements, but also getting better about providing payments in a timely fashion. There's quite a body of work underway in relation to that, but without knowing the individual circumstances, I couldn't -

Mrs BESWICK - So we expect some sort of measurements to be in place at some point that would show us that those sorts of things are happening in a timely fashion?

Ms GRAY - Yes.

Mr FAIRS - You spoke about multiculturalism and what the government is doing and contributing, et cetera. One thing I'm interested in is if you could update the committee on how the government's enabling a gathering space for the diverse cultural communities here in Hobart.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. We have always supported our multicultural communities and we love them. They enrich our society, make us more worldly people, and more informed, tolerant and inclusive at the same time.

An important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is to support our communities further, to build stronger communities, to eliminate racism, and to celebrate diversity.

The next iteration of our Multicultural Action Plan is in development, informed by over 1000 Tasmanians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Supported by $105,000 in the budget, the Multicultural Council of Tasmania, the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania and Migrant Resource Centre North conducted extensive community consultations to inform the next plan. Following the consultation process, the emerging plan's vision has been adapted and refined to a harmonious, inclusive and respectful multicultural island where all Tasmanians belong, contribute, achieve and succeed.

The Tasmanian Government has committed $500,000 to address racism and foster social cohesion, which directly addresses the outcome's sought of 'We feel safe and we belong' as part of that overall plan. Of that funding, $200,000 was allocated to a competitive small grants program addressing racism and fostering social cohesion through local place-based partnerships. Applications for the program closed on 30 August and are now being assessed.

One of the ways in which we can encourage social participation is to provide welcoming and accessible places, going to the crux of your question, for people to come together. This is why we are providing $75,000 a year for the next two years to the Moonah Multicultural Hub, which is a venue for hire managed by the Multicultural Council of Tasmania. It's available for activities organised by and for newly arrived and emerging cultural groups. I was pleased to visit the hub recently and observe it being hired for, I think it was a Tai Chi class, which was very calm. We had to be very careful not to disrupt because everyone was extremely focused on what they were doing. It was fantastic to see a group of people who were new to Tasmania, new to their local community and maybe new to each other as well breathing and moving together silently in this room and enjoying the experience and the social cohesion that that offered there.

We also visited a new commercial kitchen which was close to being completed at the hub, which looks fantastic. That'll allow groups to hire the space for self-catered events, but also be able to support other sorts of sharing and inclusion, which so often happens through food. A lot of people and cultures express their love and hospitality through food. They can literally give people in their community a taste of their culture and their history, their heritage through being able to use a kitchen facility like this to share that with their community. Another worthwhile investment and I look forward to attending more activities and potentially meals at the Moonah Multicultural Hub in the future.

Ms ROSOL - Can I clarify the length of answers, please? How long is allocated for answers in the committee today?

CHAIR - I'm giving a degree of latitude to all members for questions and answers today. Ms Haddad has the call.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, in the 2020-23 Budget there was a provision of $180 billion for the continuation of time-limited programs. It was in Finance General. There was $40 million in year 2, rising to $80 million in year 4, which is 2025-26. That was an acknowledgement that there is a large number of programs funded for just one, two or three years, which I was talking about earlier, which the government didn't have any intention of cutting. A lot of those one-, two- and three-year funding agreements are in funding community organisations. From my reading of this year's Budget, it looks like that provision has been removed from the Budget for this year. Does that mean that there is a plan to cut these time-limited programs, or has it moved somewhere else in the Budget?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll just get some advice. Could you direct us to -

Ms HADDAD - It was Finance General of the 2022-23 Budget and I don't have that part open for this year's Budget, but there isn't an equivalent allocation of funding in this year's Budget across the forward Estimates. It was called provision for continuation of time-limited programs in the 2022-23 budget that allocated $40 million in the 2022-23 year, $60 million in the 2024-25 year and $80 million for 2025-26.

Mr JAENSCH - In relation to this portfolio?

Ms HADDAD - It was for time-limited programs and there was discussion at the time of that Budget that a lot of those time-limited programs are contracts of between one and three years, many of which are contracts into the community services sector. It doesn't look like that provision has been replicated in this year's Budget. That's what this question is about.

Mr JAENSCH - From what you've referred to, it's not clear that this is a portfolio matter or that the time-limited programs referred to are within this scope. That's a matter for the Treasurer.

Ms HADDAD - Some of them would be. It's in Finance General, but it was money allocated for one-, two- and three-year contracts across government, many of which are in your portfolio in communities' organisations. Another way to phrase the question is, can you guarantee that there isn't an intention to cut time-limited programs?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm not aware of any cutting of any funded programs, certainly not a whole category of programs. In every year, there are things that are already scheduled to conclude that don't necessarily appear in next year's Budget - those fixed term, fixed time, one-off purchases or initiatives. There will always be evidence of that in some churn, but this is in the general budget paper. I don't think that's mine to comment on portfolio wise. I think it's a matter for the Treasurer.

Ms HADDAD - I understand that, but Treasury funds everything. Are you confident that whatever component of that allocation that would have applied to contracts within your control, isn't going to flow through to your department, meaning there isn't enough money? In other words, there might be yet another budget deficit or black hole to continue to fund those time-limited programs of one, two and three years.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm not aware that this Budget has discontinued funding for time-limited initiatives in my portfolio areas. I haven't been involved in any decisions.

Ms HADDAD - You are confident that there is budget there to do that, to continue the funding rather not to cut the funding?

Mr JAENSCH - For the period that there are agreements, as far as I understand, those agreements will be met.

Ms HADDAD - It would be easier to interpret the papers if there was a clear indication in the budget papers of the whole spend on community services and that is difficult to unpick from this year's budget, partly in your own department alone, but also because of the split of contracts across 5, 6, 7 different agencies. It is difficult to actually see a whole picture of the sector now in the budget papers.

Mr JAENSCH - It is and I think what we need to do when it comes to things like how we do our contracting and how when we make commitments about increasing the terms, outcomes based et cetera, that that applies uniformly, but I would expect that health will always be doing the contracting for health outcomes with its relevant organisations and us with others.

Ms HADDAD - You have to recognise that some of these organisations, many of them actually have contracts across government.

Mr JAENSCH - Exactly.

Ms HADDAD - So they might have a contract with health and with you and with Justice and with Homes Tasmania and for them it's really burdensome to have to think about which government agency their funding is coming from. It really should be quite seamless for the sector and it isn't right now.

Mr JAENSCH - At least consistent

Ms HADDAD - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - Many businesses have multiple clients and strategic partners so we just want to make sure that we're reducing red tape for them and at our end as well because the other thing that we're very aware of, particularly when we're looking at efficiencies and savings as well, is that for every acquittal report, every application for another round of funding, et cetera, someone has to write that report, someone has to read it. Are we generating value all the time and ensuring that we're getting good use of public funds? We need to declutter that to the extent that we can, save the whole system some resources and let more of those dollars be used to deliver outcomes for Tasmanians rather than moving paper around.

Ms ROSOL - I just wanted to come back to the Community Support Levy, that's the levy collected from the gambling industry and 25 per cent of it is for the benefit of charitable organisations. That would potentially be community service organisations who are providing support to people who are affected by gambling addictions and we know that they're struggling to meet the need.

That $1.23 million sitting there, gathered by that levy not allocated to any funds, are you involved in any way in the decision making around how that community benefit the charitable organisations as it's called money is allocated. Do you have any role in that?

Mr JAENSCH - We know the levy and it's played an important role in our community services sector each year. We do note that from July 2023 we doubled the funding available through the Community Support Fund to deliver services to support people impacted by gambling, education programs to help Tasmanians make informed decisions about gambling, community grants programs to deliver local responses to gambling and research projects to inform support and education directions. There is a funding request process through which CSF funding is available to government agencies which the Treasurer approves based on recommendations provided by the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission.

I understand in the past that there has been significant funds delivered through Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania's engagement. This year $1.5 million in that category, also scheduled for next year as well, so definitely, if there's a reserve of funds there, there is a process to make it available and we'll be making application for that in my portfolio area.

Can I just highlight that in 2023-24 Community Support Fund Grants Program recipients included Anglicare, Burnie Community House, Georgetown Neighbourhood House, Huon Valley Police and Citizens Club, Live Well Tasmania, and Rokeby Neighbourhood Centre.

Small grants went to a long list of organisations which I'm sure you won't want me to read all in, but it's one of the sources of grants for community services organisations. I expect that it'll continue to be available to them.

Ms ROSOL - Given there's $1.23 million sitting there unused and there are processes available, will you use those processes to seek funding for services?

Mr JAENSCH - It's not clear to me that when you're referring to the amount that's available, if it is an amount that is due to be expended through large and small grant programs and government internal applications. I don't think that unspent funds in that levy are returned to Treasury for general revenue use. I expect that they're held for that specific purpose they were collected for. That's how levies tend to work.

There are grants programs that the community has access to and internally across government we can make application for.

Ms ROSOL - That's interesting because yesterday minister Street said it's just sitting there; it's a surplus. So, it's available and could be used. Will you know that it's there, follow up on that and seek some funding from that?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll definitely follow that up with him, but as a levy that's collected from the public for a particular purpose, if there is a balance in an account, there are rules about how it's used and there are processes through which application can be made and decisions are made about it. I'd expect that those rules would continue to apply and we need to make sure that that money is working for the purposes it was collected for?

Mrs BESWICK - Minister given that we've had obviously quite a late budget this year and you have mentioned that indexations will be backdated, how quickly are we going to get a lot of these grants and approvals out the door and when can we expect that those budgets will be completed?

Mr JAENSCH - The roll-out of the indexation can only apply after our Budget is passed through both Houses. As soon as that happens, then there is an account to work with. I might ask Ms Gray, what's the process and the time frame for that sort of reconciling that uplift in indexation.

Ms GRAY - Yes, as the minister said, once the Budget is passed - and minister has mentioned the modelling work and the guidelines work that we're doing with the sector - we would expect that we'll just be getting on to rolling-out the commitment as soon as possible.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you update the committee on how the state government's addressing long-term food security please?

Mr JAENSCH - As I mentioned earlier, we are in the process of investing $200 000 from this Budget in a Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy, where hopefully the first stages will be in place in time to inform the 2025-26 state budget. In the meantime, there's about $7 million committed in the Budget to support emergency food relief programs across the state while we're taking that longer-term outlook through the strategy, Mr Fairs.

The strategic work will be done in partnership with major emergency food relief providers, including Loaves & Fishes, Food Bank, the Tasmanian Food Security Coalition, our agricultural sector, our charities and social enterprises, neighbourhood houses, Eat Well, School Food Matters, transport and logistics stakeholders as well as the hospitality sector.

We've seen food resilience in action recently when the state was affected by adverse weather events. Through that, we were able to boost some funding for Foodbank and Loaves & Fishes, $50,000 each, and also create a boost for our Neighbourhood Houses, $255,000 across the state. Between them, they know what to do to get food into people's bellies who need it in a hurry.

What we found is that people are already turning up to their Neighbourhood Houses, even those who've never been in one before. The power was out for days at a time, they brought their kids and their soap and towels. There was there was soup and sausages and things ready for them, they had a hot meal, had a shower and were able to go home. We didn't have to tell them what to do. The Neighbourhood Houses intuitively just fed people because they needed it. Foodbank and Loaves & Fishes stood up their supplies to those houses. We provided more resources for them so that they weren't constrained by their business-as-usual funding, but could meet the needs wherever they were right around the state. We're very grateful for them doing that.

Through the 2023-24 Action Plan that I referred to earlier that's already in place, we've delivered additional funding for the emergency food relief providers, Loaves & Fishes and Foodbank, $400,000 for School Food Matters for the delivery of the School Lunch Program pilot, $100,000 to Eat Well Tasmania for nutritional programs delivered through Neighbourhood Houses, $300,000 for delivery of a Community Food Relief Grants Program for small food relief providers, and $100,000 to Neighbourhood Houses through community garden grants.

We'll keep working with Food Secure Tasmania, formerly the Tasmanian Food Security Coalition, to design and deliver three place-based community led food relief pilot projects. I'm very keen to see that we have a statewide strategy, the Food Relief to Food Resilience one, which makes sure that we're not just funding activities like the ones I've mentioned where they already occur. We're identifying where there might be food deserts, or food relief or resilience deserts. People are missing out where there is not a local provider. This is one of the areas where I'd like to see our outcomes framework approach working, where we say everybody in Tasmania who needs it needs to be able to access nutritious food.

We know that we've got wonderful effort underway, across the board. We need to ensure that we're not doubling up in some areas and missing out others entirely. That might mean that we go to some sort of head agreements with larger organisations that can take responsibility for ensuring that there is delivery across a whole area of the state. They might subcontract and work with local organisations of different kinds in those local areas to make sure that that happens. It will be a strategic approach as well as that emergency response.

Ms BROWN - I'm glad to hear that you're passionate about food security. Once again, I'm pleased to see in the Budget money for Meals on Wheels. As you are aware, Meals on Wheels Rosny will be losing their venue on 31 December due to decisions made by your government. Can you provide an update on what you are personally doing to secure them a new suitable venue?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand there has been a fair degree of engagement with Meals on Wheels regarding possible alternative venues. I'll ask my department if they can comment on that. My office has been dealing with Meals on Wheels, and looking with them at suitable spaces, and other organisations they might be able to partner with. I understand that Meals on Wheels is a Health portfolio funded program. Some of those other details would be in minister Barnett's area. We've been responding to the calls that have come to us and trying to assist them through the networks that we have in my portfolio as well to see where we can find them a suitable space to operate from.

They do fantastic work. They're one of the organisations that has expressed strongly to me their concerns around attracting and retaining volunteers and ensuring that there is appropriate training for those volunteers, particularly because they're out on the road a lot. We have a duty of care to the volunteers, to other road users, and to the people who are being served. Some of the investment in the budget for Meals on Wheels is about ensuring that they can secure the volunteer base that they need to keep working. We'll work with them and liaise with minister Barnett's office further to ensure that they've got a base to work from.

Ms BROWN - Great. Will you commit today that you, with the help of minister Barnett, will find them a suitable venue by 31 December?

Mr JAENSCH - We'll work with them to identify what options that they have. We're not going to make those decisions for them, but we'll assist in any way we can.

Mr JAENSCH - Hello Mr Willie. How are you?

Mr WILLIE - Good, thank you. I want to follow up on my colleague, Ella Haddad's questioning around time-limited programs. There was an acknowledgement in the budget last year that some programs would continue, even though they're not funded in the budget. There are a number of examples here. This is a conversation I was having with the Treasurer earlier this week. Not only are your expenditures flat or decreasing across the forward Estimates, there is a number of programs that will continue that you haven't allocated funding for.

I can give you some examples. I was listening to the conversation earlier. The Council on the Ageing Tasmania, I'm sure you're going to fund that past the two years that's in the Budget. Emergency Food Relief is only funded for one year. The LGBTIQA+ framework and action plan is funded for two years. There's nothing in the last two years. The Multicultural Council of Tasmania, a very important organisation, particularly in my electorate, is only funded for two years. The No Interest Loan Scheme, we can both agree that that's a great program, you're going to fund that in 2027-28, but it's not funded in the Budget. This is the problem. Last year there was an acknowledgement that these things would continue, and there was a provision for it. This year there is none.

Mr JAENSCH - If you had been here at the opening, I provided an overview of the portfolios and what's in the Budget in relation to them. The thing I started with was an explanation that, partly due to the timing of this Budget this year, we find ourselves in a position where we are in the process of renewing some of the longer-term strategic action plans, strategies, and plans for our sector which will inform future budgets. I went through the Carer Action Plan, the older Tasmanians action plan, the Food Relief to Food Resilience Strategy,

the Volunteering Strategy, the LGBTIQA+ framework and action plan, and the multicultural action plan.

These are all to be finalised by 30 June 2025. They will inform the next two years' budgets and forward Estimates. We don't want to pre-empt the outcomes of those plans, but they will give us a current contemporary evidence-based up-to-date plan that we can then address through future budgets. We don't know what their needs are going to be. What we're doing at the moment is funding continuation of work in a number of these areas on the basis that future funding for them will be directed by these strategies and action plans.

Mr WILLIE - I understand that, but this is why your forward Estimates can't be believed. Last year you had a provision to protect some of these programs, this year you don't. You've just said that you're going to review and probably fund these programs, but there's a black hole in the Budget.

Mr JAENSCH - They're not so much programs. These are areas where we have to make strategic investment. We don't just allocate money to keep doing what we've always done. We need to, from time to time, sit down with these sectors and replan.

Mr WILLIE - I understand that. Last year there was a provision in the Budget for that to occur. This year there are black holes.

Mr JAENSCH - I don't know what black holes you're talking about, but we'll work with -

Mr WILLIE - Stuff that's not funded that will end up being funded.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - That's why you have a budget every year, to bring things forward. Otherwise you'd only have a budget every four years, Mr Willie, surely?

Mr WILLIE - Your government's talking -

CHAIR - Ms Burnet has the call

Mr WILLIE - -about a pathway back to surplus. It can't be believed.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms BURNET - Thank you Chair. Good morning, minister.

Mr JAENSCH - Good morning.

Ms BURNET - I'm here to talk about multicultural communities -

Mr JAENSCH - You're welcome here. It'd be nice if you'd been here at the beginning when we talked about all this. Sorry, I beg your pardon.

Ms BURNET - We have 20 minutes to talk about multicultural communities, which is farcical to be honest.

My first question is, when will the government have a dedicated multicultural minister? This was a very important question that came up during the election campaign. Mr Willie will remember some of the community forums we went to. It is important for our multicultural community to be recognised. When will the government have a minister for multicultural communities?

Mr JAENSCH - Welcome, Ms Burnet, to the committee. I agree our multicultural communities are very important. I take my responsibilities for them in this area, as Minister for Community Services, very seriously. We don't have 20 minutes to discuss this; we've had an hour and a half and we've been here since 9 a.m. I reject that we're downplaying this area by not giving it enough time.

That being said, the questions of how the Premier assigns portfolio responsibilities is one of those things that is for the Premier alone to decide. I trust you've raised the issue with him. We've certainly received correspondence from you and others promoting the need for a standalone portfolio minister for this area. That'll continue to be a matter for the Premier to consider.

In the meantime, I can assure you and our multicultural and culturally and linguistically diverse community in Tasmania that I am deeply committed to being a very effective minister for them and on their behalf. My door's open to them. I look forward to engaging with them and understanding their needs and the contributions that they make to our community, which are highly valued. I'll do my very best with or without a formal title of being minister for multicultural Tasmanians.

Ms BURNET - My second question is in relation to a reduced funding arrangement or certainly reduced funding the Diwali Festival committee is being provided this year. I believe their festival funding was lumped in with another festival.

Mr WILLIE - The Chinese festival.

Ms BURNET - Thanks Mr Willie.

I want to to point out their distress. They're holding their festival this year in PW1 and, while PW1 has a special rate for not-for-profits or organisations such as this committee, essentially their costs to bump in and out and to have a day festival is $37,000. It's not cheap - and it raises concerns how any not-for-profit organisation will be able to have something at any proposed Macquarie Point stadium because I don't reckon they'll be able to afford to hire that. I'm wondering what you can tell the Diwali organising committee as to how you might help them. I did raise this with Madeleine Ogilvie in a text recently, concerned about what might be happening in her electorate, but also with some of her interest in the area.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. It's fantastic to see celebrations like Diwali - or Deepavali, depending on who you speak to - growing and expanding. More strength to their arm. I understand they're also supported by the council and others. We have an allocation in the Budget towards supporting the festival - $5000 a year out to 2025-26. We also understand that the festival has grown and that they have chosen to go to PW1, which has a different cost

structure for them to be involved with. I understand that my office is in the process of arranging a meeting for me with them next week, and we'll have a talk through what they're planning to do and how we can assist that. The choice of venue, however, and the costs that come with that is the organiser's choice. We want them to succeed, obviously. We have a contribution that we announced in the Budget, but I'm always happy to talk to them about their plans for the future.

Ms BURNET - Could I have an update after you've had that meeting? As multicultural spokesperson for the Greens, I'd appreciate that.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms BURNET - Thank you. They want to be as independent from government as possible. It's only these first few years that they want to have this support, but $5000, quite frankly, is well below what you'd expect for this kind of thing.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you update us on how the government is planning for our ageing population, please?

Mr JAENSCH - We hear a lot about Tasmania's ageing population. It's sometimes painted as a negative for us, but it's also an opportunity for individual Tasmanians and our community. It's something that all of us get to do, if we're lucky: grow older and enjoy old age and reflection with the wisdom gathered through our lives, and to contribute back to our community. It's our vision, as a government, for all Tasmanians to stay active and healthy and resilient and connected to their communities, regardless of their age. Helping older Tasmanians to remain active and engaged in community life is an investment in the quality of life for individuals, families and communities, and helps to reduce pressure on our health system as well.

That's why, in this Budget, we've allocated $1 million for a two-year trial of the Ticket to Wellbeing program to support the social participation, and health and wellbeing of older Tasmanians; $200,000 per annum for two years to the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Tasmania to continue its Seniors Week; elder abuse prevention services and advocacy for seniors in Tasmania; and $150,000 per year for two years in partnership with COTA to develop digital inclusion initiatives, including peer education for people who are not natives to the digital world and are finding themselves with more and more services and information that they need only being available online and in digital forms. That's a real challenge for us, but one that COTA is up for, and we'll back them 100 per cent.

I'm very committed to listening to and working with older members of our community, to understand and respond to their needs and advocate for them, as I am for the multicultural community. I note there's been strong advocacy from COTA for there to be a dedicated minister for older Tasmanians. Until there is, I am it, and I'm deeply committed to doing a good job at that.

We are progressing the development of a new older Tasmanians five-year action plan, including enhancing wellbeing, safety and quality of life for older Tasmanians, while addressing the unique challenges associated with growing older, and creating an age-friendly environment that supports the wellbeing and dignity of older Tasmanians and encourages their active participation. A community reference group has been established to assist with direction of the action plan, and consultation is underway across government and with key stakeholders

including COTA, Carers Tasmania and Volunteering Tasmania. That plan is intended to be finished and released by the end of this year, Mr Fairs.

Mr WILLIE - Given the time, I might ask a few local member ones.

Minister, in my electorate and where I live in the northern suburbs, the past 12 months have been particularly shocking for its racially motivated attacks. The multicultural community is struggling through that. I've met with various groups and I've written to the Premier. One example was on behalf of the Nepalese community; they wanted to meet with him and he refused. He delegated that to, I think it was Jo Palmer, the Community Services minister at the time.

I'm interested in what you're doing as Community Services minister to support our community here in Hobart, particularly the northern suburbs, through this. There are people I've met who are isolated. They can't go to the Glenorchy Bus Mall for fear of being targeted, which means that they don't have access to transport. It is a real worry and I think more needs to be done.

Mr JAENSCH - I've met with the Migrant Council of Tasmania (MCOT) and the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tas), and will continue to learn from them about what they're hearing directly from their member organisations and communities across not only Hobart but other areas of Tasmania as well. There is a feeling amongst various communities that there have been targeted attacks or violence towards them.

I'm also trying to understand that in the context of some broader community concerns regarding antisocial behaviour and violence in certain areas, in bus malls and things, at certain times of day, and amongst different demographic groups. In that, I'm trying to understand the extent to which this is racially targeted violence and antisocial behaviour, or if it is more general antisocial behaviour that disproportionately affects people from migrant communities because of where it's happening and what times of day and in what settings, like in public transport and affecting groups like taxi drivers, who might have an over-representation of people from other countries.

I'm listening to the multicultural community and how it feels to them because that's the reality. I'm also trying to understand the perceptions of police and others, for example, as to whether they are seeing this as directed violence or if some members of our community are disproportionately affected by it. I am aware that we have people in our multicultural communities who have come from places where they were targeted and persecuted, and who have trauma that makes them particularly vulnerable to any violence and intimidation or racism in our communities. I'm very sensitive to that. I'm trying to understand the dimensions of it.

We are supporting a grant program with half-a-million dollars to address racism and foster social cohesion across our communities, including $200,000 for a competitive small grants program for local communities to do things that are meaningful and have impact in their local areas; $70,000 to the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania for counselling and psychosocial support for individuals and groups within their communities where that's needed; $30,000 to MCOT for Harmony Week and, as I mentioned, $200,000 to support actions under the next multicultural action plan, which needs to be celebration, but also protection and the safety of our multicultural community. I think one breeds the other. More understanding has a protective value as well.

Mr WILLIE - I don't think you can downplay some of these incidents. There have been high-profile incidents that are racially motivated, that is clear.

Mr JAENSCH - I don't doubt that.

Mr WILLIE - I was a bit concerned with what you were saying. Look, I take my hat off to people like Detective Inspector Jim Simmons, who's doing the best he can with the resources he has. He has run public forums but with some of the groups that I meet with, it seems like there's a huge breakdown in communication between authorities, following up on police reports and things like that and people feel they're not being listened to.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll be very happy for anyone who brings specific concerns like that for you to refer them to me. I'll be very pleased to hear from them either through you or directly. Please ask them to get in touch.

Mr WILLIE - I have one more question. It's on a different matter, Neighbourhood Houses. I am interested in the Community Connector Program. I know they wanted to roll that out to all houses, but you're running a pilot.

The second question on Neighbourhood Houses is, in my electorate, you'd be aware of Bucaan Community House, a great community house. They're limited in their infrastructure. They did have plans to redevelop their current site. It was very expensive for not much. I've connected them with the council when they were working with the council about some land. Are you aware of that issue? I'm just interested in your engagement given their needs supporting the local community.

Mr JAENSCH - Our houses are a huge resource for Tasmania. I think that Tasmania does neighbourhood houses and men's sheds better than anywhere else. There are about 34 neighbourhood houses across the state; they all respond uniquely to the unique needs of their local communities. We're very grateful for the work that they do.

In terms of the houses that are outgrowing their current facilities or they're not fit for purpose, there is a $6 million capital improvement fund announced as part of the Budget and $2 million a year for three years, which houses can make application to.

Mr WILLIE - We need the whole lot for one year.

Mr JAENSCH - We'll have to have a discussion on the side about that. But there are houses that need to rebuild, like the Bucaan one. East Devonport is another one and that's for structural reasons and safety reasons as well as capacity, looking for a new site right now. We have a few houses that we are working with to make sure that they've got a plan for what their options are and availability of sites.

Homes Tasmania is part of the mix in a lot of cases and a lot of the houses are owned by Homes Tasmania. Quite often, it's crown land or council land that they are on as well. So, we'll look at all of the options for those houses that need a new build, as well as across the network, ensuring that there are dollars there to ensure what they've got now remains fit for purpose and safe.

Mr WILLIE - As a follow-up, can I ask that you engage with Bucaan Community House about the negotiation with the council and also potentially make representations to Glenorchy Council? I've done that for them as well, but I think it would be powerful coming from you as the minister.

Mr JAENSCH - We want there to be houses that have appropriate spaces to operate from. I'm very happy to engage with them directly and to interact with the council if that's required, but all of our houses need safe and fit-for-purpose buildings to operate from. There's no doubt about that. They need to be able to maintain them as well, hence the $6 million in the budget, a continuation of the extra $50,000 a year for each house as they've had for the last year or so, and investment in maintaining and expanding the Community Connector Programs as well so that there are budget line items for all of those.

Ms BURNET - I have a minute to ask a question in regard to - and this covers other portfolios, but bear with me because it's around migrants. In regard to exploitation of migrant workers, is the government doing anything to regulate labour hire agencies that are providing migrant labour to Tasmanian industry and taking a substantial cut of their wages?

We've had reports from community members of temporary contract workers being provided to a northern suburbs based company under labour hire contracts.

CHAIR - Unfortunately, the time for Estimates for the Minister for Community Services has expired. We will have a short five- minute break and resume the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The committee suspended from 10.30 a.m. to 10.36 a.m.

MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

CHAIR - The time being, after 10.30 a.m., the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will commence. Welcome again, minister, would you please introduce the persons at the table?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you Chair, and good morning to committee members. To my right is Steve Gall, who's the Director, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. To my left, Mel Gray, Deputy Secretary from DPAC and to her left, Caroline Spotswood, Director, Aboriginal Partnerships in DPAC.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is 1.5 hours. Minister, would you like to start with an opening?

Mr JAENSCH - In doing so, I acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of the land that we're meeting on today, acknowledge ancestors and elders and Aboriginal people in the room with us here today.

I'm pleased and proud to be here today in my capacity as minister for Aboriginal Affairs and will provide a quick update on the last 12 months in the portfolio as they relate to the Budget that we're here to examine. We've continued to consult with and receive feedback from Tasmanian Aboriginal people that's informing the drafting of new, stronger Aboriginal cultural

heritage protection legislation for Tasmania and our amendments to the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995*.

Discussions and feedback to date have indicated positive support for many themes and key issues proposed for both pieces of legislation. However, several of the matters are complex and have required further discussions with Tasmanian Aboriginal people to ensure their views are properly responded to. My commitment is to listen carefully to all views and introduce legislation that is effective and balanced and robust.

We intend to release a draft exposure bill for the new Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection Act for further consultation next month as part of our second 100-day plan ahead of its introduction to parliament. I'm pleased to note other measures to support the new act are included in the 2024-25 state Budget, including funding for a new Aboriginal Heritage Register and an Aboriginal Heritage Consultants' Training Program.

We've also continued to work with and support Tasmanian Aboriginalcommunity controlled organisations to build their capacity to deliver services in line with our obligations under the National Agreement for Closing the Gap. We're currently developing our second Tasmanian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan in partnership with our Coalition of Peaks partner and all other Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and I look forward to its release later this year when it's finalised.

The Aboriginal Advisory Group appointed by our government to progress advice on Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty continues to make regularly and I thank them for their commitment and their preliminary advice to date. We're not setting a time frame or a predetermined outcome for their important work. These matters will be determined by the group to ensure the process is truly Aboriginal-led and I look forward to receiving the group's next instalment of advice regarding the next important phase of this work.

We're committed to working respectfully with all Tasmanians on this journey and we will continue working with all Tasmanian Aboriginal people to deliver better outcomes for them and their families right across the state. Thank you, Chair.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, it was three years ago in November 2021 that the Pathway to Truth-Telling Treaty report by Professor Kate Warner and Tim McCormack was accepted in full by your government. What progress can you say has been made on key recommendations of that report, such as the establishment of a Truth Telling Commission and Treaty and truth-telling advancement legislation being put forward?

Mr JAENSCH - It's not accurate to say that the government committed to the outcomes of the Warner and McCormack report in full. We received that report and we undertook to listen to the communities' responses and priorities arising from it. On the receipt of the report and its publication we listened to Aboriginal people in particular and their responses to the matters raised in that report. I must say that our Tasmanian Aboriginal communities are as diverse and complex and varying in their views and opinions and priorities as any other subset of our population and our community. It's no surprise that there were mixed reviews and differing priorities across Aboriginal people.

One of the things, though, that there was more support for than just about anything else was that we progressed down this path towards truth-telling and treaty, and find a way to do

that in a way that was meaningful and safe for Aboriginal people. We set out a process to understand what that pathway might look like, and to be directed by Aboriginal people on how to do that.

We set up our Aboriginal Advisory Group. They have been meeting over the intervening period. They've been examining the experience of other jurisdictions around Australia, some of whom are more advanced than us, some of whom have had false starts and have rethought their approach to developing truth-telling and treaty processes. They're doing it in different order. Some of them have stopped what they're doing and started all over again. Our advisory group has been meeting with and listening to a lot of people from interstate. It is preparing advice for the government as to what they think a model could look like here, and what needs to be done to consult further on that and present that as a proposition for Tasmania to accept.

Mr WILLIE - Clearly there are frustrations within the Aboriginal community. Just a couple of months ago we had some members of the Aboriginal community camped out here in Parliament Lawns. They were frustrated with the lack of progress. I'm interested in what the Premier said to them to give them some assurance that progress is being made.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm not the Premier. You need to ask him -

Mr WILLIE - Surely as the minister you would understand what he said.

Mr JAENSCH - what he said to them. I understand that he heard their concerns. He met with them and heard their concerns. They felt heard sufficiently that they packed up their camp and moved off. As I understand, he has had further communication with the group. He also has appointments to meet with a range of different Aboriginal groups and organisations across the state on this, and other matters that they want to bring up with him. We remain committed to this pathway to understanding the best way for that to happen. We will be advised by Aboriginal people and we'll learn from other jurisdictions.

Mr WILLIE - I have one more question. It's my understanding that you have draft advice from the Aboriginal Advisory Group on the way forward. When is the time line for that release and what do you plan to do from here?

Mr JAENSCH - The latest I have on that is that there's still finalising that. We've had some information from them, but they're putting a little bit of extra work into that. I'd expect that over the coming weeks we'll have some further discussions. We'll consider the advice they have for us. Not only what they see as a model or a proposal for Tasmania, but also what they suggest happens next. When the advisory group was formed, it was to look at other jurisdictions, to consider various models, but also to ensure that there was consultation with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on a model or a pathway. Some of that work still needs to happen but you need to have the thing to consult on first. We're looking forward to getting a briefing from them on that.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is a fact that since you've been the Aboriginal Affairs Minister and since the Liberals have been in government, there have been no land returns, there has been no improvement in heritage protections, which are appalling for Aboriginal heritage, there are still Aboriginal children languishing in Ashley Youth Detention with no prospect of leaving.

Mr JAENSCH - Why would you say that, with no prospect of leaving?

Dr WOODRUFF - There is no movement for process, for truth-telling and treaty. No movement at all has happened. Nothing has happened.

Many people in the Aboriginal community feel that your words are hollow and your government's actions towards Aboriginal people are tokenistic. Nothing could be more apparent than the Macquarie Point Precinct Plan that was tabled yesterday. The original copy, I'd like you to talk about the draft copy of the Aboriginal precinct plan, because it's changed the Aboriginal culturally informed zone between the draft and the final. What we see now with the final is that the approximate area has been reduced from 9000 square metres to 8000 square metres. The additional approximate area has reduced from 7000 square metres to 5000 square metres. There's been a loss of 3000 square metres.

There's also been a loss of a commitment to delivering a Truth and Reconciliation Park. The draft copy made that commitment, the final plan does not make a commitment to delivering a Truth and Reconciliation Park. What do you say about the fact that is a clear, utterly tokenistic way of treating Tasmanian Aboriginal people? You're not even making a commitment to consult with them on this incredibly important place.

Mr JAENSCH - Are you finished? In place of a question, you've given me a whole series of statements of the way that you want this government and our actions to be seen in relation to Aboriginal Affairs.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you dispute that no land returns have happened? Do you dispute that? Do you dispute that there is no improvements in heritage legal protections? Do you dispute those things?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - I would love to go line by line through the question that wasn't really a question there, but the one that I want to pick out -

Dr WOODRUFF - Just go to the question.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - The one that I want pick out, Dr Woodruff, is that you shouldn't say that there are young people, Aboriginal or otherwise, languishing in detention with no hope of ever getting out. That's an irresponsible thing to say. I reject that entirely, that characterisation, of the young people themselves and of the people who work with them and our youth justice system.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's not a characterisation of them; it's the awful conditions they're living in.

CHAIR - Order

Mr JAENSCH - I think it is a disgusting portrayal that you've put in place there. I reject it outright. I think you should apologise because I think it's insensitive as well as inaccurate. We do have overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in our youth justice system and our adult

correction system as well. For you to ever say that someone has no chance of leaving, that is deeply irresponsible.

Dr WOODRUFF - Don't put words in my mouth. I didn't say that.
Mr JAENSCH - You said it and I think you should withdraw it.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - I did not say that. Chair, the minister's putting words in my mouth.

Mr JAENSCH - No I'm not.

Dr WOODRUFF - I said Aboriginal people -

CHAIR - You had a very long-winded question, allow the minister to answer.

Dr WOODRUFF - I had a long statement and it had one question at the end. It had one question.

CHAIR - Please be silent and listen to the minister's answer.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, he's just -

CHAIR - No, no, no.

Dr WOODRUFF - Excuse me, he's just asked me to withdraw a comment.

CHAIR - Excuse me, no, I will not tolerate these interruptions. Allow the minister to speak.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you please clarify, Chair, what I need to do as a member of the committee?

CHAIR - No. I want you to listen in silence to the minister's answer.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you Chair. Ms Woodruff, in relation to a couple of the other matters that you have raised. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection Act, a brand new act, is being drafted. I've just said that it's going to be released in draft in the next month.

This government has already amended the existing legislation to, for example, update the use of terminology in the act so it is not offensive to Aboriginal people in reference to relics. It will also ensure that the penalties that apply for destruction and interference with Aboriginal cultural heritage in Tasmania are benchmarked against an equivalent to those for destruction of any other heritage in Tasmania, so that that disparity has been addressed as well.

We are undertaking substantial reforms in the area of Aboriginal cultural heritage protection. I would like it to have moved faster. We have had interruptions along the way to the business of government generally, on a number of fronts, that have also prevented that from happening. We've just had a discussion in response to Mr Willie's question about the steps that we are taking regarding the pathway to truth-telling and treaty. We'll continue to do that work.

Whether that's fast enough for you or not, I'm less concerned than to ensure that we are respectfully seeking and taking the advice of Aboriginal people, and that we've given all Aboriginal people and groups the opportunity to participate in that process. We'll continue to do so as we go.

With regard to the Macquarie Point precinct, that is not a project that we manage. We have provided support and advice to the Macquarie Point development body regarding Aboriginal contacts and information. The management of their consultation process is a matter for them and how that manifests in their precinct plans. I note that they have also engaged with Aboriginal people in the concept designs for the stadium itself. Aboriginal themes have been incorporated into the look and the textures applied in the design of the stadium structure. I'm looking forward to continuing engagement from Aboriginal people with them on the Aboriginal themed and dedicated areas of the broader precinct. We'll stand by to assist Macquarie Point with that, and to support and enable Aboriginal people to be part of that process.

Dr WOODRUFF - As Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, are you concerned about the fact that the draft Macquarie Point precinct plan had a commitment that said:

> MPDC remain committed to delivering a Truth and Reconciliation Park, however, only if this is consistent with the guidance from community. This space is anticipated to be an open-area Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone

Are you concerned that that statement of commitment to delivering a truth and reconciliation area consistent with the views of the community and a commitment to an additional 3000 square metres have been removed from the final plan?

Mr JAENSCH - I expect that we will see areas there dedicated to themes and presentation that are informed by -

Dr WOODRUFF - Who?

Mr JAENSCH - Aboriginal Tasmanians, and that will continue to be part of the overall precinct delivery.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why wouldn't the MPDC have a stated commitment to seeking the views of the Aboriginal community on a Truth and Reconciliation Park? Why would they have removed that statement?

Mr JAENSCH - I think you need to ask them those questions. We will stand by to support and inform them to any extent that we can.

Mrs PENTLAND - In reference to the commission of inquiry's Aboriginal Youth Justice Recommendation 12.29, which includes funding for the recruitment of a full-time Aboriginal liaison worker to support youth in the justice system, has this critical position been filled?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm going to check in with my adviser on that.

I understand it hasn't been appointed yet. That is a matter for the youth justice portfolio. I don't have those materials with me. I'd be happy to provide you an update on that.

Mrs PENTLAND - Okay, great, thank you. I was wondering - maybe this is associated with that too, but I was going to ask if you could give a detailed breakdown of the funding allocated in this Budget for the protection of Aboriginal youth in regards to the commission of inquiry. Would that be a better suited question for them too?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, for youth justice and child safety, the Children and Youth portfolios. I'm happy to take those questions from you at any time though.

Mrs PENTLAND - Okay, thank you.

Mr FAIRS - Can you update the committee on the government's commitment to progress a new, stronger Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage protection legislation, and other measures in the Budget to support the act when it's in effect?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I'm very happy to give you an update on that. Our government recognises the importance of Tasmania's Aboriginal cultural heritage to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and all Tasmanians. It is ancient and unique in the world and irreplaceable; and it's continuing. It spans tens of thousands of years, and we are only starting to fully appreciate its extent and significance.

The 2024-25 Tasmanian Budget supports our government's continuing commitment to develop a new, stronger Aboriginal cultural heritage protection act, as I said in my overview, which we intend to release for public consultation next month.

To support the new act, we've committed an additional $300,000 to finalise an improved Aboriginal Heritage Register that will significantly improve Aboriginal heritage assessment response times. The current Aboriginal Heritage Register has been in place since November 2014, but is no longer fit for purpose. It poses some risk for ensuring that Aboriginal cultural heritage is appropriately understood and managed properly in the state.

The register contains approximately 13,500 site recordings, Aboriginal heritage assessment reports, digital and business records. The register is critical to support Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania's desktop review process, which determines if there is known Aboriginal heritage in a particular location, or a risk of interference with or interaction with Aboriginal heritage that may jeopardise it and might require further management actions.

The register also underpins the Aboriginal Heritage Property Search website and Before You Dig Australia, BYDA referral system, which sounds like a brand of electric car, doesn't it? Both of these provide automated Aboriginal heritage advice for a variety of stakeholders.

The department identified the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and information system developed by Cohga Pty Ltd as having a strong demonstrated history in other jurisdictions including Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. The new register will be web-based, including a public facing platform to provide greater accessibility and functionality to AHT staff, Aboriginal people and stakeholders, to better manage and protect our Aboriginal cultural heritage.

It's anticipated the new register will go live in the second quarter of 2025. Linkages with planning platforms such as the Property Search website and Before You Dig Australia will also be maintained. A new robust register is a critical aspect of improving protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage. Importantly, it will make it easier to know about and plan for protection of

cultural heritage earlier in the development planning process as well. Rather than Aboriginal cultural heritage being a matter which is considered after you've finalised your plans and made your investment and committed to a development, the earlier that you do your homework on it, understand how to work with and around the protection of Aboriginal heritage. It's better for the heritage. It's better for developers, who don't find themselves with heritage becoming a problem for them later in the process, potentially a feature of good design on the sites where they're operating.

Mr WILLIE - I'll ask a few more truth-telling and treaty questions. I'm interested in whether you're engaging with tuylupa tunapri, or whether the Premier is, and whether you're considering their advice alongside your Aboriginal Advisory advice.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, thank you. I've had a number of meetings and many, many hours of meetings with representatives from the tuylupa tunapri group. We had hoped that they would agree to participate in the advisory group process that we announced. The door remains open for them to do so. I understand that the advisory group itself has reached out and invited them to come and share their ideas and concepts with the advisory group. To date they haven't, but the door remains open for them to do so.

I understand that the Premier has also made himself available to members of that group for further discussion as well. We're not excluding anybody from this discussion. We'll listen to all the different perspectives and concepts and our hope will be that, ultimately. We'll be able to chart a course that everyone wants to participate in.

Mr WILLIE - The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania is underfunded and has been for some time. It's a statutory body, as you're aware, expected to manage all return lands and administer important cultural and country programs. Their budget's normally $300,000, which, I understand, they struggle to meet some of their requirements, particularly around financial reporting and things like that. I have some advice that it's been now reduced to $200,000. I do note, though, that there is $150,000 in another initiative's line item, so I'm just interested if you can provide some clarity around their funding.

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that the year-on-year-based funding is about $314,000 that the Aboriginal Land Council receives each year. We have, over recent years, provided additional funds each year of around $50,000 in response to their identification of a need for more resources, and, last year, an additional $130,000, particularly around the need for a financial controller or services to assist them with some of their financial management in governance issues.

This year in the Budget there's $150,000, as you point out, which is to enable them to continue that sort of extension of work. The Aboriginal Land Council has also received $700,000, I understand is the figure, in relation to work at properties it's responsible for at Wybalenna on Flinders Island. There's some work there on interpretation and presentation of the site, which is an incredibly important site in Tasmania's history and Tasmania's Aboriginal history, in particular, and there has been, I think, an additional $100,000, not through my portfolio directly, but through the Activation Program Built Heritage Scheme to support some restoration activities on a homestead at the Wybalenna site as well.

There's a number of areas where there has been resourcing provided to the Aboriginal Land Council. We anticipate that the amendments proposed to the *Aboriginal Lands Act* will

create some new governance roles and activities and, hopefully, then result in more land parcels being prepared and brought to parliament for consideration for land return, more management roles for the Aboriginal Land Council. We think that's probably the time for a fulsome review of the resourcing requirements for the Aboriginal Land Council. Until then, we'll support them with additional funds where needed to ensure that they can continue to meet their obligations.

Mr WILLIE - It was my understanding that they sought advice from the Treasurer around this $314,000 base funding, and we were told that because the Budget was delivered late, the amount is pro rata, and the argument is that it doesn't make a lot of sense because there are other organisations in the Budget that aren't being funded pro rata. I would have thought with the financial reporting, you'd see the full amount.

Mr JAENSCH - No, I'm not familiar with the 'pro rata-ing' that you refer to. I'm happy to see if the department has any further advice for me on that.

Mr WILLIE - I can take it on notice if you like.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, $314,000, I understand, is the Budget amount for the full year as per year-on-year arrangements with the Aboriginal Land Council.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the previous precinct plan for Macquarie Point, before a stadium was proposed, committed to a Truth and Reconciliation Park that acknowledged Tasmania's true history and treatment for Aboriginal people, a place for the whole Tasmanian community to commit to truth-telling.You're saying that there will be, what you said earlier, textures in the new stadium that reference Aboriginal cultural heritage. Do you think that's an appropriate change?

Mr JAENSCH - I think you're misrepresenting what I said. I think I referred to the designs that have been released for the proposed stadium itself have included input from Aboriginal artists and designers as part of that design. In terms of the overall precinct and what's included in that - that's a separate matter - I don't think one is an exchange for the other.

Dr WOODRUFF - The stadium that's proposed - the Macquarie Point precinct plan - has an area that's allocated to an Aboriginal culturally informed zone.

Mr JAENSCH - Correct.

Dr WOODRUFF - Previously, the government had committed to a Truth and Reconciliation Park that would tell the true history of colonisation in Tasmania and now there is a precinct plan, which we've just seen, has a tiny area and that does not include a commitment to consulting with Aboriginal people about what's going to be in that space. Did you provide advice to the Macquarie Point Corporation in the development of that final plan?

Mr JAENSCH - We've provided advice when it's been sought from us on particular matters. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation and its plan for the site is a matter that you should address to them and ministers that have responsibilities for that. As I understand it, the Aboriginal culturally informed zone has that label because what happens there will be

informed by Aboriginal people through their consultation and design processes, not the Aboriginal Affairs minister directly.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm asking you as Aboriginal Affairs Minister - did you have any correspondence with Macquarie Point Development Corporation in the cultural Aboriginal culturally informed zone? Were you aware that it has removed a commitment for consulting with Aboriginal people about what is to be the contents of that zone?

Mr JAENSCH - I am not aware of removal of a commitment to consult. In all of the engagement I've had with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation on these matters, they have been acutely conscious of any areas of that planning which is intended to honour and respect Aboriginal people, their culture and their place in their role in our community should be informed by Aboriginal people. I've never heard them speak otherwise of that.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, it was to be a Truth and Reconciliation Park.

Mr JAENSCH - That was before there was a stadium.

Dr WOODRUFF - Hold on a minute. There was to be a Truth and Reconciliation Park, but now it looks like a truth and reconciliation plaque. Isn't that all tokenism? Back to my question, have you had any engagement? Did you provide any advice? Is there any correspondence between you and the Macquarie Point Development Corporation about that space?

Mr JAENSCH - I would be happy to ask my office to check my correspondence so that I can give you a definitive answer on 'has there been any correspondence'? I think you've worked up your park versus plaque line and needed to get that out today. I think that's a little insensitive.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's an unfortunate statement of fact.

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that the Mac Point Development Corporation and its precinct plan includes a reference that the corporation is already engaging with the Aboriginal community in this process.

Dr WOODRUFF - Which Aboriginal community? What engagement process? What consultation process is actually happening?

Mr JAENSCH - Again, I have some more information here, but it's not mine to give. I think you should direct your questions to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are the Aboriginal Affairs minister and you should be responsible for consultation processes with the Aboriginal community or at least know about them.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff, Mrs Pentland has the call.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Chair, just on the rotation, it's three to Labor, two to the Greens. I just heard about five or six questions from the Greens.

Dr WOODRUFF - I asked two questions and there was a bit of backwards and forwards, which is what we've been doing on this committee.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, we know that there's a division within the Aboriginal communities when it comes to the ownership of Aboriginal heritage and cultural land. How is the government helping Aboriginal communities with this issue and ensuring that these disputes don't interfere with Aboriginal heritage and cultural land being returned to the Aboriginal people?

Mr JAENSCH - That's a big question. Again, as we discussed a little earlier in response to one of Mr Willie's questions, Aboriginal people sometimes ask me why, when we go to parliament, that Liberal, Labor, Greens and independents don't get in the room and agree on how to do things and why we always seem to be arguing. They sometimes point out that in any group of people there are different schools of thought and ways of approaching things. So mustn't we expect that Aboriginal people are any different to anybody else? There's always going to be disputes and differences of opinion and approach between them.

As a government, our approach has always been that we will listen to and work with everyone who will work with us. We will not exclude people from the discussion and we'll seek to be inclusive in all of our processes. It has to be said in the context of the *Aboriginal Lands Act*. Some of the amendments that we're proposing there are a direct response to people feeling that the current legislation and the way it's been enacted doesn't enable their voices to be heard and represented, and we want to be sure that any state legislation serves all of the people that it's meant to serve and provides opportunities for them to have voice and be heard and be represented. This is a challenging area. We have to be sensitive to it because as a non-Aboriginal person I'm dealing with complex interactions between family groups and organisations that have been happening for a lot longer than I've been around and it makes it a sensitive area to work through at times. We need to ensure that we're doing so in a way that doesn't make people feel unsafe in dealing with government and working under the legislation that I'm responsible for.

That's a broad topic, and I gave you a broad answer to it. If you have any more specific examples that you'd like to speak about, I'm happy to take them to.

Mrs PENTLAND - I wanted to ask a question about the Blue Lagoons on Flinders Island. Is there any prospect of that land return happening?

Mr JAENSCH - You may be referring to an area that I'm familiar with, which has been referred to as The Lagoons, which I understand is one of the precursor settlements to the Wybalenna settlement on Flinders Island. We have been engaging with the Aboriginal Land Council over a couple of years now and with the assistance of the Parks and Wildlife Service as well, we try to identify the location of that historic, important site and where it sits in the landscape there, either on private property or in a reserve area.

As I understand it, despite a fair bit of research from the Aboriginal Land Council and others, that the general locality seems to have been able to be identified, but not specific sites because of the nature of the country and then the sorts of remains of a settlement or evidence of a settlement that might have been there, including graves.

Mrs PENTLAND - That's correct.

Mr JAENSCH - In the absence of being able to determine specific sites, the discussion is now centering around a representative location, the extent to which that is on Crown land and maybe able to be subject to a management agreement or a future land return proposal. That's work that's currently in progress.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thank you.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, in the Budget, there was a commitment to develop a Tasmanian Aboriginal heritage consultant training program. Can you update the committee on plans for that, please?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much, Mr Fairs. As I said before, we're bringing the new legislation forward. The Tasmanian Heritage Register is part of that story, but the other critical element is the role of Aboriginal heritage consultants who deliver an essential service in providing authentic and qualified Aboriginal cultural heritage advice. Consulting archaeologists undertaking Aboriginal heritage surveys and assessments must be accompanied by an Aboriginal heritage consultant whose key role is to provide or facilitate the cultural significance assessment in consultation with Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

The issue we're facing is that there are currently only 11 registered Aboriginal heritage consultants in Tasmania with the appropriate specialist training and skills and not all of them are actively or fully engaged in providing those services at the moment. Nor have they received any regular training or upskilling, in a formal sense, for quite some time.

The review of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* that we undertook and our ongoing discussions with Aboriginal people and people in the planning and development community have identified that we need to address this and some priority actions need to be undertaken to ensure that we have a pipeline and a workforce in the Aboriginal heritage consultant area. The 2024-25 Budget, therefore, includes $1 million to develop and deliver a new training package that will support Tasmanian Aboriginal people to upskill and build their knowledge to become Aboriginal heritage consultants.

There is work being done at the moment and Steve may be able to speak with far more knowledge than I can about the approaches being considered to deliver that training through TAFE and/or university courses as well as working with community. If we can do that, we'll not only enable developers and those encountering Aboriginal heritage as part of their work to have ready access to qualified people to assist them through that and to help them get it right, we'll also be heading towards one of our Closing the Gap targets. That is, to have more Aboriginal people qualified and working in areas in relation to protection of their heritage and culture as well for their communities.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania will work with the Aboriginal Heritage Council to design and scope that program. That work is anticipated to be wrapped up before the end of this year so that we can start recruiting and training next year. Steve, do you have anything to add?

Mr GALL - We are looking at various models for what that training can look like, whether or not we go down that path. We already have existing traineeships within Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. They're focused more on the internal works of what we need to do as

regulators and administrative legislation, but we can tap into some of that training that's already been provided.

We're looking at what could be provided through the TAFE. There isn't a lot of strong training at the moment in Aboriginal cultural heritage that actually is specific to that. It's more about land management so we'll also be looking at some packages that are provided by universities more broadly.

Also, to give them some field experience, we're looking at the program running placements with consulting archaeologists' firms and Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, where they can learn about the state and the level of information required for registrations and to feed through that and navigate the heritage assessment process. That will give them some insights into that and help inform them about the level and quality of information that's required when they're in the field.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, you encouraged Reconciliation Tasmania to apply through the budget process for funding to recognise their important contribution in Tasmania, but they were unsuccessful. They're the only state reconciliation council in the country that's not supported by their state government. What's the explanation for that?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Mr Willie. Yes, we did receive a budget application from Reconciliation Tasmania and, unfortunately, in this budget process, it hasn't been able to be supported. They're not alone; there are a lot of bids that I put up into the budget process that also didn't get funded. We work through every budget to ensure that we're investing our resources on the highest priorities we can and that we're supporting as many organisations who are doing good work as we can.

In this case, I had correspondence from them, I wrote back to them, and I understand that we're setting up a meeting with them shortly to talk about their needs, their work program, and the next budget process, which is coming up. Noting that this budget that we've just seen now is also an unusual one, given its timing and that there have been priorities around things like the commission of inquiry and specific commitments that the government has needed to cover as well.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, I see you and other ministers at the reconciliation breakfast when there are events on and things like that. You're quite happy to go to their events and things, but when they call upon you to support them in the wake of the failed referendum and the important community education and things that they need to do, you don't support them. Don't you acknowledge that the work, particularly in the wake of the failed referendum, is very important?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I do, and we do support the work that they do. In this instance, their budget submission wasn't able to be met. We've made arrangements for me to meet with them again soon to catch up on what the consequences of that are for them and what their planning is for a submission to the next budget process, which will be opening soon.

Mr WILLIE - The consequences are they're going to have to significantly scale back the work that they're doing in the community. I'm a young-ish man at 40, and I can tell you, some of the things I learned at school were utterly false, so I think this work in the business

community and in schools is very important to correct mistruths that have been circulating in the community for generations. Yet, you're not supporting that work.

Mr JAENSCH - I wouldn't like you to portray that we are not supportive of that work and the importance of it, but we also support the Aboriginal Education Services, the Aboriginal Land Council, the protection of Aboriginal heritage, the training of new heritage officers, and the development of new legislation. We have a range of things that are important for us to support and fund in my portfolio. We have to prioritise those and we have to put them up against all of the other things that every other sector wants from our budget each year.

On this occasion, Reconciliation Tasmania was not successful with their budget application. They're not alone; there are many other things that I also put up that I didn't get a guernsey for. We'll continue to work with them, support the work that they do, and understand what their priorities and needs are, so that we can assist them to shape their next application for consideration in the next budget.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, your department's review in 2021 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* identified it, correctly, as the worst Aboriginal cultural heritage law in the country.

Mr JAENSCH - Did it?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes. Matthew Groom, when he was the Heritage minister in 2016, said it was shamefully disrespectful of Aboriginal people and woefully outdated. You've talked about an exposure draft finally coming. Other documents, like the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan, have identified cultural landscapes for Aboriginal people as extremely significant and deserving of protection. The current act doesn't countenance protections for cultural landscapes and it's stuck in an antiquated archaeological approach, which some members of the Aboriginal community have called a sticks and bones approach to protecting Aboriginal culture. Will you commit? Does your exposure draft countenance protections for Aboriginal cultural landscapes and seascapes?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for the question. There is a wide range of matters that are covered in the successive drafts of the new legislation and the matter of Aboriginal cultural landscapes has been given a lot of consideration, as have other things like intangible cultural heritage, to the extent that the two are different. Some of the matters that we're working through still - one of the reasons this isn't straightforward and quick work is that we need to not only protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in its various forms, but also to provide people interacting with the legislation with clarity and certainty about what that means, what their obligations are, and how to manage for them and around them.

We need to be careful that we don't create uncertainty when we introduce into legislation protection for things that are new ideas or concepts that arguably have a subjective assessment of significance built into them. We don't want to end up creating confusion, or even resentment and hostility towards notions of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

One of the things that I've been very consistent with in briefing, and being briefed by, my department is to look closely at what happened in Western Australia when they introduced new Aboriginal cultural heritage protection legislation within the last couple of years, then withdrew it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes. They went back to a very dark place.

Mr JAENSCH - That's right. In the process there were a lot of people who weren't terribly deeply engaged with the subject matter who weighed-in on arguments there. It has set back Aboriginal affairs, the discussion, the acceptance, and the reconciliation journey because it introduced fear and uncertainty where that was not needed. We want to avoid that wherever possible. We want to make our new legislation robust in terms of the the way it protects Aboriginal cultural heritage. We need to make sure that it is clear to everybody how that works and what their obligations are. There may also be issues that, ultimately, we would like to have considered and protected through this legislation that we'll have to decide whether we spend another year trying to refine and polish to make sure they're absolutely watertight, or if we set them aside and put them to further work while we get on with the things that we know we can get right. Cultural landscapes may be in that latter category. We've not yet finalised the draft. You'll see it when it comes out and we'll take your feedback when you see it.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm sure you're aware that cultural landscapes is the issue that Tasmanian Aboriginal people continually raise as the area which is -

Mr JAENSCH - Aboriginal people raise lots of issues all the time, it's not my -

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I just finish my question, minister? The issue that Aboriginal people continually raise as the kind of gross failure of our legislation in being able to protect ancient Aboriginal areas. It was the west coast of takayna that was protected in 2012 as the Western Aboriginal Cultural Lands that would tackle the western -

Mr JAENSCH - Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Landscape.

Dr WOODRUFF - Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Landscape. Because of its hut depressions and high density of midden deposits, petroglyphs, and burial sites, amongst many other incredibly important cultural factors in that living landscape.

Your government has continually supported four-wheel driving in that area and in the Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area. The Parks minister has put out a draft West Coast Off-Road Vehicle Strategy. I know you're aware of it. Can you see the harm that would be done to that extraordinary living landscape if four-wheel driving was expanded as is proposed under this government initiative? It's a $10 million funded initiative for mainland four-wheel drivers to come to Tasmania as part of a north-west tourism strategy.

Mr JAENSCH - I think you've put your own ribbon on that to suit your narrative about what the purpose of that strategy is.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is stated in that document.

Mr JAENSCH - Another perspective on it is that, post the closure of tracks south of Sandy Cape, due to their impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage, which haven't been reopened, undertakings have been given to ensure that the existing track networks are maintained, managed, and used in such a way that they don't cause further damage to the environment and its natural values and heritage values as well, whilst continuing to provide opportunities for people to access and enjoy that landscape that people have been accessing and enjoying for tens of thousands of years. This is very important the modern-day communities of the

north-west of Tasmania and those who visit from elsewhere as well. It's part of their culture and their heritage that they can visit and interact with that environment.

I don't see there's anything wrong with that. I think it's a very healthy thing that we have people out in these landscapes enjoying them and enjoying traditional pursuits there. I've got no concern. I'm glad we've got a strategy coming together to govern how that area is used and protected in the future with a particular eye on protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage. It's wrong for you to suggest that the government is promoting unregulated four-wheel drive access and people driving over Aboriginal heritage, as you often do. It's quite irresponsible to continue to do so.

Dr WOODRUFF - Your own Aboriginal Heritage Council in their recent update said:

> In June the AHC lodged a submission regarding Tasmania Parks and Wildlife's draft West Coast Off-Road Vehicle Strategy. The AHC were strongly opposed to the strategy and detailed several key concerns relating to appropriate management and protection for Aboriginal cultural values.

Their words, minister, your council's. Not ours.

Mr JAENSCH - And again -

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I finish and ask the question? Why are you deaf to listening to the Aboriginal community about the necessary protections? Isn't this basically about pandering to developers and making sure that you can provide clear pathways for development approvals, like for Robbins Island that the Aboriginal Heritage Council was so concerned about, like for kunanyi that they were also so concerned about, and that fell on deaf ears to you?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm not sure which part of that is your question. I think you've given a speech which reiterates -

Dr WOODRUFF - You're not listening to the community, to your own council.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - your narrative on a range of topics there.

In terms of the Aboriginal Heritage Council, I do listen to them continuously on a wide range of matters there. Putting out a draft strategy is precisely to get input and advice from a range of different perspectives, including from the Aboriginal Heritage Council. They're performing an important part of that process.

Dr WOODRUFF - Did you back it up to the Parks minister with your view as well?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - The other thing I need to be clear about, is that you're asking questions and making assertions around a wide range of areas of government activity which are outside my portfolio responsibilities.

Dr WOODRUFF - Maybe they shouldn't be: that's our point. Maybe you should take more ownership of your portfolio.

Mr JAENSCH - That's a matter you can take up with the Premier in terms of where portfolio allocation should lie.

Dr WOODRUFF - We try on a regular basis.

Mr JAENSCH - Did you want to try to bring that down to a particular question, or is it just a general of -

Dr WOODRUFF - The question is are you going to put cultural and seascape protections into the new legislation? If it doesn't, it's utterly failing the needs for Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Mr JAENSCH - I've had a discussion about Aboriginal cultural landscapes. I have my own understanding of different layers of what Aboriginal cultural heritage landscapes are about. I would like to see them somehow recognised and recorded because it's part of us being able to read the human history of our state through our landscapes. That's a really important thing for us to be able to do.

Dr WOODRUFF - What about protecting them as well as reading about them?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - It's a different thing to work out how to protect that in legislation, in a way that's consistent and clear to people who may come up against it.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's your job.

CHAIR - Order, Mrs Pentland will go next.

Mr JAENSCH - We'll do that to the best of our ability. You'll see what our proposed approach is when we release our draft legislation.

Mrs PENTLAND - Rebecca Digney from the Aboriginal Land Councils of Tasmania has informed of her concerns about the outstanding $20,000 in council rates on the sacred land at Saltwater River. This land transfer can't happen before the rates are paid. What is the government doing to try to rectify this situation? Do we expect the Aboriginal Land Council to flip the bill on this in order for that land transfer to happen?

Mr JAENSCH - That's a matter that we've been engaged with the Aboriginal Land Council on for some time. We understand it has to do with a land that was held under a previous organisation, and the transfers of title to the Aboriginal Land Council as the most equivalent existing body to hold that land in trust for Aboriginal people.

Generally, we understand that the issue is mainly to do with the federal government's treatment of those properties and outstanding rates and other encumbrances on those properties. We've been advocating on behalf of the Aboriginal Land Council to the Commonwealth and the federal minister's offices to find a way to pay those bills so that the Aboriginal Land Council

doesn't have to. We've raised this with the federal minister many times, including the new federal minister, including as recently as last week. We'll continue to do so. We recognise it's an issue for them.

Mrs PENTLAND - I heard in the committee before about the indexation of what's been given to community groups as far as the budget goes. I guess they really wouldn't have the scope to pay that $20,000, given -

Mr JAENSCH - We understand they've got limitations there. We think it's actually the feds who have a responsibility here. We'll continue to argue for them to assist that transfer and to wipe those outstanding rates.

Mrs PENTLAND - Okay great, thank you.

Mr FAIRS - You've spoken about Closing the Gap and our commitment as part of the National Agreement. Can you give us an update on how the Tasmanian government is working with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to build their capacity as part of that?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm certainly happy to do that. We are committed to better life outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and for them to have greater control of the services that they rely on and decisions that affect their lives. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap commits to a new way for governments and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to work together to improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

Previous attempts to close the gap nationally and at state level haven't worked, despite significant funding and effort involved from both governments and service providers. The new approach developed with Aboriginal people aims to capture the insights and understanding needed to ensure that the services provided to close the gap, meet their client needs through full involvement of Aboriginal people in the decision making and the delivery of the services, not just receiving them. It recognises that Aboriginal people are often the best place to determine what service is needed and how they should be delivered to meet the needs of their own people and their communities in culturally appropriate and effective ways.

A key element of the first Tasmanian implementation plan for Closing the Gap was to invest $5.3 million into Tasmanian Aboriginal Community controlled organisations to build their capacity, including skills and organisational capabilities, to co-design and deliver services for Aboriginal people in areas like health and well-being and education and housing.

From that investment we've seen the melythina tiakana warrana (Heart of Country) Aboriginal Corporation supported to embark on organisational change to transition from a volunteer-run entity to a fully operational organisation with four paid staff members. Appointment of a general manager enhanced organisational capacity, the ability to secure additional funds from a range of sources and successfully manage projects of its own.

The increased capacity has supported them to implement projects such as an Aboriginal Youth Hub and the Tebrakunna Ranger program and development of an amenities block and other services on their land in the north-east and their enhanced capacity to operate effectively and secure funding and build relationships. They're foundations that will set them up for the long term to continue to provide opportunities particularly for their young people and upskilling them in areas like land management and potentially they're the sort of organisation that might

be able to partner with and invest in further upskilling so that we have new Aboriginal heritage consultants as part of that group and based on the start that they've been given by MTW.

Mr WILLIE - That's a good lead into my question. The Premier says that Closing the Gap is his greatest priority and all governments around Australia keep failing when it comes to Closing the Gap in key areas. We don't even collect data in some areas that is Tasmania-specific. I'm interested in the implementation plan that's currently in a draft form. How are you going to address that data collection specifically and also Aboriginal sovereignty around data?

Mr JAENSCH - It's a good set of questions. Closing the Gap is an absolute key priority for us and across government. This is a whole-of-government commitment. The national agreement is signed by the first ministers of all jurisdictions and the federal minister as well. Around our Cabinet table, all portfolio ministers have responsibilities to deliver in terms of Closing the Gap.

In terms of progress, just an update based on most recent dashboard from March 2024, and this is the Productivity Commission's data. Tasmania has improved so far on eight of the Closing the Gap targets, including babies born with a healthy birth weight, enrolment in early childhood education, children assessed as developmentally on track, attainment of year 12 or equivalent, completion of tertiary qualifications, engagement in employment or education, adult employment, and over representation in youth justice have all seen improvements. There's a lot of work still to do to keep those heading in the right direction to further close the gap, but it'd be wrong to say that there's not been progress.

There's been some poorer performance on a few of those targets, including appropriately sized housing, but I do understand that Tasmania has met the national target in that one. It's just that our performance isn't continuing in the right trend. We have to turn that around. Adult incarceration and over-representation in out-of-home care are areas that have seen deteriorating statistics for Tasmania and they include areas that have significant focus in our out-of-home care reforms and our youth justice reform priorities right now in government. I'm confident that we can align those with the Closing the Gap challenges. There are some others where data is not reported because of very small numbers in some of those areas -

Mr WILLIE - Like life expectancy?

Mr JAENSCH - things like - life expectancy? I don't know if that's a small numbers issue or if it's something else, but suicide rates and other. For Tasmania, as a small jurisdiction, we're getting into an area where it may be possible to identify people if very small data sets are shared. Do you want to speak to the numbers?

Ms GRAY - Through you, minister. In relation to data and data sovereignty, we're establishing a data sovereignty reference group with the Coalition of Peaks partner and Tasmanian government agencies on a whole-of-government basis so that we work on collecting in innovative ways and ways that partner in new ways around data to collect, and be able to report on some of those ones where we're not reporting. Then at a national level, there is a number of policy partnerships underway that we sign up to by virtue of being part of the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap. They are in the areas of justice, early childhood education, care and development, social and emotional wellbeing, languages and housing. They've been established between 2021-22 and each agency works through the national architecture of Closing the Gap to progress those. There is a data sovereignty policy partnership

coming online as well, so there'll be work undertaken at a national level as well as the work that we're doing locally with our Coalition of Peaks partner and all Tasmanian government agencies.

Mr WILLIE - I have a few more questions Chair. You've just identified some of the areas the state needs to improve, particularly around justice and child safety. How are you going to bring Aboriginal people in to help get that trending in the right direction?

Mr JAENSCH - In relation to this - it is really a youth justice and child safety portfolio, which is also my hat -

Mr WILLIE - It's a Closing the Gap one too.

Mr JAENSCH - There's alignment there, but we have reference groups established and we're actively consulting with and involving Aboriginal people in the processes of designing those reforms in those different areas.

We also have an Aboriginal person on our expert panel for our youth justice reform process, Rodney Dillon, who's had a long history of working with Amnesty International on issues like raising the age of criminal responsibility and the welfare of young people in the youth justice system. We will continue to work with Aboriginal people through consultation, but also in the design of new diversionary programs, early interventions, and through care solutions for young people who are moving through our youth justice and out-of-home care services as well. The Change for Children report, our fulsome response to the commission of inquiry's recommendation does name up Aboriginal children, their wellbeing and your approaches to supporting them as a priority for the state.

Mr WILLIE - They're not building the northern prison. There's probably a good opportunity here to do things differently in supporting Aboriginal people in the community to reform their law-breaking ways. I've been to South Australia and I encourage you to have a look at that. That's the only state that is trending the opposite way when it comes to recidivism. They were going to build this billion-dollar huge jail and they decided not to and they're doing more community correction stuff that could be Aboriginal-informed and culturally appropriate. What are you doing when you look at some of the things that are happening there to get some of these things moving in the right direction?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I visited the Kurlana Tapa, the new youth justice facility development that they have in Adelaide, and we have the manager of that facility on our expert panel as well for youth justice reform.

Mr WILLIE - I am talking here about the adult correctional facility there.

Mr JAENSCH - We'll learn from every other jurisdiction. I can only speak about the youth justice. I'll speak on youth justice in particular and I'll defer to my colleague, Madeleine Ogilvie, regarding adult corrections. She has Closing the Gap targets that are aligned to her work as well which she's responsible for delivering on and you could direct some questions to her.

We think that we have a unique opportunity right now with the priority that's been assigned to youth justice reform, particularly recognising the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in our system and the supports needed in the community, led by

Aboriginal service providers to support them. We probably have the best opportunity in a generation to reset that and to set that on a new path. I'm excited by the work that's underway. It is directly relevant to Closing the Gap targets, as it is to our commission of inquiry targets and that's a very useful alignment in terms of things like Budget resources that are going into it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, can you give us some information about what I understand is occurring, that Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania will be moving from DPAC to NRE to be located with Heritage Tasmania? I believe that's what was announced this week by minister Ogilvie. That is, if it's true and if you could give us some information about it, a very long way from your government's commitment previously to creating a whole-of-government division for Aboriginal affairs to coordinate the government's Aboriginal affairs agenda, informed by Aboriginal people and remaining within DPAC. Can you talk about what's happening with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll provide a quick overview. I will ask that Ms Gray speaks to the operational aspects of it.

There have been a couple of machinery of government changes over the last few years involving Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and Aboriginal Affairs portfolio more broadly. You are right that previously the Aboriginal land and heritage work sat in the context of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, partly because it deals with a lot of land management issues and databases, spatial data management, planning and interaction with Parks and Crown Land Management as well as the resource management and planning system. So, there's a lot of very functional alignment between the heritage and lands aspect, Aboriginal heritage and lands and the work of NRET.

You're right, there was a decision taken to consolidate Aboriginal affairs under one roof in one agency with DPAC a couple of years ago and there was a progressive move of people and systems from NRET into DPAC. I understand more recently DPAC itself has been reconsidering how it specialises more in whole of government and policy development work and that delivery of services and policies is better handled by other agencies.

There is change underway at the moment which, as I understand, is at the end of October or around then.

Mr GALL - 1 November.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, 1 November. We'll see Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania having another change of postcode but the team has still been working together and will continue to. This is not an enormous government. We have the ability to work across some of those agency boundaries, but when it comes to things like the new heritage protection legislation, land management, the issues around things like cultural landscapes that you're talking about, there's an enormous alignment there with the workflows and the operations of NRET that I believe does suit Aboriginal land and heritage as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - Before you answer, I wanted to delve a bit more into that, because I suppose they're the concerns that people are raising. In this hearing we've talked about three things which you said that you can't really give comment on because that's better under another minister. You mentioned it on the Macquarie Point Development Corporation - the

removal of the Truth and Reconciliation Park commitment - you said that's another minister. When I was talking about Parks and their push for tourism and four-wheel drive track increases in the western Tasmanian Aboriginal landscape, you said that was the Parks minister. When you were talking about Ms Ogilvie just then, you said in relation to Corrections and Closing the Gap commitments, ask those questions of that minister. That is the concern with the way Aboriginal issues are being split up. The commitment was to bring them together so that there's a whole-of-government approach.

Now what you're doing is taking Aboriginal heritage, putting it with colonial heritage, and that seems to -

Mr JAENSCH - Well, no. Just because you say it, doesn't mean that it is true.

Dr WOODRUFF - Just wait. Well, it is my view and it's the view of other people. It reinforces a concern that you're going to stick with an old sticks and bones approach to protecting Aboriginal heritage and not take on cultural landscapes and protection of the seascapes. Can you see that people are concerned at this move of putting Aboriginal heritage with colonial heritage?

Mr JAENSCH - I believe you're quite committed to a narrative of your own on this and I would like to dispel it. First of all, in your preamble, Closing the Gap is everybody's responsibility. I'm very pleased and proud that we have assigned targets to every relevant portfolio minister to meet under Closing the Gap. This is not something that is the responsibility of the Aboriginal Affairs minister alone, and shouldn't be.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why can't you answer questions about it as the Aboriginal Affairs minister?

Mr JAENSCH - People like Pat Turner have been very clear with us that they don't expect this is something which is driven by Aboriginal Affairs ministers trying to change everybody else's portfolios. It's an all-in and everyone has responsibilities to serve.

Dr WOODRUFF - But who takes responsibility for the outcomes at the end of the day?

Mr JAENSCH - When you raise the issue about - I'm referring to everybody else. When you're asking me questions about tourism and you're asking me about -

Dr WOODRUFF - Parks.

Mr JAENSCH - about Macquarie Point decisions, I can speak to the aspects of that that I have input to. I reject your assertion that I'm farming out or neglecting my responsibilities -

Dr WOODRUFF - You just don't have any engagement with that. That's the problem.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff. Please allow the minister to answer.

Mr JAENSCH - When it comes to the functions of Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, Aboriginal land and heritage, they will still report to me as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs directly. I'm not responsible for Parks. They won't be subsumed by Parks. I'm not responsible

for European heritage. There's no suggestion that someone else is going to stand between me and Aboriginal heritage.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, they won't sit under Ms Ogilvie?

Mr JAENSCH - No. Aboriginal heritage is still mine as minister responsible. It just has a different administrative home in the structure of government. When it comes to the processes of land management, working with our Heritage Register, interacting with other spatial datasets, that's not stuff that DPAC is good at. That's stuff that NRET does all day. There are good connections there to get better outcomes for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal heritage. Critically, the oversight of the whole-of-government process of Closing the Gap, and right now, things like the intensive focus on our youth justice reforms, including Aboriginal youth justice, as a lead in DPAC as appropriate, because we need to draw in the involvement of many government agencies. That's what DPAC is good at.

Dr WOODRUFF - Given that a disproportionate number of young people who are in Ashley Youth Detention centre are Aboriginal, have you funded a bail hostel safe home facility so that Aboriginal young people won't be sent to Ashley when they should instead be bailed and going into a home? I think you haven't done that, minister. I think you've not actually funded a home as promised.

Mr JAENSCH - You've asked me the question, and you've told me what the answer is in your view. My version of that is that we desperately need more options for diversion, for bail, and for alternatives to sentencing and detention for all young people. Aboriginal people, as you point out, are disproportionately represented in that population. That's why we are working with non-government organisations of a range of kinds, including Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, about what roles they can take in providing supports and wraparound services for young people who may be at risk of entering our youth justice system, or who are exiting it and need those supports outside of it.

Our picture of that, at the moment, is more of individualised case management with wraparound services for young people, rather than building a home to put them in, which -

Dr WOODRUFF - Will it allow children to be bailed, which is the point of the bail hostel?

Mr JAENSCH - It will enable children to be bailed, which means -

Dr WOODRUFF - At 11.00 p.m. on a Friday night, instead of them getting put in the back of a paddy wagon and taken to Ashley, will they have a home to go to so that does not happen?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. That's the intention, for as many young people as possible.

Dr WOODRUFF - Funded by you?

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr JAENSCH - Can I speak to your question, please? Stop interrupting me.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, are you paying for the house, or are you paying for someone else to do that job?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, please cease interjecting and allow the minister to finish. We only have a minute to go.

Mr JAENSCH - What I'm trying to put across to you is that you are talking about a house where we put children. We are talking about -

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, it's called a home.

Mr JAENSCH - I give up.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, please stop interjecting.

Dr WOODRUFF - But you're not doing the thing you promised.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, please allow the minister to finish his answer.

Mr JAENSCH - Right across the state, wherever a young person, through their behaviours and their circumstances, is apprehended by police and is to be brought before a JP or a court, we need there to be supports and solutions in their community where they live that can support them to meet conditions of bail in the system as their matters are being delivered. It's not necessarily a building built by the government where we put young people. That's what Ashley has become, and it's not a good thing. What we are trying to do is to take a service response to this in the first instance, which can be far more -

Dr WOODRUFF - That is absolutely shameful. That is completely dishonest.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - You promised something and you're not delivering on that critical thing.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, order. Please allow the minister to finish.

Dr WOODRUFF - The commission of inquiry recommendation, that was. You're not fulfilling the commission of inquiry recommendation.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, order.

Mr JAENSCH - The commission of inquiry's recommendations align very strongly with our Youth Justice Blueprint -

Dr WOODRUFF - 12B, I believe.

Mr JAENSCH - which involves there being a 24-hour bail service available across the state. That doesn't necessarily mean a building where we take young people to, but it may mean that we have relationships with a wide variety of service providers - some of whom provide accommodation, some of whom provide accommodation with other supports, some who provide supports to people who provide accommodation - so that we can have an individualised

response to young people across the state, flexible, tailored to their needs. Not a building where we put young people, because that's what Ashley is.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's not a building, it's just a place for children to stay safe.

Mr JAENSCH - You keep saying 'building'.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, it is a home. That's why children don't get bailed. It's because they don't have a home to go to. You know that.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for your advice. Sometimes it's the home they're getting away from.

CHAIR - The time for Estimates of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has expired.

The committee will resume at 1.00 p.m.

The Committee suspended from 12.06 p.m. to 1.00 p.m

MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

CHAIR (Mr Wood) - The time being 1.00 p.m the examination of Estimates of the Minister for Children and Youth will commence. Welcome again, minister. There's no one at the table.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm sure they'll turn up. We need the committee's guidance on where you'd like to start. We've got different teams for different components, Children and then Youth Justice, or vice versa. I have an overview statement which covers both. Then we'll bring a team to the table depending on where the questioning starts. In your hands.

Ms ROSOL - Are they all in the room here?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes ma'am.

Ms ROSOL - They could just come as we ask the questions and we can go where we want to?

CHAIR - It might be less clunky though, if we just decided.

Ms ROSOL - Could we start with Youth Justice, please?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm happy either way.

Ms BROWN - I had different places to start.

Mr JAENSCH - I'm in the hands of the committee as always. I'm happy just to take a few minutes now while you work that out.

CHAIR - In light of that, maybe we could start with Children?

Ms BROWN - Yes, please.

CHAIR - Ms Rosol, are you happy with that?

Ms ROSOL - Sounds like I have to be.

CHAIR - Thank you. We'll start with Children.

Mr JAENSCH - Chair, I welcome to the table Sue McKerracher, acting deputy secretary, Keeping Children Safe; Ms Claire Lovell, executive director, Children and Families; and Mr Jason Sowell, deputy director, Finance and Budget Services.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for Estimates of the Minister for Children and Youth is three and a half hours. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr JAENSCH - Very much I would. There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of Tasmania's children. I am pleased to be here and proud to be Minister for Children and Youth in Tasmania.

I thank our staff, not only those at the table and in the room, but across our child safety, out-of-home care and youth justice systems for their extraordinary work. They work with children and young people who have had trauma in their young lives. They build trust, advocate for them, ensure their safety, and provide them opportunities. This is a challenging job. In undertaking it they exhibit great integrity and service and professionalism.

On 1 December 2023, our government released Keeping Children Safe and Rebuilding Trust, our response to the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, including the acceptance of all 191 of the commission's recommendations. Our clear focus is now to use the commission of inquiry recommendations to build on the work that we have already done in ensuring safety for children and young people. Accordingly, $174.89 million has been allocated over the 2024-25 Budget and forward Estimates for commission of inquiry initiatives across the Children and Youth portfolio. This includes significant reforms in the out-of-home care and youth justice services.

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

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

We are developing a whole-of-agency complaints management system to achieve a robust, consistent and transparent complaint management process resulting in timely and

relevant reporting of information. We are prioritising the transition of out-of-home care to non-government organisations as part of ongoing reforms to the out-of-home care system. We continue to prioritise the recruitment and retention of our highly valued child safety advice and referral line, and youth justice workforce across the state.

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

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

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

Ms WHITE - I want to start with the services for children and families. There has been a significant amount of interest in the work that your agency is doing, particularly in regard to their commission of inquiry work. The allocations across the forward Estimates for this particular line item are a bit lumpy. I was hoping that you might be able to provide an explanation to the committee, particularly in relation to some of the changes that are happening in 2026-27 for the decrease in expenditure.

Mr JAENSCH - Decrease in expenditure in 2026-27?

Ms WHITE - There's a significant uplift for the current financial year, which is explained in the footnote to relate to the commission of inquiry. Then there's a decrease over the next two years.

Mr JAENSCH - There are a couple of initiatives in the Budget and in the work program that are either winding up or are funded for an initial period and will be subject to future budget processes. For example, there is a decrease in 2026-27 that reflects the funding profile for our child safety workforce package. We have $4.52 million over the next couple of years as part of that system of payments and incentives and relocation, settling in payments for new workers in Child Safety, Youth Justice and the ARL. That is an example of a one-off, time limited allocation.

I understand that the Under 16 Lighthouse Project also concludes its planned term of being funded for this stage of works in 2026-27. There are also a couple of services, including the Intensive Family Engagement Service and the Transition to Independence programs, which are funded out to the end of 2025-26 under an existing allocation. We will be looking at their future funding in future budgets.

Ms WHITE - Is it possible for you to table for the committee, or I can put a question on notice to you, about the different programs that are ending over the next year or two that explain that significant variation?

Mr JAENSCH - Some will be projects that have a defined life and did have from their outset and some will be services that are funded periodically as well. Which time periods and funding changes do you want to target for that?

Ms WHITE - This financial year there is an allocation of $189 million and next year it's $180 million. The following year is $177 million. I would like to know why there's a decrease over the forwards for those two next financial years. What programs are ending, please?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm just going to ask Mr Salter if there is a table in the budget papers that would have more of those line items mapped out under the years so that the committee could refer to. Table 2.2 on page 54.

Ms WHITE - Yes, I'm looking at that one. I'm very keen to understand because we've heard from other hearings this week that there are black holes in the budget where programs just suddenly drop off a cliff and there's no provision made for how they're going to be funded in future budgets. I'm keen to understand what that means for your agency. I'd like to know if I can place a question on notice to you so that you can come back to the committee at a later date with the details of those programs that end in the next two to three financial years, please.

Mr JAENSCH - The advice I have is that for the time period you're talking about and those line items, the examples I gave you account for the majority of that change and I confirm that I expect that we would have in future budgets new bids for things like the Intensive Family Engagement Services and transition to independence for future funding for those.

Ms WHITE - Is it possible for you to quantify the amount of money you'd need to continue operating those programs?

Mr JAENSCH - We would review that in the formulation of our budget bids internally over the future budgets. I wouldn't want to under sell that.

Ms WHITE - Could I ask then, and it might be a question on notice, could you provide for the committee the years each of those things ceased, please?

Mr JAENSCH - The Intensive Family Engagement Services and the Transition to Independence are both funded for 2024-25 and not in the budget beyond that. That's an existing allocation that concludes in this financial year so we would be due to revisit those for the next period.

Ms WHITE - And the Lighthouse Program? You said that was 2026-27.

Mr JAENSCH - That was 2026-27.

Ms WHITE - Then you talked about the incentive payment to staff. When does that cease? Is that a one-off for this financial year only?

Mr JAENSCH - No, I think that extends through to next financial year as well.

Ms WHITE - So 2025-26.

Mr JAENSCH - That extends out to 2027-28 with a tail on it there. And the out years - the last two years - reflect the component of the workforce package which is scholarships.

If you're aware, there is a market allowance. There was a payment of $10,000 to eligible staff market allowance for the north-west relocation and settling in payment for the north-west and university scholarships and TAFE fee-free places that will extend out to 2027-28.

Ms WHITE - Yes, but the incentive payments just a one-off financial year?

Mr JAENSCH - No, I think they go in to 2025-26 as well. Yes, because there was a second payment component of those.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, I understand what you were saying about having different teams here, but there's five empty seats at the table. I've got quite a lot of questions I'd like to ask about Ashley and I'd like to start with them, so could I ask some of those questions, please?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm in the committee's hands when it comes to the order of your questions. I'm not going to determine that.

CHAIR - I got the distinct impression the will of the committee was to start with Youth.

Ms ROSOL - I think I made it clear that I would like to start with Ashley and there is room at the table if that's if that's possible, please?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, we can bring more people to the table.

I'm bringing to the table Jenny Burgess, associate secretary and acting secretary for the Department for Education, Children and Young People; Mr Craig Woodfall, director, Community and Custodial Youth Justice for the Department for Education, Children and Young People; and Courtney Hurworth, who is chief reform officer in DPAC.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, could you provide a breakdown of the ages of children held in Ashley Youth Detention Centre during 2023-24, please?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't think I have an age profile in my folder. I'm happy to see if the department can look that up while we're at the table. If you have another question you'd like to proceed with, we could return to that one when they have an answer ready for you.

Ms ROSOL - Yes, can do. In the budget papers, it shows the average number of children in Ashley Youth Detention Centre each day has grown by 79 per cent in two years. In that time, the centre's gone from an on average detaining nine children per day to over 16. That's despite

stark warnings from the commission of inquiry of live and current risks of abuse and human rights violations and the former commissioner for Children and Young People's warnings that more children there leads to greater risk. Why have you allowed for the number of children at Ashley to increase so much? Do you accept that this has increased risks to children at the centre?

Mr JAENSCH - The number of young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre fluctuates daily. Typically, within the range of 10 to 16 or so has been normal over the last couple of months. I understand there's 15 young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre today.

The number of young people that we have in there is a reflection of the decisions of courts and magistrates regarding where young people need to be held in relation to their offending behaviour, and also the extent to which they presented with suitable supports to enable them to be bailed outside of the detention facility.

The number does fluctuate. It has stabilised over the last couple of months, which has been very welcome. There is ongoing work to intercept those young people earlier in their in their offending behaviour, but also to provide more options when young people have offended and are presenting for the first time to someone who makes a decision about what happens to them next.

Our clear aim and significant investment in in this Budget of around $16 million is directed to various forms of intervention and diversion for those young people. This includes addressing their behaviours in the community before they offend, and developing partnerships and procedures with organisations that can support our police and community youth justice services to provide bail plans and options, sometimes including accommodation for those young people. That way we can present courts and JPs with sound bail plans that meet the needs of those young people and they are not defaulting to detention when there are other options. We need to develop more of those options and be able to deploy them very quickly in response to a young person's offending.

Ms ROSOL - I understand that and I understand that it fluctuates, but the average has gone up over the two years. Then, looking in the Budget, you have an aspirational target that there will still be, on average, 15 children in Ashley until at least the middle of next year, which is essentially the same as current levels. Despite all the action that you talk about and that it's a court decision, there is no change in the average number over that time. I'm interested in the word that you've chosen, you've said 'aspiration' rather than 'projection'. Do you have a projection that it will be even greater than that? Is that why you're aspiring to only have 15?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask someone else who knows how the budget papers are put together. Maybe Mr Salter can talk to us about the choice of words and conventions regarding projections and aspirations, targets, et cetera. Clearly, our aspiration is to have no young people in detention. Back from that, only those young people who were sentenced to detention should be in detention. Beyond that, only those who a court determines are a great risk to themselves or a community and cannot be held in some other more suitable form of accommodation should be in in detention. There is a process for the purposes of a budget that there is a conservative estimate of what we need to be able to budget for or around to ensure we have provision in the event that the current trend continues.

Our policy and operational response that we're talking about here today, largely with the commission of inquiry, our Youth Justice Taskforce, and the work of many, many people who are on this right now is to drive that number right down to its lowest possible level.

Ms ROSOL - I'm asking because previous years have used the word 'projection' and this Budget has changed it to the word 'aspiration'. I'm trying to understand that.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Mr Salter if he can comment on that or Ms Burgess, because it's a convention in the construction of the papers.

Ms BURGESS - We've changed the way that we've approached our targets for the budget papers across the entirety of the department. When we became a new department back in October 2022, there was a conscious decision to make those targets more aspirational and not just solely based on statistical calculations. As you see there, for that one where the average daily young people in youth justice detention, by way of example, there, if you did a trajectory from 13.6 to 16.3, you would have that going up and you'd have confidence intervals around that. What we've done is we've drawn the line of best fit based on that statistical calculation and said, 'No, that's not good enough. We want to be reducing the number of children in detention'. Therefore, while the statistical calculation might be higher, we've said we need to make sure that we are working to a reduced target of number of children in detention.

Ms ROSOL - Wouldn't you want to reduce it to what it was a couple of years ago and be even more aspirational than just what it is now?

Ms BURGESS - We would like to be aspirational. As the minister indicated, there are a number of factors that are outside the control of our department. A number of those decisions are made by the courts and not by our department. We receive them, look after them, case manage them, and try to get them out as quickly as possible.

Mr JAENSCH - We're doing everything we can to put different options in front of courts, so even the most conservative after-hours JP can be presented with some solutions for young people that don't involve them defaulting to remand.

Mrs PENTLAND - Before I start my question, I want to thank Craig, who took the time to take Miriam and myself on a tour around Ashley Detention Youth Centre. Craig, I want to commend you. Your passion and dedication to those kids is remarkable, so thank you for what you do there.

I want to ask a question in and around the commission of inquiry's Aboriginal youth justice recommendation 12.29, which includes funding for the recruitment of a full-time Aboriginal liaison worker to support youth in the justice system. Has this critical position been filled?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Mrs Pentland, for your question and thank you for recognising the passion of our staff. Anywhere across these services dealing with young people, you'll find that same heart for the work. It's difficult work and it relies on people who are motivated to turn up every day to make a difference in the life of children, so thank you.

Funding for a one FTE Aboriginal liaison officer role to be established at Ashley, and any future youth detention facility, has been provided for in the Budget. It'll include facilitating

cultural support and involvement in case planning, case management and exit planning. There's an allocation of $492,000 over four years for that. I understand that planning for that position has commenced. I might ask Mr Woodfall if he can update us.

Mr WOODFALL - We have developed a SoD, Statement of Duties, in a draft form, and the next step is to consult with Aboriginal organisations to make sure that they're comfortable and have been consulted appropriately. The position, pending consultation, will have a strong focus on supporting young people in Ashley for things like the yarning circle, general support, cultural safety, all of those elements that we want. We're also hoping that we'll position it to informing our policies and programs, both at Ashley and across Community Youth Justice. That's the intended direction of the SoD, pending consultation, which we're now moving towards.

Mr JAENSCH - Can I note as well, that appointment is one of a number of important leadership roles that are contemplated in the reforms based on out-of-home care and youth justice across our system, including an Executive Director, Aboriginal Children and Youth in DECYP, and a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children.

Mrs PENTLAND - Could you give a breakdown of the funding allocated in the Budget overall for those positions?

Mr JAENSCH - For those positions?

Mrs PENTLAND - Yeah.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay. What I might do is ask that between my advisers, who've been looking at some of this already, and the department, if we can put a summary together at the table here for you. If we can do that today, we will, otherwise we can take that on notice. I think we have some numbers to respond to the earlier question.

Ms BURGESS - We do, we have that data. Craig's just finding it again. He just flicked to something else.

Mr JAENSCH - Sorry, I thought we were being very smooth there.

Ms BURGESS - Just checking that I'm answering the right question: that was 2023-24, the distinct number of young people by age:

- 10-year-olds, none
- 11-year-olds, none
- 12-year-olds, none
- 13-year-olds, five
- 14-year-olds, 11
- 15-year-olds, 16
- 16-year-olds, 25
- 17-year-olds, 20
- 18-year-olds, none.

Mr WOODFALL - It's less than five, so we don't stipulate it.

Ms BURGESS - We have a statistical thing because of the identification of the young people. That one is not reportable.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Minister, can you update the committee please on what is being done to increase the focus on early intervention and diversion in line with the Youth Justice Blueprint's and the commission of inquiry's recommendations?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much Mr Behrakis, very happy to do so. We are committed to developing a youth justice system that achieves better outcomes for young people, their families and the communities they live in and that keeps them safe. The Budget provides a total of $15.85 million over four years in line with the commission of inquiry recommendations and our Youth Justice Blueprint's focus on intervention and diversionary services.

That funding breaks down as follows: $2.1 million over four years for an additional six Community Youth Justice staff or FTE to work with children and young people to meet the conditions of their community service orders and reduce offending behaviour through community-based diversion and rehabilitation programs; $6.5 million over four years for outcomes-focused community diversion and support for children and young people in the community as well as assisted bail and supported accommodation; $3.7 million over three years for JCP Youth's innovative model that offers a community-based response to at-risk children and young people; $2.3 million to support innovative local initiatives and partnerships that target the root causes of youth offending in local communities, like some of those you'll be aware of in the south here, Mr Behrakis; and $1.25 million in 2024-25 allocated to the Department of Premier and Cabinet as part of the Youth Justice Reform Taskforce to commence the establishment of assisted bail and transition from detention services.

Our 2030 Strong Plan investment in JCP Youth and in local place-based initiatives seeks to divert and prevent young people from offending and reoffending, so there's a recidivism aspect as well. JCP's BEAST Program delivers statewide interventions for children and young people by providing outreach and mentorship that's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It helps at-risk children and young people build the life skills they need to be happy, healthy and positive members of their community.

Additionally, by investing in other new local initiatives and partnerships that offer responses to local circumstances associated with antisocial and offending behaviour, we're targetting the root causes, not just the community safety aspects of the situations in the south of the state that you've been bringing to our attention. The department has also commenced development of a youth justice diversionary services framework that will identify criteria and measures for diversionary programs to ensure they are effective, evidence-based, and regularly monitored and evaluated. This aligns with the commission of inquiry's recommendation 12.13 that the government develop such a diversionary services framework and begin delivering programs under it by 2025.

While diversionary options such as informal and formal cautioning services and referring young people to community conferences are valuable and available now, and they'll continue to be used, the government will increase the number and range of approaches that are available to assist more young people and their families. This includes ensuring that Aboriginal children

and young people have access to Aboriginal-led diversionary services as we recognise that, while we seek the same outcomes from diversionary services for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people, the approach we take to divert them from the youth justice system in partnership with Aboriginal community organisations might be different. This significant service system development will see young people being diverted through an increasing number and range of programs, initiatives and services grounded in evidence that are regularly monitored and evalutated to ensure that they work. Thank you for your question.

Ms WHITE - Seeing we're on Justice, I'm not going to ask you to shift your people at the table.

Mr JAENSCH - We're all here now, everyone's here.

Ms WHITE - How cosy! In the joint House committee hearing on the commission of inquiry recommendations earlier this year, the committee was informed that the model of care for the new youth justice facility would be finalised by the end of September. Are you able to share with the committee whether that's on track and whether it will be made public?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. I understand that there is considerable consultation happening at the moment on the elements of the model of care that have been concluded so far.

Is that one yours to speak to, Ms Hurworth? There are so many people here.

Ms WHITE - It was Ms Hurworth who gave the evidence at the committee.

Mr JAENSCH - If you want to lead in on this one, I'll be very happy for you to do so with an update.

Ms HURWORTH - Yes, it is on track. We have just finished incorporating all of the feedback from the youth justice expert panel on the model of care and our intention is that it will be published publicly. It is a model of care for the whole youth justice service continuum, which makes it unique. Tasmania is the first jurisdiction to try a model of care that goes across the whole continuum of services and so, yes, our intention is that it will be public and to be published imminently.

Dr WOODRUFF - You spoke about it going across the continuum, minister; is it still?

Mr JAENSCH - I beg your pardon?

Dr WOODRUFF - I didn't ask the question because I knew you were taking advice.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is it still your government's intention to build five new youth justice facilities?

Mr JAENSCH - When the Youth Justice Reform Blueprint came out, we prepared another piece of work which we referred to as a facilities plan, which indicated what our intention was to support fewer young people being in detention in the future, and that was to ensure that more of them had the opportunity to be supported under a bail arrangement while

awaiting the outcomes of their court processes rather than being in Ashley. More of them were able to be supported as they exited detention to rejoin the community and be supported to not reoffend after a period of detention.

The initial model that we put out envisaged a single smaller detention facility at the heart of that and establishment of one or more assisted bail and supported accommodation facilities either side.

Further work on that and discussion with the NGO sector in particular indicates we might be able to get a better outcome more quickly by working with some of the service providers. So, instead of building a bail house somewhere in the state or in two or three locations, another government institution set up to house young people as part of our correction system or our youth justice system, we might do better by the young people by being able to support them in their communities through the use of some existing providers and facilities and services that are already there but brokered to meet their individual needs.

We do have organisations like 54 Reasons, Colony 47, JCP Youth, Anglicare, and others who already work with some of these young people or people in similar situations to them, who also may be involved with provision of things like special care packages in their out-of-home care system. Our initial focus is working with them to see how we build their capacity and their capabilities, not necessarily as a one-stop shop, but as a component of a brokered package of supports that we can put around a young person that enables them to stay in the community with support rather than being remanded in the detention facility.

If we find ultimately that there's not enough capacity there, we need to build more physical facilities that are suitable for providing a bail house, then we'll do so, but first we wanted to exhaust the capacity of the NGO sector to work with us around packages individually tailored to the needs of young people. The difficulty we have is each time we create another building and put a number of young people with complex behaviours in it, we run into the same issues that we have in Ashley. After all, we're dealing with some of the same young people in a different setting. We need to do better by them.

Ms WHITE - Minister, you've just confirmed that you're looking to use existing non-government organisations to provide services like a bail house facility, for instance.

Mr JAENSCH - Bail services, we'll call them services.

Ms WHITE - Why on earth can't you remove those young people in Ashley on remand now to those types of services? This is exactly what the community has been calling on you to do and you've refused to explore that, and now you tell the committee that it's something you are open to.

Mr JAENSCH - No, we're doing it already and so there is work -

Ms WHITE - Why have you been so reluctant and pushed back on the time lines? Your government announced that it would close Ashley by 2024, saying there was no alternative, and you've just confirmed that there are possible alternatives that exist today.

Mr JAENSCH - You've conflated a few different things there. We're unlikely to be able to create an NGO solution for young people who were sentenced by courts to detention for their crimes -

Ms WHITE - I'm not talking about sentencing, I am talking about the kids on remand who have not been sentenced to detention.

Mr JAENSCH - For young people who are in detention on remand now we have processes underway within Ashley that are intensive case management that include working with those young people's families and legal representatives to create applications for bail, including brokering accommodation if needed, and wraparound supports for those young people so that they can be released from detention and supported in the community.

Ms WHITE - Shouldn't that intervention happen sooner though? The courts should be able to have those options available to them so they're not sending kids to Ashley, but instead sending them to the bail services.

Mr JAENSCH - Where we talk about our diversionary framework that I mentioned in my overview statement, that's about establishing those systems and those relationships with service providers of different kinds so that we can offer that at the point a person is brought before a court and decisions are made about where they need to go. That work is underway now and there's money in the Budget that I've just described to buy those services, where they exist.

We also have young people who are already in the detention facility on remand, and we're working with them and their representatives as well to identify where there are opportunities for them to be bailed under certain conditions that a court will accept and after the fact, if you like, so that they don't have to be in detention as well. Sometimes those cases and the behaviours that underlie them are extremely complex and those young people are sometimes very difficult to place in a community setting because of the nature of their behaviour and offending. We're working at a number of different levels through our reform task force, with our expert panel and with our reference group of community service providers as well, to identify where the capabilities exist in our sector at the moment and where there are gaps.

There are gaps, particularly in terms of young people with violent behaviours and there being suitable premises and staffing arrangements to be able to provide for their care. Our ambition though is to grow that capability so that we can offer more of those solutions for more young people.

The pushback that I have expressed before is when people have asserted to me that we can close Ashley tomorrow and place all of the young people there now. That may come in the future in the care of community service organisations and that they're ready and waiting to take them now. My meetings with individual organisations, and with them in groups, they clearly don't expect that that can be done straight away. We need to grow the capacity of the sector to do that and the capacity of our service system at intake, if you like, when young people are identified as being at risk of entering the youth justice system to broker a set of services that can help be an alternative for them to go into detention. It doesn't happen overnight, but there is work underway right now and there's resources in this year's Budget to buy those services and put them together. There are people working on the case management of individuals in Ashley right now.

Ms WHITE - You have $1.25 million that's gone to DPAC for youth justice to try to build the capability.

Mr JAENSCH - No, more than that, there's $2.45 million I think, and $1.25 million is for purchasing those diversionary services and interventions.

Ms WHITE - It's in your press release, it says $1.25 million.

Ms ROSOL - I was wondering if we can go back to the projections and aspirations and the calculations that were done around that? What was the statistical model that was used? What were the calculations that were used to produce those figures and projections?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd ask Ms Burgess if she could speak to that.

Ms BURGESS - I'd have to get my data and systems and insights team here to be able to take you through the technical side of those calculations. Are you specifically asking for those measures in the Budget?

Ms ROSOL - Just how you came up with those figures and how you calculated those figures? What were the inputs you were putting into it to determine that you had a projection that was heading up, but you had an aspiration that you thought was achievable? What were the inputs that you put in to produce that?

Ms BURGESS - I can certainly get my data team to get an answer to that.

Ms ROSOL - The question is about the projection rather than the aspiration. What was the projection based on the current trajectory? Do you have that figure? You went for 15 for the aspiration. What was the projection going to be?

Ms BURGESS - Are you comfortable if I take that, Mathew?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm comfortable for you to provide Ms Rosol with any information she wants on that. I just need to confirm that I'm not aiming for 15. There's a column in the budget papers and a formula for filling it, which I do sometimes find that they're a bit meaningless in some settings. It's a little bit different when you're talking about performance data on other areas where we're trying to hit a particular target for a reason.

With this one, our aim would be to reduce that number down dramatically, ideally to 0. What we do have to do is also make provision for things that are outside of our control, which might mean that our budget papers need to reflect a reasonable provision so that, ultimately, we have the capacity in our system to look after our young people in our care, no matter what circumstances.

Ms ROSOL - We can only go with what's written down on the paper, and it says 15.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, but it's not guiding our work to achieve 15. We don't get any reward for hitting that target.

Ms ROSOL - I have another question. You referred a couple of times to things beyond your control. At the election, your government announced a so-called strike force to crack down on youth crime. By the government's own measure, the goal of that policy is to arrest and charge more young people. Doesn't that mean that the government policy is to send more children to detention - if you've got a strike force policy that will result in more of them being

arrested? It's in direct conflict with the goals of the Youth Justice Blueprint and with what you're saying in terms of aspirations. I can't figure out how those two things fit together. I'm wondering if you can shed some light on that?

Mr JAENSCH - One's about keeping the community safe from violent crime and damage to property. The other question is about what do we do with those young people to address their offending behaviour and help them to not become part of our youth justice and adult correction system. They can sit alongside each other quite well. One is about making sure the community is safe. That's the role of police. The question then is what happens to these young people? What we're doing at the moment is clearly not working, for the young people or for the communities where their offending happens.

That's why all of this work is so important - to address them earlier, address the causes of their offending, and prevent their offending and antisocial behaviour in the first place. For those who do end up committing crimes in the community, we don't not see that. We have to find better solutions for it. At the moment they're doing it again and again and again. That's no good for their community. It's certainly not good for young people. I see my job as intercepting them earlier and working out, with all of the skills we have and all of the best advice we can get, what we can do in the life of those young people that turns them around. If we can do that well, they'll be better off and their communities will be safer places.

Mrs BESWICK - I'd like to briefly add to Ms Rosol's questions on the targets of 15 people per day. She has probably covered it, but I wondered how many years calculated into there is actually sentenced versus remand. How many in sentencing, because you have to allow for a base number there per day?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm happy for that to be taken up as part of that line of questioning.

Ms BURGESS - If I'm answering the question correctly, it's a question about how many young people have been detained in custody by their legal status, and their legal status is either by remand or by detention or sentenced?

Mrs BESWICK - Yes. I think in the calculations there -

Ms BURGESS - For 2023-24, of those young people, 55 were on remand and 22 sentenced.

Mrs BESWICK - In June you promised a laser focus on child safety workforce recruitment, particularly for the north-west coast. Since that promise, how many new child safety officers have been employed on the north-west coast and how many currently are there in vacancy?

Mr JAENSCH - I will introduce Claire Lovell back to the table. Are you able to update us on those specifics - how many appointed and how many vacancies? I will try to reach for an update on the current recruitment process?

Ms C. LOVELL - How many staff members in the north-west currently, is that part of it?

Ms BESWICK - Yes.

Ms C. LOVELL - In the north-west currently we have 39 frontline staff members in our establishment. Budgeted, 23.5 of those are child safety officer positions, and 15.5 of those are other frontline positions. They can be allied health professionals or other people directly there in those services working with children and young people. Of those, at the last pay period ending 11 September, we had 14.2 child safety officers occupied, and 20.6 of the other positions occupied. We had over our funded establishment for the other positions and under for child safety officer roles, which have been the hardest to fill roles in recent times.

Ms BESWICK - We have nine vacancies?

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes. That doesn't factor in leave and workers' compensation absences. We had eight available child safety officers for that period and another 17 available staff members in other roles. We have had 25.6 staff over that period.

Mr JAENSCH - Can I add a little detail? The start of your question went to the recent recruitment blitz, and our workforce package which we announced. As I understand, the update that the first stage of that recruitment campaign resulted in 93 applications for child safety officer positions statewide. I'm advised that 51 have been interviewed so far. There are interviews continuing for positions in the south of the state. They're anticipating making offers soon for positions in the north and north-west, which would substantially meet the vacancies that we have for child safety, if they are successful.

There have some positive results also for the Advice and Referral Line. It would seem that that campaign has been a success. The incentives that we announced have been included in the recruiting process, so that the people who are making decisions about whether they can take this up will be aware of the market allowance, the payments, the relocation and settling-in payments, et cetera, that we've been able to put on the table.

We seem to have met the market there, but we need to keep recruiting. We know that with our workforce there are people who for their own lives and circumstances may need, from time to time, to not work full-time or take leave for personal reasons, to have a family, et cetera. There's a fair bit of coming and going in that workforce. We need to be able to recruit above what we call our establishment, our full complement of staff, so that we've got some capacity to fill vacancies when they occur in either short-term or longer-term.

We're very pleased with the response. We don't want to count too many chickens before they hatch. I'm very heartened by the advice that I've had from the department about the numbers. Particularly for the north-west, where there have been some big gaps to fill.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Can you please update the committee on how this government is working to strengthen leadership and culture in detention environments?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I can do that. An older one. Our government is committed to ensuring children and young people in youth detention are supported by a skilled, capable and supportive workforce that demonstrates the changes in attitudes and behaviours required for child-safe and child-centred practices. The commission of inquiry made several recommendations regarding strengthening leadership and changing the culture in our youth detention settings.

We're committed to ensuring that we have the leaders in youth justice who have the skills and capabilities to lead a child-safe organisation. That's why we're providing $3.4 million over four years to support and strengthen leadership and cultural change in youth justice. The funding is provided for four FTE to strengthen the leadership in the youth detention system now and into the future, and to support improved governance arrangements as well. An additional one FTE is provided for a Cultural Change Manager to lead the transformation of culture in youth detention services in line with the commission of inquiry's recommendation.

You would have noted through the inquiry's commentary that we need to amend legislation in some cases and we need to change practices and standards and guidelines and facilities et cetera in our youth justice system as well as in out-of-home care. But they kept coming around to this issue of changing the culture - building a culture which has a very clear focus on the rights of the child, the voice of the child, their role in decision-making that affects them, and the aim of what our youth justice and out-of-home care systems are meant to be doing for the children, not just what problem they're solving for society. I think that is a major shift and it does change the way that those young people experience their care and the systems that they interact with.

We're very committed to that. The department has translated those recommendations into changes to their staffing and management and leadership structures, and we look forward to the changes that they can bring in these settings. Thanks for your question.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I want to go back to the line of questioning I'd started around the change of policy by the government to move away from building five new facilities in the youth justice space. How has that been communicated? Is today the first that the public knows of that changing policy?

Mr JAENSCH - We've been talking about this with the sector for quite some time.

Ms WHITE - It's still on your website that you're going to build two assisted bail facilities, north and south, and two support centres plus the new detention facility.

Mr JAENSCH - Ms White, we will if we have to, if we don't have the capacity around the state where we need it for suitable buildings, rooms and services that can be provided by others.

What we do have is a number of partners who we are already working with, who provide a number of the services that we need, maybe not all of them, and maybe we need to look at how we do that in different combinations. If we're going to get a result quickly and if we're going to accelerate our way to reducing numbers in detention, we need to maximise the services that are out there now, maybe use them in different ways. Maybe it'll be that we end up investing in partnership with some of those service providers to establish facilities that they own and operate and that we use on a needs basis when young people need them rather than us building another government building somewhere.

However, if the capacity or the interest in the NGO sector is insufficient and we have gaps in the market, we'll build them. What we want to avoid is just decanting young people for the sake of getting them out of Ashley, putting them into another building which feels to them just like Ashley.

Ms WHITE - With all due respect, minister, you're not known for your speed and this is a project that's been dragging on for a long time and you still seem unclear about what your policy is exactly. Why have you been unable to decide whether you're going to proceed with the construction of new facilities - which is what you told Tasmania you were going to do - versus outsourcing to the non-government sector? How much longer do we need to wait before you actually make a decision?

Mr JAENSCH - Well, we're using partners in the non-government sector already and we want to grow that. We believe we can grow that faster than we can build new facilities that may duplicate things that are already out there in the market.

Ms WHITE - I wouldn't be surprised, given the slowness that it's taken so far.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for your character assessment.

Ms WHITE - It's not a character assessment; it's a critique of the policy.

Mr JAENSCH - I think the other way you could look at it is that we're prepared to pull every lever available to us to find solutions for young people who need it rather than deciding that we're going to be on a one track to build a new bail facility.

Ms WHITE - When will you know that by?

Mr JAENSCH - We'll know that as we engage more of these services and see how many of the cases presented to us can be dealt with, with existing service providers and co-investment with them in solutions.

Ms WHITE - That doesn't answer the question. We have kids sitting in detention who are on remand who could be accommodated in different facilities. How soon will you know?

Mr JAENSCH - Maybe. Every one of those young people is different and they have different needs and it may be that for many of them, Ashley is the only suitable place to hold them because of their needs and their behaviours. I'm not talking about them being naughty. I'm talking about sometimes their extreme complex behaviours.

Ms WHITE - Regardless of the individuals - I don't need to talk about individual cases - I'm talking about your policy and I'm trying to understand when you will have clarity around the decision-making process for when a court is making a judgment about where they might send that young person, what their options might look like. How soon will you decide what the framework is, because your website says one thing, you've said something different today and I'm really interested to know when we will have a final decision made by you on this.

Mr JAENSCH - I think it continues to evolve. We will use everything we can that works to reduce the number of young people in detention as quickly as we can. If we need to co-invest with the NGO sector, we'll do so. If we need to invest on our own, we'll do so.

Ms WHITE - Is there capital funding in this Budget for you to do that?

CHAIR - Order, please let the minister answer.

Mr JAENSCH - There's funding for us to achieve solutions, funding of various kinds in there, including $50 million for youth justice facilities. My hope is that we can focus that on the development of a new youth detention facility which we know we're going to need, hopefully for a smaller number of young people, with a greater investment in procuring services and partnering with service providers to provide those other non-detention settings for those who aren't sentenced. I think that's in the best interest of young people.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, just checking in on that projection information around the projection aspiration, is that available yet or is it something that we could put on as a question on notice if it's taking a while to find it?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't know who was looking at that. Ms Burgess, do you have an update for us?

Ms BURGESS - The team are still working on that.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay, if we haven't got that by the end of our session today, we'll take it on notice. If we can provide it at the table, we will.

Ms ROSOL - Great, thank you. Just going back to what you were saying about the average daily number of children in Ashley: on DECYP's reporting dashboard, it has the quarterly figures for what's happening in youth justice. In December 2023 quarter, the average daily number of children in Ashley is 13.3, in March quarter it was 16.8, and in the June 2024 quarter it was 21.5. So, it's been going up, but you said it's stabilised and starting to reduce which is great. Do you have figures on that? I know that there's still a few days left in this quarter, but do you have any figures on how that's been tracking through this quarter given the trajectory was up, but you're saying that it has stabilised now?

Mr JAENSCH - At the beginning of the quarter, there was a period where we had some very high numbers for a period of weeks and the quarter that those numbers fell in will be an anomaly in otherwise a more consistent trend.

Ms ROSOL - It's likely to still be high, but that's reflected at the beginning of the quarter, not the later part of the quarter?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll just look to Mr Woodfall to help with that.

Mr WOODFALL - I'm just looking for it, but I do know it. Since that last quarter, certainly recent numbers have been averaging around 13, 15 in the last month or so.

Ms ROSOL - Just a question, we've obviously only got one detention centre in the state. What's the contingency plan for young people who are in the detention centre if Ashley was to face an unexpected event and it was unable to be used? What's the backup plan in that situation?

Mr JAENSCH - Do you have an example of what you mean by not able to be used?

Ms ROSOL - An extreme weather event or fire or something like that meant that it wasn't safe to have young people there anymore? Is there a backup plan for that situation?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd ask the managers at the other end of the table to give thought to the sort of risk strategies that you might have, but one of the things that I will comment on is that one of the advantages of the Ashely facility is that it was originally designed for a far larger number of occupants than we're currently using it for which means that the layout of the facility gives management some options in how we utilise the capacity to accommodate different groups to be able to keep, say females and males separate and to be able to separate older and younger people or those with challenging behaviours, and sometimes there are grievances between groups of young people and they need to be able to be kept separate.

There's quite a bit of flexibility within the site and within the range of buildings there. If, for example, one of those buildings was disabled by the roof blown off or some other failure, there is some capacity within the existing Ashley structure to redeploy it and use it in different ways. I think that happens from time to time and that's an inbuilt flexibility.

In terms of whether there is a contingency plan in case there was an inability to use the whole of the Ashley facility, I'd ask if Mr Woodfall or Ms Burgess might want to comment on that.

Mr WOODFALL - Yes, I am getting that information but what I do know practically, we have a weekly AYDC escalation meeting and that was instigated once we started working with DPAC on reform. We meet and we discuss and we've got a level of escalation which could be a variety of factors from staffing to numbers of young people to complexity of young people. There's a whole lot of variables where we feel like what is our current capacity and how are we travelling?

At the extreme case like an extreme weather event, we have a temporary agreement with the Launceston Remand Centre. That is in exceptional circumstances, but we're exploring those legislative changes around that currently. There is a temporary agreement in place.

Ms ROSOL - How temporary?

Mr WOODFALL - In that we would be able to house people there with our staff and support young people, but I think under the proviso that this isn't a long-term solution, that you're not closing actually and putting young people in the watch house.

Mrs BESWICK - Minister, the implementation monitor is due to be filled imminently. How is our planning for the actual reporting process for that going?

Mr JAENSCH - I think this is a question that should sit with -

Mrs BESWICK - I mean as in for the department to report to that implementation monitor, not the other way around.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay, is that one for you, Ms Burgess? In terms of DECYP's responsibilities to report on commission of inquiry recommendations to the Independent Monitor when that role commences, what preparations are there for us to be able to meet our obligations to report? Is that for Sue McKerracher? Thank you.

Ms McKERRACHER - We have set up a small team at DECYP, which is monitoring our response to the COI recommendations. We have teams that are actually doing the work, but we've got three or four people who are monitoring that and will be available to report.

Mrs BESWICK - My second question is, you've been talking about the framework that you're putting into place particularly around the youth justice options, are you going to have similar kind of outcomes and reporting mechanisms and measures that we were talking about this morning built into that?

Mr JAENSCH - For those who weren't part of the earlier discussion, we were looking at how we are tracking the performance of our other systems that we create to divert young people, reduce the number of young people in detention and I would say the other would be something like reduce recidivism and reoffending at the other end. What are the mechanisms that we've got to provide for that? Maybe the person who's writing the answers down could tell us - Ms Hurworth?

Ms HURWORTH - I was trying to be subtle.

Mr JAENSCH - I can see what you're doing. Let's not try to hide it.

Ms HURWORTH - The development of a specific outcomes framework for youth justice is part of the Youth Justice Blueprint. That work is ongoing, and it will be a critical focus of our expert panel, which is made-up of a whole range of experts internationally and Tasmanian, as well. It will similarly align with the framework that you were discussing this morning, including having a line of sight to the government's wellbeing framework- all of population wellbeing framework, that's currently in its final stages. That's very much a part of the youth justice reform work program. How that translates into changed performance measures in the budget would be a future stage of that work.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Minister, can you please update the committee on the work that the government is doing and how it is keeping children and young people safe in detention environments?

Mr JAENSCH - We are committed to developing a youth justice system, as I said before, that achieves better outcomes for young people and their families, and keeps our community safe. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is now leading the youth justice reform work, and that's the position that Ms Hurworth has been speaking from, to progress the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and everything that's required to make that possible. While that's happening, we need to ensure the safety and oversight of the care of young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and delivering a therapeutic model of care to support them. That's why the 2024-25 Budget provides funding of $9 million over four years to ensure children and young people are kept safe in detention, both now and into the detention models that we make the transition to after Ashley closes.

The commission of inquiry makes a range of recommendations that will improve safety and security of young people in detention, through a comprehensive review of legislation, policy and procedures relating to personal searches, isolation and the use of force. The commission also highlighted the imperative for children and young people to be kept safe in detention, through developing policies and procedures to support the use of body-worn

cameras, and developing and implementing a policy for managing and retaining surveillance footage from CCTV and the body-worn cameras as well.

Funding is provided for five policy and project officers with communications and policy expertise relevant to this task to review these policies and bring them up to date. Further funding is also provided for operational staff at Ashley to ensure that these policies are operationalised and that there's proper monitoring of them as well, so that they are working for us. This includes additional youth workers and staff to manage security and safety in youth detention, as well as workplace health and safety for our workers there, and additional control room operators to ensure 24-hour operation of a CCTV control room.

The policies and procedures of that will move with us to new facilities in the future, given the concerns observed and made by the commission of inquiry and the community's interest, and the commitments that we've made to ensure that the things that have happened in the past in Ashley and in our system cannot happen again. Introducing this sort of technology and the rigour of this policy approach is all part of ensuring that safety.

Ms WHITE - Minister, can you explain to me how that $50 million that's in the line item for youth justice facilities is to be spent?

Mr JAENSCH - I understand that around $400,000 or a little over has been spent so far. There is a range of other activities about to commence that will use a good deal more of that. The primary purpose of that will be to establish the new youth detention facility at the Pontville site.

Ms WHITE - Do you have an estimated cost for that project?

Mr JAENSCH - Not as yet.

Ms WHITE - When do you expect that you'll have a price for that project?

Mr JAENSCH - As we proceed further into the design phase and we can start to get quantity surveyors and potentially the builders involved in providing estimates on that.

Ms WHITE - That's not a very clear answer. It does appear that there's a significant spend allocated this year, $3.7 million. What do you expect to use that money for?

Mr JAENSCH - Some of the initial stages are preparing the site itself for the building that'll be brought to it. We need to formalise the access to the site and the delivery of services including power and water, and whether sewerage is on site or whether it's into the network, landscaping and other site works. They'll be the initial stages of that work. Is there anything that you could add to that, Ms Hurworth?

Ms HURWORTH - In addition to the things the minister mentioned, we'll also be developing early works packages for the site. We'll be looking at moving into the master planning process in more detail.

Ms WHITE - There's a $50 million budget allocated for facilities, plural. You've indicated the majority of that will go on a project you haven't scoped the cost of. Is there -

Mr JAENSCH - It's a provision.

Ms WHITE - Do you expect you'll need to make further provision?

Mr JAENSCH - We'll know as we proceed into it. What we're trying to do, as well, is shrink the facility. Since the facility's plan that you referred to earlier, our picture of what we're aiming for with the detention facility, part of that system, is changing as well. We're aiming for that to be as small as possible, taking into account, not only diversion and alternative sentencing, et cetera, fewer young people coming through the system who end up on remand, but, also, things like the commission of inquiry's recommended changes to the minimum age of criminal responsibility and the minimum age of detention. This will provide, structurally, another reduction in the number of young people that can be held in detention as well.

This is not a like-for-like replacement for Ashley Youth Detention Centre. It's a completely different thing. Just as our model for how we provide assisted bail and supported accommodation has evolved - and, I think, improved, and is more away from an institutional model to an individual case management model - so our picture of this detention facility goes from being a larger institutional to a smaller and more home-like structure for the young people who need to be in it. As it gets smaller, it becomes simpler and cheaper to build, as well.

Ms WHITE - What's stopping you using some of that capital allocation, which has not been assigned to any particular project, to purchase homes, now, that you could give to the NGO sector or lease to them so they could provide some of those bail services to young people today? Why can't you just buy a home for them to offer that service

Mr JAENSCH - I don't think it's as simple as the 'just a home'. The ability to deal with complex behaviours, particularly for violent offenders is the big challenge with some of these cases.

Ms WHITE - We're talking about kids on remand, on bail, not detention.

Mr JAENSCH - I know, but they may still have committed serious, violent crimes. The fact that they have not yet been sentenced doesn't alter that. The behaviours that they present with are what anybody who is providing for their care and support needs to be able to deal with.

Ms WHITE - You're not open to using some of that unallocated capital budget to purchase a house for the NGO sector, and start delivering those services that you've been working on for yonks?

Mr JAENSCH - That's not something that's been suggested to us or that I've had advice from my department as being a priority to use that money for. That is there as a provision for our detention facility, first and foremost.

Ms WHITE - You've had no advice about that at all.

Mr JAENSCH - No one's suggested we should buy a house.

Ms ROSOL - Does the department use private companies to transport young people to and from Ashley Youth Detention Centre?

Mr JAENSCH - Can I get an update on transport of young people to and from Ashley Youth Detention Centre and who that work is done by now?

Mr WOODFALL - Yes. It's currently facilitated by Essential Security.

Ms ROSOL - It's a private company?

Mr WOODFALL - Yes.

Ms ROSOL - What's the cost of that?

Mr WOODFALL - We'd have to source that.

Ms ROSOL - Could I take that as a question on notice?

Mr WOODFALL - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - I do recall conversations that have been had from time to time. I think our preference ideally would be that that is a service that is managed by our staff, so that we can ensure some continuity of our approach to care of young people. We have had times where we probably need those staff to be where we have them to be focused on the care and operation of the centre, to ensure that we've got the staffing ratios and the cover that we need for everyone to be safe. One of the options is to be using an external provider for some of those functions.

Ms ROSOL - A question about the external providers - have they been assessed, safety assessed, risk managed? Do they have Working with Vulnerable People checks? What are the protocols in place for that?

Mr JAENSCH - Can I ask the department to make a comment on that procurement?

Mr WOODFALL - They undergo training. All have Working with Vulnerable People checks, all undergo training and familiarisation with the centre, and our processes in putting cuffs on, for transport.

Ms ROSOL - Just to clarify, there's no centre staff going with them? They go with Essential Security staffed by the security staff?

Mr WOODFALL - That's a case-by-case scenario. If a young person is, say, taken into remand and appears before the courts at 10 p.m. on a Friday night, then Essential Security may make that. Where we've got young people going into appointments, or where maybe they're anxious or maybe we're buying new clothes, then often it'll be our staff who will take them out. Sometimes it's a combination. It just depends. We transported someone the other day and three of our staff transported the young person. No use of Essential Security.

Ms ROSOL - Is there a policy around that? Do you have a formal policy or is that ad hoc, depending on what's happening?

Mr WOODFALL - Essential Security is contracted to deliver that service when we require them to do so. It's risk-managed. Where it's just pure transport from a remand centre at a random time then they deliver that work.

Mrs BESWICK - The Gender Budget Statement shows that over 10 per cent of our 15 to 24-year-olds are not engaged in education or work. What kind of focus do we have on this area?

Mr JAENSCH - There's a few layers to that, there's the gender budget statement -

Mrs BESWICK - It just happened to be where the data was. Sorry, it was 14 to 24-year-olds, did I say 10 to 15-year-olds?

Mr JAENSCH - I think that the responsibilities for that would be under the Education minister and their associated legislation.

Mrs BESWICK - Not young people?

Mr JAENSCH - No. In terms of engagement in education and work, that's an education act.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Can you please update the committee on how this government is supporting cultural safety for children and young people in detention?

Mr JAENSCH - We're committed to working with Aboriginal communities in particular, to reduce overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system, and to ensure that the experience of the youth justice system for those who are engaged is appropriate for them culturally, and that we reduce the trauma of that experience in their lives. We recognise that Aboriginal people are best placed to ensure that we're getting that right, both in terms of the overrepresentation, and their experience of the system itself.

We're providing funding of $1.7 million over four years to support Aboriginal youth justice. Specifically, the funding will enable an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, which we've discussed already, to be established at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and in any future detention facilities to support Aboriginal children and young people there. The role will include facilitating cultural support and involvement with case planning, case management and exit planning for Aboriginal children and young people.

The funding will also support commission of inquiry recommendation 12.23, Connection with Family and Community, by providing financial assistance to families and community group members to be able to visit Aboriginal children and young people in detention. It's not exclusive to Aboriginal children and young people. This is something more broadly that we want to be able to facilitate. The commission does specifically refer that we need to ensure that we're making provision that's appropriate for the circumstances of Aboriginal children and their communities to make that connection.

Commission of inquiry recommendation 12.29(c) outlines that the government should be

> Working with Aboriginal communities to establish ongoing cultural programs for Aboriginal children and young people in detention, such as visiting Elders programs, on-Country programs and cultural mentoring programs.

Currently the Ashley Youth Detention Centre engages with the Aboriginal Education Service, the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service to provide programs and services to Aboriginal children and young people in youth detention.

Funding from 2025-26 is also provided to allow the programs currently in place to be strengthened, and for the implementation of new and additional programs to support Aboriginal children and young people in youth detention. That's $300,000 over three years. We are also working with Aboriginal people to implement commission of inquiry recommendations relating to the appointment of a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People as part of the new commission structure. We are also working on the development of an Aboriginal Youth Justice strategy created in partnership with Aboriginal communities, that's underpinned by self-determination, and focusing on prevention and early intervention and diversion for Aboriginal children and young people.

Ms WHITE - Minister, you and I have both met with residents and businesses in proximity to the proposed site at Pontville for the new detention facility. They've raised a number of concerns that they have about that location. In the work that you're doing, you've said you've spent about $400,000 to date on progressing that site as a preferred location. How do you plan to respond to the concerns that have been raised by the community and the businesses in that area?

Mr JAENSCH - We are acutely aware that we have neighbours and we want to be a good neighbour to those residents in that locality. We are also aware that in the absence of frequent updates, they'd be asking questions and perhaps be concerned that the project is getting more advanced without them having a clear line of sight of it.

The work that's been done so far has very much been around the suitability of the site and how we use it to locate services, access, and to look at the geotechnical features of the site at the presence of Aboriginal Heritage that needs to be managed in a certain way as well. That gives us an idea of where the footprint of buildings and roadways and other things will be on the site.

As that comes into perspective, we'll have that to share with the neighbours. It'll inform the landscaping that we do, the screening vegetation We'll have a better idea of how our plan to use the side affects those who live around it and who interact with it. We want to be able to communicate regularly with them as that advances. That's starting to take shape now as the work that Ms Hurworth referred to is concluded. For those constituents of yours and neighbours of ours, we want to reassure them that, at this stage, we're looking at the ground and how we use it and how we're able to use it to best effect for what we need to do. We'll share with them more of the details of that as it takes shape.

Is there anything you wish to add to that?

Ms HURWORTH - No, thank you.

Ms WHITE - At the joint House committee hearing on the recommendations from the commission of inquiry, you indicated that you've been in discussions with the cannabis facility about a different way to manage their waste. Obviously there's quite a strong odour that comes from that facility. It is in close proximity to the proposed site, and that could be triggering for

some of the detainees there. Can you provide an update on those conversations and if there's any changes that will be adopted by that facility?

Mr JAENSCH - Ms Hurworth, are you able to speak to that?

Ms HURWORTH - I can update that the discussions are ongoing. There has been discussion around composting. I can't update any further on the specific next steps. I do know that my team is in regular contact with that company that you're referring to.

Ms WHITE - In those conversations, minister, you may not know this, but I'll ask you -

Mr JAENSCH - Try me.

Ms WHITE - is there an expectation that there'd be some kind of financial payment made to that private company to support them to transition the way they manage their waste? I can't imagine they're going to, out of the goodness of their hearts, change to a new way of dealing with their waste if there's an additional cost they have to bear.

Mr JAENSCH - One of the advantages of things like the Landfill Levy, which you're aware of, I understand -

Ms WHITE - I am very aware of it, a terrible bin tax.

Mr JAENSCH - It provides a capability to invest in new solutions for waste. That's an example of the sort of thing where, if there was a waste solution that this company needed that was beneficial to our project to make this site work for the purpose of a youth detention facility, that might be where we could facilitate access to funding programs, et cetera, to get a solution for them, as an example.

Ms WHITE - Okay. There's obviously concern from Shene Distillery as well, and then there's the proximity of the rifle range. Have you had any further conversations with those businesses about those operations and the potential impact that might have on the detainees?

Mr JAENSCH - I haven't. I've had initial meetings and discussions with representatives of each of them. I haven't had an update. Maybe, Ms Hurworth could give us an update on any further engagement she's had with them.

Ms HURWORTH - There'll be official letters going out next week specifically to a number of organisations, including to the two that you mentioned. It will advise that the work on the Pontville site is ongoing, and will provide a specific contact person for those organisations to liaise with to raise concerns through the process - a specific individual, their name, contact details - so that we can have that continuous conversation.

Ms WHITE - Will there be a similar letter provided to the residents in the area?

Ms HURWORTH - Yes.

Ms WHITE - Will that also be delivered next week?

Ms HURWORTH - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - The overview is that anywhere that we are developing any facilities as part of our youth justice or adult corrections process is going to have neighbours. They're going to have advantages and drawbacks of any location. We need to work with those. We need to work with people respectfully, by keeping them informed, taking their needs into account, and doing what we can to address them, while also delivering a new detention facility that's better for young people than the one we have now.

Ms ROSOL - I'd like to ask some questions about the assisted-bail facilities and what's happening with those. I note that recommendation 12.14 of the commission of inquiry is pretty clear in outlining what assisted-bail facility should look like. It says in paragraph (d) that we should ensure the proposed assisted-bail facilities are small; homelike; and, subject to bail conditions, do not place restrictions on the movements of children and young people; have the capacity to deal with children and young people with complex needs; are designed to include wraparound services such as health, education, and employment; are culturally safe for Aboriginal children and young people; and include specialist therapeutically trained bail support workers to help children and young people attend programs and services and to comply with their conditions of bail.

That addresses quite a few things that we were talking about earlier when you were saying that if you built an assisted-bail facility, it might not meet these things. I think there's the capacity for it to be built that way. Not building the assisted-bail facility is a breach of one of the recommendations that the government's agreed to. Are you comfortable with stepping back from that recommendation? Is that what we're hearing here, that you are stepping back from that recommendation?

Mr JAENSCH - We're committed to meet that need the best way we possibly can and as soon as we possibly can. That's why we established the Youth Justice Taskforce, which is led by DPAC and working across all relevant government agencies and departments to drive our responses to these recommendations and get things moving quickly. It's also why we have reference groups of all of our community service organisations that we work with, and an expert panel, which is chaired by Mr Robert Benjamin, who was one of the commissioners with a particular interest in this area. We can bring back to them, here's what we're planning to do or proposing to do, to get their feedback, modify our responses and models accordingly, and make sure they are meeting the intentions of those recommendations.

Ms Hurworth might be able to speak to us about the 24-hour assisted-bail model. That's the right terminology, yes? That addresses those commission of inquiry recommendations. That's a piece of work that's advancing now.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. What we're trying to do is leverage the smallness of our community to have a really integrated system for young people. What you would already know is that there are lots of organisations that provide services to vulnerable and at-risk young people. Some of what is described in that recommendation may already exist or does already exist. We're trying to integrate that into a holistic model that goes to some of the questions that were raised earlier about picking young people up at the earliest possible point and diverting them out of the system. The 24-hour bail support is part of that. It's about leveraging a whole range of options that meet the differing needs of individual children.

Ms ROSOL - If you have all this work happening for this, how many staff do you have working on the Youth Justice Blueprint or on the implementation of the new facilities model? How many staff are working on that at the moment?

Mr JAENSCH - Can you speak to that one directly? Thank you very much.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. A taskforce was formed by searching for subject matter expertise from across government agencies. The taskforce is 12 FTE - that excludes me - and that FTE represents expertise from all the major agencies - things like people who have worked in out-of-home care or youth justice reform for a period of time; someone from the child and adolescent mental-health system; and people with specific infrastructure delivery and development experience. That taskforce has come together for 12 months. In addition to the 12 FTE, we're working extremely closely with DECYP who have the day-to-day operational responsibility, and learning from them. That's on top of our expert panel and our community engagement group. I can't emphasise enough how engaged our expert panel is in our work, and how integrated their advice is to what we're delivering.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, has the cost of building the facility played a part in your stepping back and looking to community services, rather than building it yourself? And, if there was more funding and more staff available, would you still be looking at building the facility more quickly, not the department more quickly?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm learning about this as we go and taking advice from everyone who's providing it. What I'm seeing is that each one of the young people we're dealing with has individual and complex needs. They become more complex and the management becomes more complex when you start to put a number of them together because of the interactions between them and the need to be able to separate and manage their safety and their individual needs.

This is not about finding somewhere to put young people and hold them while they wait. This also has to be about actively managing their individual needs, and -

Ms ROSOL - That's everything I read out.

Mr JAENSCH - that's exactly reflected in that. Now, we could build a building, put six of them in there at a time, and try to manage that and keep them safe, as well as finding someone who wants to be a neighbour to a house that has kids who may have come freshly from violent offending. Alternatively, those young people might possibly be better dealt with in their own communities, by people who are set up to provide a service and a case-management approach for them. I believe the latter has the better chance of meeting the young person's needs, as opposed to the community's need to put them somewhere. I'm drawn to that in the best interest of the young people.

If we find that there is not suitable capacity out there, or we need suitably hardened facilities, et cetera, to be able to withstand their elevated behaviours and things like that, then we're on our way back to producing another little Ashley. I'm open to us being able to find something else, which is better for those young people and which carries that therapeutic model of care right from that point in the system.

Ms ROSOL - I don't think anyone disagrees with that or thinks it's anything but complex. My question is more, if this was funded in a way that reflected the urgency of the need, would it be happening more quickly? If we had more people putting their attention into it, could we make this happen more quickly?

Mr JAENSCH - We have a dedicated team of 12 people drawn from across government. We have several million dollars in the budget. We have -

Ms WHITE - You've had two years, as well, of funding. We still don't know what your policy is.

Mr JAENSCH - We have a process that's being overseen by the head of the State Service. Let's say, for a typical day in Ashley at the moment, we have a dozen young people and nine of them are remandees, if a significant proportion of them, or six or so of those are young people whose behaviours are such that they may be able to be to be hosted and supported outside of a detention facility and courts, magistrates are prepared to bail them with support, then, we've maybe got six people at a time who we're needing solutions for.

The question then is, do we build a building in the middle of the state and staff it to look after those six young people? Or do we have service providers dotted around the state who are able to be brought together to provide a solution for that young person where they live, where they can still maintain their connection to family, supports, school and other things, while they are in their own community. The latter sounds more like a child-centred and a child-rights-centred approach than creating another more institutional environment. It's also something that we can potentially escalate to more quickly than acquiring and building and staffing another facility that would need to have all the oversight, mechanisms, and safety built into it. Maybe we can buy that as a service for those individual young people more quickly and cheaply than building a building and putting kids in it.

Ms ROSOL - Ms White's been asking questions about this, too. We're looking at the Budget, we're trying to work out what's happening with it. At some point a decision will need to be made about whether you're going to build that assisted-bail facility or not. When will you be making that decision like?

Mr JAENSCH - The work that the Youth Justice Taskforce is doing now is about answering those very questions, including what the capacity is to deal with the intake of young people that we're seeing and where the gaps are physically around the state, but also in terms of the nature of services, including accommodation.

Ms ROSOL - So, it's a big unknown at the moment? There's no timeframe for deciding and we have to keep waiting. We've been waiting for quite a while on quite a lot of things in this area.

Mr JAENSCH - You're waiting, but nobody on this side of the table is. We're working with all those young people and their individual case management every day, and we're working with service providers. We are buying services to support those young people. We'll do more of what works and we'll identify where there are gaps that we need to fill and how quickly we can do that.

Ms ROSOL - It's not really me or us waiting, it's the children. They're the ones who are waiting.

Mr JAENSCH - And we are working directly with them.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Minister, can you please update the committee on how investment in the new Child and Youth Empowerment Office will benefit children and young people?

Mr JAENSCH - We know that involving children and young people in decision making on issues that affect them leads to better outcomes for them. This government has committed funding of $1.6 million over four years through the 2024-25 Budget for child and youth empowerment in line with the commission of inquiry's recommendations that the department develop a participation and empowerment strategy for children in out-of-home care and detention settings. The Participation and Empowerment strategy will document, and build on, existing work across the department and include the development of an overarching and comprehensive guide that outlines best practice principles, ethics, and models for children and young people's participation at the individual and systemic levels.

A Rights of the Child educational campaign that builds awareness and understanding of children's rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. A lived-experience advisory model to establish advisory groups for functions and the community of the department that include out-of-home care, youth justice, students, parents and carers. All of this work will be developed in parallel, using the same consultation and opt-in co-design process with children, young people, and the community.

Funding will support the recruitment of three FTEs to strengthen and expand child and youth participation and empowerment across the department. The department has recently appointed a Director, Child and Youth Empowerment and established the Child and Youth Empowerment team and this has grown from the child-advocate function and now comprises a total of four FTEs. That team is led by Sonya Pringle-Jones, previously a child advocate in DECYP.

Ms WHITE - Minister, are you the final decision maker on the policy that your government will get to, at some point, on what the new youth justice facilities model looks like?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I'm responsible for it.

Ms WHITE - The website still has the proposed youth justice facilities model that was released in late 2022, which is, as described earlier, the two youth bail facilities, the two support facilities, and the one detention facility. You've now said you prefer a different approach, which is essentially a policy shift. When did you start to have that view that you wanted to move away from the policy position that's published on your website and publicised to the one that you've articulated to the committee today?

Mr JAENSCH - You're very keen to find a situation here where I've somehow tricked everybody or moved the goalposts or something.

Ms WHITE - I'm more keen to know when you're going to land on a final decision and do something.

Mr JAENSCH - We're doing something now to match young people and service providers as best as possible to get better results for them. I'll keep doing that and I'll update you and answer your questions when you ask them. I also have, at various times, people saying I should close Ashley tomorrow because the community services sector can take all the young people and look after them and everything will be fine. We've followed that line of inquiry and confirmed that there isn't the capacity to take all those young people or a readiness to do that. It may also be very difficult legally to go and farm people who the courts have sentenced to detention out to an NGO, and maybe those NGOs don't want that responsibility and they're not set up for it. What we do is we continue to look at the whole landscape of solutions and find the best ones that we can bring online as soon as possible for young people.

If we need to invest in further built facilities to put young people in and manage them through this period, we will. If we can do that in a better way with people who are better set up to deal with them closer to where they live, we'll do that because it's better for young people. That's why we have question time in parliament, why we have briefings that we offer, why we have consultation, why we have expert panels and reference groups, so we can have that conversation with them about evolving this model, which has the potential, I think, to deliver best practice in Australia at least, if not the world, because of the small numbers that we have. That's why we have experts with international experience advising us on what we do.

I don't want to say to those experts, 'No, we can't do any of that because I published a diagram a couple of years ago that we're stuck with because that's our policy'. I'm going to continue evolving the policy. I'll take it off the website if it -

Ms WHITE - If it's no longer your policy, perhaps you should, but you haven't confirmed that or not.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - But the issue, Ms White, is that -

Ms WHITE - The issue is that you're not doing anything.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - The issue is that that diagram shows a system whereby you have one smaller detention centre because you found other ways of dealing with young people pre and post their engagement with the youth justice system and divert them. Whether that's a building or if it is a service that does the same thing the outcome for the young person is what that diagram represents. The description of whether it's one or two buildings and whether they're ours or somebody else's, or where they are in the state is, is somewhat secondary to that and we need to make sure we're delivering the outcome as soon as possible because that's what affects young people.

Ms WHITE - Can you confirm at the moment, minister, there are no other buildings, whether they're owned by you or other people and the courts have no other option except to send kids to Ashley?

Mr JAENSCH - No, there are buildings all over the state. We have a service-level agreement between DECYP and Homes Tasmania regarding -

Ms WHITE - And the courts can send kids there?

Mr JAENSCH - It's not just an address that the court sends them to. There needs to be -

Ms WHITE - No, answer my question, please.

Mr JAENSCH - supports around those -

Ms WHITE - Can you confirm that the courts have any other option except for Ashley Youth Detention Centre at the moment to send a child to?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, and a very large number of young people are bailed and -

Ms WHITE - What? Bailed to their home address? I'm talking about services -

Mr JAENSCH - Or to other services.

Ms WHITE - Like what?

CHAIR - We're going to have a break because we need a break, so we're having a break for five minutes, and then we'll come back. I'm happy to pick up on that same conversation when we get back.

The Committee suspended from 3.00 to 3.09.

[resumed from short break]

CHAIR - Minister, thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - I was in the process of responding to Ms White, and a conversation over a few questions regarding assisted bail, and the needs, what options are out there, and what we're providing. I'd like to ask Ms Lovell to help us have an understanding for this conversation about what some of the elements are of a placement outside of detention - not to talk about individual cases, but what's involved beyond an address, and the sort of supports and some of the work that is being done now to broker those options for young people.

Ms C LOVELL - I want to begin by mentioning that a lot of the young people who we're talking about here also have child safety involvement. Some of them will actually have a guardianship status but for many other young people in Ashley, the Child Safety Service know of them and their families. They may have previously been in out of home care, they may have younger siblings who are working with one of our Intensive Family Engagement Programs. We certainly know of them.

Last year we commenced a pilot Intensive Case Management Program for those young people, recognising that the young people who were in Ashley at that time - and that was a time where there was an unusually high number. We recognise that if we drew upon all of our resources collectively across the Child Safety Service, youth justice and the broader support system, that we may be able to create some innovative responses that individualised to the needs of these young people. So far, I believe, it's six young people who have been intensively

case-managed. That includes them having a care team with all of the supports around them, and us inviting additional members into that who could provide support.

It also includes reaching out to the young people's families and engaging them. Often in these circumstances they've been disengaged for a long time, or their engagement in their parenting has been patchy. There is a very strong family finding aspect to it as well.

We have found that we're able to establish some individualised plans that have enabled young people to be successfully released from detention. It won't always be successful, knowing what we do around recidivism, but we still believe that we see progress when that happens. We're bringing in supports that weren't otherwise involved and progressing goals that hadn't previously been progressed.

Some of the options that we have used are identifying a family member who hasn't provided care to a young person before. These are young people -

Ms WHITE - Can I seek a point of clarification? Are you talking about releasing people from detention at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and these are some of the solutions that you found?

Ms C LOVELL - Yes.

Ms WHITE - This is really useful information and I thank you for it, but the question to the minister was actually what options do the courts have as alternatives to Ashley for children who are awaiting sentencing?

Ms C LOVELL - Part of what we are doing is also testing which of the options we have found suitable at that end of detention, that we could actually have in place to avoid young people coming into detention. An example of that is that, in the out-of-home care system, we've had very limited options around where young people can be placed when they have committed a violent offence. We haven't had emergency contingency there. We have established that. We've established a new care type which is an emergency-salaried care arrangement. We have placements available in the north-west and the south to facilitate that.

That has been a gap in the system and we'll be trialling that for the first time. That may become a feature of the new service system that could provide supported bail.

Ms WHITE - Thank you.

Ms C LOVELL - I could mention just one other example. We do have housing stock available to us in services for children and their families. We have utilised that for some of our older adolescents, where they have been able to reside semi-independently with outreach services from our existing provider network. We've found some success in doing that. Each of these is an individualised package, very much based on the age, stage and capacity of that young person. We are very aware that each time we create one of these responses, we are testing something new that may be expanded and built into the system.

Mr JAENSCH - That's why, in terms of what options a court has, they are probably better described as what options can we present a court to choose from based on a knowledge of the child's needs. The court can then take confidence that there's a responsible adult or

service provider or family member who is going to take responsibility for the young people and provide some evidence they're going to be able to appropriately manage their interests, and help them to make any other conditions of their bail. That's an important factor. It's not the court coming up with options; it's about what options they've got to choose from.

Ms WHITE - Yes, of course. Have you got any examples where you've been able to present those options for the court yet?

Mr JAENSCH - I think that happens every day. That's part of the role of our community youth justice system, to do that work with young people. The ones we're talking about are the ones who end up being sent to detention.

Ms WHITE - Yes, and thank you for sharing that information. It's useful to understand what options are available for children exiting Ashley or how you might support them to return to their community.

Mr JAENSCH - Or getting them out of Ashley, which was the issue that you were talking about before.

Ms WHITE - It was earlier, but the question that I asked you before the break was what options are available for the court? You said there are plenty, then I asked you to detail what the programs are and what the organisations are that you have available to you to present to the court, and you've just explained to me that you are piloting some that you might one day be able to present. Is that right?

Mr JAENSCH - I think that more to the point, in terms of what options the courts have, courts every day are seeing young people with support and plans to get them bail. I would say the majority - I don't know who's best to speak to that, maybe Mr Woodfall?

Mr WOODFALL - I can add that courts can bail, which is not a sanction. They can put in place community service orders, that might be a choice. They can put in place community conferences whereby you would meet with the victims of crime and there'd be a lot of work with our community youth justice. They're the options before they either remand or sentence to detention. They are the options once Community Youth Justice are involved.

With working with children and families, if there are any other barriers in place, we work with children and families. We've got a group called the Youth Justice Collaboration, until we find a better name, where we bring some of those cases where we say, 'Look, Community Youth Justice have concerns about a particular set of circumstances around the young people,' and we discuss and say, 'Well, what other things could we put in place?'

We have had cases where we've put in special care packages. For example, we've leased properties for a young person to make sure everything was in place. In those particular cases, we've also had that same young person, who's had a curfew, not return to the house that night with all the supports we could possibly put in place, and been picked up for breaking curfew and then gone back to court and then remanded. Sometimes all those supports can be in place and the young person can still be remanded.

Mr JAENSCH - When we're talking about our youth justice system, the ones who are involved in custodial youth justice are a very small proportion of the overall population of

young people engaged in the youth justice system. We're very much talking about the pointy end here, and a small number of very complex cases and extreme offending behaviour in most cases. We're trying to work out what else we can do for them so that fewer of them end up in detention, because we know that detention, however good it is, has an impact on the life of a child, their record and their future. We're working at that intake end, as well as working with the young people who are in Ashley now who may have the ability to apply for bail and get it with the right supports in place.

All of this is about getting the numbers down, having more diverse options available that configure differently. Not just one solution of a building or a bail house, but customised individual care of the types that Claire's been speaking about, and doing more of that for more young people.

For this immediate 12 months, DECYP's doing this work with its combined resources, including reaching across and using the expertise from the out-of-home care and child safety system. There's also $1.25 million applied to DPAC to proactively go out and acquire some of these diversions and services and supports as well. The aim being that as we're working on policy and putting extra resources into individual case management, by the time we get to the end of this 12-month initial period, we'll resolve that model and be able to repatriate that activity to DECYP for its ongoing delivery. We're supercharging it with the work of the taskforce, the whole-of-government approach and extra dollars as we go.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, we've talked about the taskforce and there's 12 FTEs on the taskforce. We've heard that they're also relying on DECYP staff to progress their work. Is there a dedicated team in DECYP that are working on the facilities model implementation? If there is, how many staff are on that team?

Mr JAENSCH - Wonder who's best to show that navigation. Do you want to lead that discussion?

Ms HURWORTH - There are staff in DECYP facilities area that are collaborating with us, but also Infrastructure Tasmania (ITas) will be one of our key partners in State Growth and they're supplying a specialised project manager to be embedded in the taskforce. That's in addition to the FTE that I mentioned to work with us so that when we get to the stage of construction and delivery Infrastructure Tas will seamlessly pick that up and run with it as the part of government that has the expertise to deliver major infrastructure.

Ms ROSOL - So, there is no dedicated taskforce within DECYP? Not taskforce, but dedicated staff. They're just working with the taskforce as needed?

Mr JAENSCH - There's DECYP staff in the taskforce as well.

Ms HURWORTH - Yes, that's correct. We also have a dedicated executive director whose focus is infrastructure in the youth justice space. She's sitting in the taskforce. She works with DECYP facilities team who obviously manage the day-to-day of Ashley but also had the pre-planning work that we've talked about and a project manager from ITas will be appointed to her and she will lead that work.

Ms ROSOL - Has anyone in the taskforce or in DECYP working on this raised with you that they believe more resources are required or that more resources would be beneficial?

Mr JAENSCH - The Budget that you see in front of you today reflects a process whereby the secretaries of our agencies together assembled a set of budget bids for the resources required to deliver on the commission of inquiry priorities. That was part of the budget process and there's substantial alignment with the out-of-home care and youth justice reform work that was underway anyway. They've been brought in together and made priority projects. This Budget delivers the resources that have been sought to make these changes.

Ms ROSOL - A question because there is a change of direction here in the assisted bail model that we're looking at.

Mr JAENSCH - There's a change of how we deliver it. The aim is consistent all the way through that. What we want to do is divert more young people who don't need to be in detention from being in detention and given the care that they need. Who builds and runs the house is a different argument. We're looking at the best ways of doing that.

Ms ROSOL - Which is a shift that has come to light this week through the Estimates , I think yesterday and today, with more questions today. Do you believe that the parliament and the community deserve to be told when there's a major shift like that? What date did you first start considering this shift in emphasis, moving away from building it yourself to having community services providing that instead? When did this alternative option come on the table? When did you start thinking about it? When were you going to tell the public that there was a shift?

Mr JAENSCH - It is no secret we've been talking with the sector about it as we go. This is something which is evolving rapidly and will continue to over 12 months. We're undertaking significant reform. We're engaging with expertise from around the world. We're bringing in new information all the time and we've got magnificent collaboration with the sector. There was a date, probably we could find a few weeks ago or months ago, when the Greens in parliament demanded that we close Ashley straight away and put all the kids into community -

Ms ROSOL - That is a misrepresentation of the question.

Mr JAENSCH - into community service organisations care and demanded that I explain why I wasn't going to do that.

Ms ROSOL - I'm sorry, minister, you're misrepresenting the question that I asked. I asked when it was going to close, not is it going to close immediately.

Mr JAENSCH - It wasn't you that I was referring to. It was your leader at that time. But I'm seeing that we've made any change in policy. What we've got is a perhaps a better way of delivering it sooner and I think that's what people expect us to do.

Ms ROSOL - You're misrepresenting the questions that are being asked by the Greens. There's been a shift in the assisted bail - the way that's being structured and funded and provided. There have been multiple delays in Ashley Youth Detention Centre closing, so it's difficult to trust what's being said. It's difficult to trust what we're being told. Would you stake your reputation on Ashley Youth Detention Centre being closed within the time - I actually don't know what the time frame is. Would you stake your reputation on that?

Mr JAENSCH - I do that every day and I get people saying things about me and calling me names and attacking me for their job every day on this stuff. At the moment I am absolutely focused on delivering the reforms to the youth justice system that we're committed to, and I think we've got the best opportunity this state has ever seen and may ever see to undertake massive change to this system and to do it better than any other state in Australia has ever done before. Because of our very small numbers, we do have the ability to implement a reform in youth justice which is very much focused on the individual needs of young people and the causes of their offending. Early intervention, individual case management, therapeutic approach and through a therapeutic model which prevents their reoffending.

I think this can have immense effects on our future prison population as well and the safety of our communities. And I'm absolutely dedicated to that. And if that means that over a period of a couple of years, we change direction in how we're doing that because we found a better way, I'll take it. I mean, we found a better way from what the premier Gutwein at the time announced in 2021 that we're going to close Ashley and build two smaller facilities, one in the north and one in the south doing exactly the same job. I think we can get to a better result than that - one smaller facility for a far smaller group of young people, raise the age of detention and criminal responsibility, invest far more heavily in individual responses to the needs of the young people who are at risk of entering that system. I think that's what everyone wants to see happen.

And if that means that we learn as we go and find the best way to deliver that, I'm not going to sort of put the brakes on that because of something that someone said two years ago. What we need to do is clearly keep more people who are interested up to date with where this is going. That's why we've got our reference group with 20-something members of the community who provided input to the Youth Justice Blueprint when it was originally created, who are keenly interested and who are going to be part of the system that delivers the reforms ultimately, rather than it being more government institutions where we put kids to get them out of the community.

So, I think that stay in touch with that room full of people. We are, we're talking with them frequently, we're meeting with them through our various parts of our department in my office weekly. And this is a rapidly evolving and developing program of work and I'm really confident that there's never been this much work done with this intensity before. And it's already yielding some new solutions like the work that Claire told you about this before.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you please update the committee on what the government is doing to support children and young people in child safety and youth justice with a disability?

Mr JAENSCH - As we've been talking about, many of the children and young people supported by our out-of-home care and youth justice systems often experience multiple complex needs. That's why we're investing $1.47 million over four years for three new disability liaison officers to support children and young people with disability in out-of-home care and in youth justice settings. These roles will ensure children and young people have access to regular holistic assessments across the seven wellbeing domains, including advice from multidisciplinary teams. Establishing these disability liaison specialist roles for children and young people in out-of-home care and youth justice ensures that services actively nurture and support the children. This fosters children and young people to reach their aspirations and their full potential in life. Each child entering out-of-home care already receives a holistic

assessment through the out-of-home care paediatric clinics being expanded across the community as kids care clinics. These assessments include behavioural health screening and making any necessary referrals and recommendations regarding appropriate care and ongoing supports.

The department is also currently expanding its range and number of specialist support functions and roles to further support children in out-of-home care and in the youth justice system. This is targeted to areas where we know that children and young people can benefit from extra support. These roles can be members of care teams such as: transition to independent workers who help young people to have what they need in place when they become young independent adults; youth workers who walk alongside young people helping them with practical things, especially when their lives are unpredictable; disability specialists who help young people access assessments and assistance they need to manage their disabilities; and legal officers who help with the legal and court work to keep children safe and progress their case goals.

The department will continue to implement care teams and care planning as the approach to meeting a child's needs across all wellbeing domains which incorporates the voice of the child. We'll also continue to engage with the Department of Health, including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Paediatric Service and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, in relation to ongoing reforms and the needs of children and young people in care.

Thank you very much for your question. I also think I can have some updates available now on a couple of earlier questions that were asked, Chair, if you're happy for me to get them in. Ms Rosol's question regarding private transport contractors, Mr Salter, do you have an answer there?

Mr SALTER - Yes, thank you. There's a new contract with essential security under negotiation at the moment. The estimated contract value for that contract is $240,000 per annum. It's a one-year contract with a one-year extension, so the total value is $480,000. While that's being finalised, a deed of variation has been agreed to extend the previous contract.

Mr JAENSCH - There was previously a question, I think it was Mrs Beswick who asked it in relation to the overall investment in the Budget regarding Aboriginal children and young people. I think the update we have is that in the youth justice area, the total of investment in the Aboriginal Youth Justice range of activities is $1.7 million over four years. There is also the office of Aboriginal Policy and Practice and implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, for which, together, the Budget is also $1.7 million over four years, a total of $3.4 million over four years.

Ms WHITE - Minister, I wanted to further explore the community orders that you mentioned, one option to support young people who are engaged with the youth justice system. Can you explain how many staff provide that service across the agency given that, in Community Corrections, we know they're dealing with some serious challenges around workforce? Does that affect the work that happens in the youth justice space? Do you rely on the same probation officers to support the work of Community Corrections? I presume if children are on orders, they are supervised in the community. Is that the same as in the adult system?

Mr JAENSCH - There were a few questions built into that. Do you want to just zoom in on the last bit?

Ms WHITE - You've talked about community orders, that these were an option for courts to use if they were making a decision about a young person engaged with the youth justice system. Who supervises those young people who are on those orders?

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask Mr Woodfall if he could give some answers to that.

Mr WOODFALL - Youth Justice Services is made up of the Office of Youth Justice, Custodial Youth Justice and Community Youth Justice and the Community Youth Justice Team, which are based in the south, north and north-west. They support young people who come into contact with the courts. They're the team that supports community service orders through a variety of organisations and the community conferences.

Ms WHITE - Thank you. Can I be provided with an update on how many staff you have available in that division within the agency, and are there vacancies?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask if Mr Woodfall can bring that forward. While he's looking at that, there are a couple of things that I'd add which go to the same issue. In the Budget I've referred to the $15.85 million over four years with a focus on early intervention and diversionary services. That includes $8.6 million over four years for community youth justice and early intervention and diversionary programs, including funding for six FTE in Community Youth Justice to provide further skilled practitioners and outcomes-focused community diversion and support programs, funding to support those early intervention and diversionary services, as well as assisted bail and supported accommodation. That's all within the $8.6 million and then there's JCP Youth, which I know you're very familiar with.

Ms WHITE - I am talking about corrections within your department, not other services.

Mr JAENSCH - But they do partner with these various providers as well.

Ms WHITE - Does JCP supervise young people on their orders?

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask Mr Woodfall to refer to that, but there may be service providers and providers of programs like JCP that are part of the management and the care and support for the young people who are on orders.

Ms WHITE - I know what they do. I am asking if they are different.

Mr WOODFALL - We have 26.4 FTE in the Community Youth Justice funded and we're currently at 24.39. There's a vacancy of 2.0.

Mr JAENSCH - And the Youth Justice workforce is included in the recent recruitment and workforce incentive packages?

Mr WOODFALL - Six additional positions and the two vacancies that we have, we've successfully been able to fill those over in the south but now we've got six additional.

Ms WHITE - Are they regional teams?

Mr WOODFALL - Yes, they are regional teams.

Ms WHITE - And can you tell me how many you have in each region, please?

Mr WOODFALL - I would have to get that.

Ms WHITE - I'm happy to put that as a question on notice or you can provide it by the end of the day.

Minister, I'm also keen to understand why it takes so long for some young people to have a date for their case conferencing. I've spoken to people who explained what a disaster that has been. On occasions where a young person has a date for case conferencing, it takes forever to get all the parties involved. They show up and they're for a particular offence, but in the time that it's taken for them to actually have that case conference, they've racked up a whole range of other offences. What are you doing to improve that process? It has huge merit if it's used well, but I've had a lot of feedback that it's failing these young people terribly at the moment. What focus do you have on improving that?

Mr JAENSCH - I think this was a question that was also asked in yesterday's session in the Legislative Council and I understand that some of the issues that are affecting the timeliness of those case conferences include higher numbers of cases and case conferences needing to be organised, and also increasing complexity, including offending that involves a larger number of young people - not just individuals, and possibly multiple victims or people impacted by their offending behaviour - so the complexity of bringing all that together and keeping everybody committed to scheduled events in the case conferencing process adds to complexity there. Mr Woodfall might fill in some gaps there.

Mr WOODFALL - In 2022-23, there were 91, and in 2023-24 it went to 146. There was a 62 per cent increase in the number of community conferences. In some ways accessing that is a good thing, but it's put extra pressure on the system.

Ms WHITE - Did you say 146?

Mr WOODFALL - Yes, 146.

My teams have reported back that the complexity of conferences, as the minister said, has increased in relation to groups of co-offenders who may have committed multiple offences. That substantially increases the preparation time as all the young people and their families have to be interviewed. It's much like that restorative justice process that we go through. The preparation is as important as the event.

Whilst we supervise that, we have facilitators who not only hold community conferences, but also family group conferences. We have had a reduction of available facilitators for those conferences due to leave and so on. We're now continually looking to recruit more of those. Notice that the facilitators are outsourced. We supervise and we arrange to do the preparation, but it's actually done by a professional facilitator.

Ms WHITE - Can I ask one further question? I accept that you've lost facilitators, and that's been something facilitators have shared with me. They are fed up with how terrible this process has been. They are refusing to work anymore in the service because they are distraught

on behalf of the young people. They're sharing stories with me of showing up to case conferences that they've been working on with this young person, and the different people around the table who've had responsibilities to take actions haven't done it. They don't do their job. I'm assuming that you're -

Mr JAENSCH - Who? Who didn't do their job, in this case?

Ms WHITE - Someone in Education, someone in the Health system - whoever it may be, who had a responsibility around that table to take an action on behalf of that young person, has not done that thing. The facilitator is frustrated, and the case continues to drag on. It sounds to me like your Community Youth Justice team is the supervisor in that room to make sure that everybody is supposed to be on task. Is that right?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms WHITE - What further powers can you provide to them so they can actually have those other agencies - who are supposed to be working to support that young person's restorative justice pathway - actually fulfil their obligations?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd ask Mr Woodfall to confirm what the arrangement is now by which those coordinators or those staff engage with the other services. It sounds to me like, if there has been a failure of individuals to perform their duties, if you wanted to refer any of those or the facilitator to us so we can follow that up in those cases, we'll -

Ms WHITE - I think it has been well reported. People are banging their head against the table.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - We'll do that.

Mr Woodfall, can you speak to what the authority is in someone who is managing or coordinating a case conferencing process, to call on the various participants to fulfil their roles?

Mr WOODFALL - The only information I have on that is I know that Tasmania Police are required to attend conferences. I am not aware of those challenges that we have. It's not what has been reported to me.

Ms WHITE - Do you do any exit interviews with the facilitators? I'm pretty sure they'll tell you exactly what their problems are.

Mr WOODFALL - I'll seek to find that out.

Mr JAENSCH - Just so that there's resolution there - I don't want to leave that hanging - if there are facilitators who, through you, or directly to me, wanted to raise concerns, so that we have some ability to follow up actual cases, we need to make sure that these processes are doing their job and that they're working, and to see what impediments there might be to people being able to play their part in making that happen.

Ms ROSOL - I asked earlier about resourcing, and whether the task force or DECYP staff have directly asked you for extra resourcing, and whether they've said that would be beneficial for urgently progressing the work that they're doing on the youth justice facilities. You didn't answer the question and you instead went to talking about the Budget.

Can I take from that, not answering the question, that resourcing levels have been raised with you as an issue, and that you've diverted attention away from that? Have your staff asked you for extra resourcing so that they can urgently do the work to develop alternative models and facilities?

Mr JAENSCH - Nearly every conversation I have with my department around the priorities and the urgency of work we're doing comes down to a discussion about resources. This is particularly over the last six months or so, with preparation for budgets and dealing with the commission of inquiry and how we're resourcing all the things we have to do there. Sometimes we talk about little else for days on end, how much we need and what priorities we have to spend on a whole range of things, and also where we're going to get the people and the skill sets that we need within our department to do these things. That's why we've ended up with this new authorising environment for youth justice reform where we've got an all-play model which is overseen by the head of the State Service to be able to draw in the talent from across government that we need to deal with some of this complex area of rapid development of policy, legislation and reform.

That has been funded with a new entire allocation of $174.89 million to ensure we're delivering on the reforms associated with the commission of inquiry including out-of-home care and youth justice. Every part of government, every one of my children, my own and those I'm responsible for, could use more resources to do more things. We've got more resources than we've ever had before invested into this work now. Our challenge is going to be to use the resources that are budgeted now, within a very limited period of time, to drive massive change. I think this is our moment in these areas to achieve significant reforms.

Has my department asked me for more resources? My department has presented me with budget bids. We've taken them into the budget process. We've come out with a version of what we went in with, and then we apply that as responsibly as we can to deliver the jobs that we've been given to do. We'll keep doing that.

Ms ROSOL - It sounds like more money, more funding would have been useful but in the context of broader government decisions, there have been other priorities and choices made in allocation of funds.

Mr JAENSCH - I can see where you are angling this to. In a context of a budget Estimates hearing, you could go to this table or any other table for any committee and ask any department, would it be okay if you had more money? Could you do more stuff? And they'd all say yes, absolutely, every single time.

Ms ROSOL - I'll move on to some other questions now. I've got some questions about child safety services and out-of-home care. How many -

Mr JAENSCH - Don't feel neglected.

Ms ROSOL - You've had a good run. How many positions in the child safety service and ARL are currently occupied, and how many are currently vacant?

Mr JAENSCH - Are you able to speak to that one?

Ms ROSOL - There's kind of two questions there.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond to that. We will just date stamp this answer as well, because there's recruiting underway right now and these figures could be quite different within a few days.

Ms BURGESS - I wonder, minister, whether you wanted to cover the breakdown of Community Youth Justice before you move to - or do you want to wait till the end?

Ms ROSOL - I'd prefer it if I could get an answer to my questions on child safety services.

Mr JAENSCH - We won't miss you. Sorry, keep going, Ms Rosol. I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond to you. We'll come back to those other justice numbers just now.

Ms C. LOVELL - For statewide, we have 104.9 child safety officer positions for the Child Safety Service, that's budget FTE, and 78.3 other. We have 183.2 positions in the Child Safety Service, and 191.6 of those are occupied.

Ms ROSOL - Can you say that again, please? I don't know if my brain's not working, but you said there are 183.2 positions, but 191.6 of them are occupied?

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes, that's right because we're over our establishment at the moment with our support roles. The youth workers, the non-child safety officer positions - we've employed a lot of non-additional support people in recent times.

Ms ROSOL - What are the vacancies with the child safety officers?

Ms C. LOVELL - For the Child Safety Service, current vacancies just for child safety officers - for the north there are 25 budget FTE, and 24.4 of those occupied. For the north-west, 23.5 budget FTE, and 14.2 of those are occupied. For the south, there are 56.4 budget FTE, and 43.9 are occupied.

Ms ROSOL - In terms of the advice and referral line, how many positions there are currently occupied and how many are vacant?

Ms C. LOVELL - I believe there are 13 vacancies currently. I don't have that data in front of me. I'm going off updates being provided around the recruitment campaign, which indicates numbers of applicants are so significant that all vacancies will be filled.

Ms ROSOL - Is it possible to take that as a question on notice, around the current figures on that, please, minister?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, current vacancies for ARL.

Ms C. LOVELL - The advice and referral line is made up of government and two non-government partners. I can get those figures.

Ms ROSOL - That would be great, thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll see if we can get them while we're here, if that's possible.

Ms ROSOL - How many practice managers are employed at the moment in child safety services and the ARL respectively?

Ms C. LOVELL - I might need to think about which report provides that breakdown. That might be one that you have there, Jason.

Ms ROSOL - I have one more question around staffing. How many staff are in each of the teams that manage children and young people through a teams-based approach?

Ms C. LOVELL - The teams-based approach, I'll find that for you.

Ms ROSOL - How many teams are there, and how many are in each of the teams?

Ms C. LOVELL - There are two teams in the south which provide a team-based approach, known as case management team 7 and case management team 10. I'll look up those numbers for you around the staff members in those. They do vary. We allocate as many available staff as we can to those teams on any given days. I'll find the right page for you and give you the exact positions and how many for each.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. There are two teams in the south, there's one in the north-west, is that correct? Or one in the north?

Ms C. LOVELL - No. In the north and north-west there are no teams with that specific focus. The children there who aren't allocated their own child safety officer are what we call service-managed. That's where all available staff from that service provide the services that the children need.

Ms ROSOL - Not CSO level?

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes. They're not allocated directly to their own child safety officer.

Ms ROSOL - If it's a service team, what are some of the staff roles that might be working in that team?

Ms C. LOVELL - Youth workers are an example of that role. Our new youth workers work with a number of young people each, so they become really their direct primary worker when that happens.

Ms ROSOL - They don't have a social worker having any oversight of them because there's no CSOs available in that team. Is that what you're saying?

Ms C. LOVELL - All of the social workers, including the managers from that service, provide oversight. A lot of those children have a care team. The care team will be collectively

providing oversight, but depending on what their need is, managers will keep making a summary of the children who need a particular thing.

For example, if some of those are in their late teens, the focus for them will be on transitioning to independence. The managers of those services know who those children are. They make sure that they're allocated to either a youth worker or a transition to independence worker and that those services are being delivered as required.

Ms ROSOL - It's like, there's a level missing? A CSO is missing and then they have the youth worker and the transition worker and a manager, but not a CSO.

Ms C. LOVELL - That's right, they're not directly allocated a CSO, but if they do have a need that a child safety officer needs to respond to, a child safety officer from that service will attend to that need.

Ms ROSOL - Who has their own caseload already and redirects to that child?

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes, they do share that responsibility across the child safety officers who are there and the practice leaders and practice managers. It might be that delegation is required to give permission for a child or young person to engage in an activity, something like anybody who's available from the service can provide that authority.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Minister, on the topic of staff, can you update the committee on the government's commitment to attract and retain staff across child safety, ARL and youth justice workforce?

Mr JAENSCH - This is directly relevant and topical. We've touched on it briefly earlier in response to continuing high levels of vacancies, particularly in the north-west of the state and these services. The government announced a $4.5 million workforce package for child safety, the advice and referral line and Youth Justice employees, particularly in the north-west region.

The workforce package includes a payment of $10,000 for each eligible allied health professional employee and manager statewide, a 15 per cent market allowance for frontline employees in the north-west, which commenced on 1 July, and relocation incentives for employees moving to and remaining in the north-west region. Also added to that was an allocation for what's termed 'impact days' for non-allied health professional frontline staff.

The Department for Education, Children and Young People is currently working with unions to finalise the agreement. I understand that there is good agreement in principle to that and it'll proceed to the Tasmanian Industrial Commission for consideration shortly.

We're also progressing short- to longer-term strategies to build our child safety workforce and give it some more resilience in the longer term, including scholarships and fee-free places in both university and TAFE into qualifications in child safety roles; delivering a children and families workforce strategy, which was also recommended under recommendation 9.10 of the commission of inquiry; and establishing a child and youth workforce round table to consider other immediate and longer-term workforce shortages.

A nationwide recruitment campaign was kicked off in August off the back of this package for frontline child safety positions and attracted a very strong response. I'm advised that there were, directly relevant to the last question, 93 applications for child safety officer positions across the state; 51 have been interviewed so far. There are still interviews to be completed for applicants for positions in the south. We don't have the final outcomes of those interviews yet, but we anticipate being able to make offers in the north of the state initially, which will go a long way to meeting the current vacancies in a number of those roles.

The advice and referral line is similar and we're very glad to have been able to, hopefully, turn a corner in terms of staffing and get back to more full staffing levels, which means that our current systems can work as they should. We can reduce pressures on our individual staff and we thank them for going above and beyond during the last few months, in particular when staff numbers have been very low to make sure that we can continue to provide and prioritise services to the children and families who need them most.

Once we've got our service operating in a more sustainable manner, then we can be building on it with the reforms that they're committed to under the commission of inquiry to evolve those services even further. It's been difficult to do while we've had a workforce under pressure and we're very grateful to those who've shown an interest in coming to work for us and being part of the reforms. I have been told by some people that the reforms in youth justice and in child safety are, in themselves, something that people want to be part of and see this as a good place to be working in these systems because of the directions we're taking.

Thanks for your question and thank you to the department, also, for all the work that's gone into making that package and that recruitment effort work well. Do you have some more information for us?

Ms C. LOVELL - I have a lot of information here in front of me. There was a question, minister, regarding the number of practice managers.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms C. LOVELL - Could I clarify practice manager as being our Allied Health Professional Level 4? That is yes. Okay, we have in the northern region, 5.17 paid, in the north-west, two, and, in the south, 11.09.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Is that across child safety services and ARL respectively -

Ms C. LOVELL - I don't have the Advice and Referral Line figures yet for their practice managers.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

Ms C. LOVELL - You're pointing me to the vacancies in the Advice and Referral Line, which is a different question. It looks like there are 14 government vacancies, two for Baptcare and one for Mission Australia.

Ms ROSOL - Out of how many positions? You gave me that before, didn't you?

Ms C. LOVELL - Out of 30 positions.

Mr JAENSCH - How many applications do we have for the Advice and Referral Line? Would that be the applications? Interviews are underway. There were strong applications for those ARL positions, as well. I think 37 applications there. They're interviewing now.

Ms C. LOVELL - I also have the figures here for staff allocated to 7 and 10.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, happy for you to provide those.

Ms C. LOVELL - For Team 7, in the south - apologies, I did have that handy. In Team 7 in the south, we have an Allied Health Professional Level 3 practice leader, two unit-coordinators, one support worker currently working at 0.5, a youth worker, and up to six child safety officers depending on their availability. For example, yesterday they had three of the six.

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

Ms ROSOL - Is that Team 10 or Team 7?

Ms C. LOVELL - That's Team 10.

Ms WHITE - Was there an answer to your question about the regional breakdown?

Mr WOODFALL - Community Youth Justice South funded 11.85 and they were the team with the vacancy and they've filled 1.0 of that vacancy. Community Youth Justice North, 6.95 and Community Youth Justice North-west, 7.6. The vacancies are 2.0 and they've filled those positions.

Mr JAENSCH - If there are two vacancies and they've been filled, are they still vacancies?

Mr WOODFALL - I'd say they haven't started their appointment. They have signed the panel reports and they're due to start.

Ms WHITE - You'd be familiar that the St John's Park facility for Child Safety Services South is a pretty old building. It leaks, it's quite musty. There are some security concerns there when they've been locked down. What progress has been made on finding different accommodation for the staff who are currently working from that site?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have current briefing on that specific matter. I will check who else might be able to make comment on it. Are you happy to?

Ms C. LOVELL - I can make some comments unless Mr Salter would like to comment.

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Salter, is this something you would be able to shed some light on? St John's Park staff accommodation strategic plan?

CHAIR - Mr Kane Salter is attending the table now. He is deputy secretary of Business Operations and Support Services.

Mr SALTER - It is a known need that medium and longer term would like those staff to be in alternate locations. The work that Children and Families is undertaking on their service delivery model is a key component that will support what those accommodation needs should be into the future so that we just don't go into accommodation that isn't fit for purpose in the long term. We also want to make sure, as an agency, that the services in Children and Families, Youth Justice and Education are more joined up. That work is ongoing as well to see where we can progress towards more co-located accommodations that supports families and young people.

Ms WHITE - Do you have a site in mind where that might work?

Mr SALTER - We don't have a site in mind where that might work at the moment. We'll continue to work through the support model and then present options to the minister and government.

Ms WHITE - Do you have a timeline for when you'll do that by?

Mr SALTER - We are continuing to work on both the support model at the moment and there isn't a specific target date, but it's a key element of work for us to have that clear service delivery model to define accommodation needs into the future.

Ms WHITE - Minister, you would appreciate that keeping staff in good accommodation is one of the keys to retaining them in the job, and I'm assuming you've been out to visit that site so you're familiar with some of the challenges around it. As an alternative site, what are you looking for? Are you looking for a piece of land that's currently owned by your agency? Are you looking for other Crown land options? Are you looking for an existing building? Are you looking to build a building? Do you have any answers to those things?

Mr JAENSCH - I haven't been briefed on that strategy in detail. I'd be seeking advice from my department regarding facilities and what accommodation was needed for our teams. That would be something that I would -

Ms WHITE - Can I encourage you to get a briefing? These staff deserve to know what their future looks like.

Mr JAENSCH - Our staff are very valuable to us and we do need to look after them. Absolutely we do. We need to build facilities and services for children in need. We need to work right across our system. We have pressure and we need to make sure we're using our resources wisely. I haven't had a specific briefing on plans for new accommodation for our office functions recently. I'll take it on as a thing to learn more about.

Ms WHITE - You'd be familiar with the fact that the staff have walked out of those office buildings previously, and the union has been very vocal about the substandard accommodation provided for those workers. I find it a bit frustrating that it's not registering more with you as a priority project and that you don't have a current brief that you've been provided around what the alternative options for accommodation might look like.

Mr JAENSCH - No, probably my focus has been on the services we're providing to children and young people and their families.

Ms WHITE - Can't do that without good workers.

Mr JAENSCH - We need both; I absolutely agree. Our workforce package and recruiting more people to fill vacancies, and we need to ensure that we've got fit-for-purpose facilities for everyone to work from. You'll have no argument from me on that. I'll seek more advice from the department.

Ms ROSOL - I've got some more questions about child safety. Before I ask them, were you able to get that projections information? If not, could I put that question on notice please?

Mr JAENSCH - Was that with regard to the Ashley numbers?

Ms ROSOL - That was a projection about the average number of children, the actual projection, not the aspiration.

Mr JAENSCH - Was that what Mr Woodfall was signalling to me about earlier on? The updated answer to regarding the projections in the budget papers for -

Ms BURGESS - We have an answer on how the current data has been calculated.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. Could you bring that?

Ms ROSOL - Yes, I asked that, and then what was the projection?

Ms BURGESS - I'm advised that the aspirational targets have been calculated as the average of the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial year targets.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Are you able to provide the actual projection, not the aspiration that was calculated for this?

Ms BURGESS - I haven't got that with me at the moment, but I can see if they can find that out.

Ms ROSOL - Would that be something I could put as a question on notice as we're getting close to the end?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd only ask that we can provide it if it exists. If there hasn't been a calculated projection then -

Ms ROSOL - And you could let us know that it wasn't calculated?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Ms ROSOL - On Child Safety Services, how many children in out-of-home care are currently in special care packages?

Mr JAENSCH - Do you have that data to hand? I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond.

Ms C. LOVELL - I have the figures for 2023-24. Salaried residential care is 49.1 children, and therapeutic residential care is 22.7. They're the two salaried care types.

Ms ROSOL - What's the cost of a special care package?

Ms C. LOVELL - I don't have that with me at the moment. It would be an average cost that we could provide, because there's a considerable range depending on the intensity of that package.

Ms ROSOL - Is that something I can put as a question on notice given we're getting near the end?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. You've talked about 'just family-based carers', which is quite an offensive way of speaking about it because there is no 'just' a family-based care. Then you've talked about the special care packages and then you're going to put the salary to carers in between. Is that in operation already, or is that the right term for it? Salaried carers or the professional carers? Have you already got people in those positions? How much are they paid for doing that caring?

Ms C. LOVELL - We do refer to it as intensive foster care at the moment. It was a very limited trial, and it's for very young children. It was put in place to step them down from where they are in salaried care arrangements with a roster of carers. It's likely to be expanded. I don't have information with me at the moment about the specific numbers and costs -

Mr JAENSCH - Care to Thrive?

Ms C. LOVELL - Care to Thrive. We can provide that.

Ms ROSOL - Is that something you take as a question on notice?

Mr JAENSCH - What was the specific question be then?

Ms ROSOL - How much are the intensive foster carers paid per child in care?

Mr JAENSCH - Would that be about the cost of a package, or is it about the remuneration for an individual who is involved in delivering it?

Ms ROSOL - Does it happen as a remuneration, or does it happen as a package if it's with someone in their home?

Ms C. LOVELL - It happens as a package, because a lot of the intensive support is actually delivered by the foster care agency.

Ms ROSOL - Okay. The question on notice then would be around the cost of the package. Can I ask what the base reimbursement rate is per child in a home-based care placement?

Ms C. LOVELL - The annual subsidy rate varies depending on the age of a child. The standard board payment for children aged zero to four is $12,532 per annum. For children aged 5 to 11 years, that's $14,326 per annum and children aged 12 to 17, that's $16,488.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. I would comment that every single child in care is deeply trauma-affected and has very complex behaviours that are difficult to manage. Carers are caring for those children at great personal cost. Providing support for carers so they can manage and cope with difficult behaviours will be a cost-effective way of sustaining placements. Will the child safety reforms that are happening at the moment provide additional supports to carers to help them continue with placements? What might some of those supports, and the level of those supports be?

Mr JAENSCH - The review of the supports required for carers is part of the reform process being undertaken now. I'm happy for Ms Lovell to speak to that if she's able.

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes, I can do. The reforms of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service are relevant here because there'll be special services for children in out-of-home-care. We recognise that they often have these additional needs and challenging behaviours associated with their trauma experience, and that their carers do need support to look after those children. That's under development currently.

We also have recently commissioned a review into family-based care subsidies. That has shown us that we do need to remodel the way that we currently fund, so that it's easier for carers to access the support that they need. Our current model is that we have the standard payment, the subsidy rates that I just read out, but also on top of that there's higher rates for children and young people with more complex and intensive needs.

In addition to that, the Child Safety Service reimburses carers or directly funds additional services, but there are a lot of different ways currently in place to provide funding and support. There are ways that we can streamline that, make it more transparent, more efficient and take some of the work out of it for carers in needing to build a case for support. In undertaking assessments which forward-plan what the needs of a child are going to be over that period, it may be an annual period, and it should be made sure that the supports are already approved to streamline that.

Mr JAENSCH - I'll note for the purposes of the committee and the Budget that the Budget includes $120 million over four years to address increased costs of out-of-home care in relation to fostering kinship care, respite, salaried care, special care packages. The reviews, the engagement strategies, the reviewing of the financial model and supports required for family-based foster carers and others and new layers of intensity of care - having an extra $30 million a year up front in the Budget allows for us to better plan for how we'd deploy those sort of reforms.

Ms ROSOL - Can I finish by requesting that you please not refer to family-based carers as 'just' family-based carers?

Mr JAENSCH - Okay. Where was that reference made?

Ms ROSOL - There was an answer to something somewhere along the way. I don't know if it was intentional. I doubt it was intentional. I believe that family-based foster carers put their heart and soul into it, and they're not 'just' carers.

Mr JAENSCH - Absolutely. I know. I will be mindful of that.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Can the government please update the committee on how the government is prioritising the statutory elements of case management to ensure timely responses for children, young people and their families?

Mr JAENSCH - We're ensuring that staff who support children and young people in out-of-home care are appropriately supported by expert professionals to enhance the work that they do. We've allocated $2 million over four years for critical case management. This will enable four legal officers to support child safety officers to deliver their statutory responsibilities, which include preparing legal applications and supporting evidence to secure protection and to progress case goals for children. This aligns with commission of inquiry recommendation 9.22.

The statutory functions that the legal officers will undertake will significantly increase child safety officers' capacity to focus on the needs of children and young people, such as spending more time with them and prioritising care teams in case planning. Prioritising these legal tasks will also ensure that children and young people experience greater stability in their care. The Child Safety Service is establishing an individual care team for each child and young person in out-of-home care. Care teams play an important role in collaborative decision-making and planning for and with that child. The legal officers will play an important role in facilitating actions for children and young people on behalf of their care teams, specialising in legal duties and statutory responsibilities of the Child Safety Service. That's using our child safety officers for what they're best at, and bringing in specialist skills to support them in those roles where they're needed.

Ms WHITE - You'd be aware that the St Johns Masterplan is due to be released this year. It's the end of September, so it must only be moments away. The workers in the Child Safety Services south team, need to be moved out of that building to progress those building works once they commence. When will that happen?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have an answer in my briefings on that at this stage. Is someone else involved with the logistics of the master plan who could provide an answer to the table? We've got Shane Gregory who was able to speak to this in the capacity as associate secretary, DPAC.

Mr GREGORY - Yes, and former associate secretary, Department of Health, that's running the masterplan.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay. So, speaking not only out of position, but also out of portfolio at the moment.

Mr GREGORY - The St Johns Park Masterplan has been released as a consultation plan at the moment. There's significant work still to be undertaken to work through that and complete that plan. I wouldn't anticipate that would be completed this year. There's quite a bit of work to do on that plan.

Ms WHITE - I thought the final was due this year.

Mr GREGORY - I'm not aware of that. I don't believe so.

Ms WHITE - He's here for a reason, minister. He obviously wasn't just hanging around for the fun of it.

Mr JAENSCH - Come the moment, come the man.

Ms WHITE - Perhaps I could put a question on notice to you in relation to what your department's understanding is of when your staff might need to move out of the building they're currently using on that site?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll get what advice I can on that.

Ms WHITE - I appreciate that, thank you. Can I ask about the Advice and Referral Line? Of the notifications received in triage by the ARL, how many are waiting for or currently undergoing further investigation to determine the appropriate level of follow up or intervention required?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Ms Lovell to respond, if she's got data with her on that.

Ms C. LOVELL - All matters that are referred to the advice and referral line receive immediate assessment and triaging. Many of those are acted on immediately. There are some matters which don't require an immediate response. Some of those matters await allocation or it waits for some administrative activity prior to closure. Can I clarify that that's the data that you're seeking?

Mr JAENSCH - I have a couple other numbers that are also important around the way the ARL works for context. Since it was introduced in December 2018, the ARL has had a steady increase in demand and calls coming to it, which is a positive in many ways because it is intended not only for people to report concerns, but also to seek help and advice. That seems to have been a transition that's been made and a very healthy one in the culture of seeking help for particularly parents and carers for young people.

The ARL handled approximately 2000 phone and online contacts per month from January to July in 2024. It's around 2000 calls a month. Typically, more than two thirds or 68 per cent were handled and closed the same day that they were received and 5 per cent resolved or escalated within a week, 11 per cent within a month, and 21 per cent were in the system for longer, mainly for lower priority follow-up actions, for example, awaiting admin reporting and closure. Importantly, in 2023-24 across the year, as I understand it, the ARL resolved 20,440 contacts. Only 1.6 per cent of which, 323, were referred to the Child Safety Service for assessment.

That reflects on the ARL and, when we're talking about the load there and the speed at which cases are moved through, the stand-out for me is that more than 98 per cent of calls are dealt with without requiring a child safety specific assessment. It's doing exactly what it was designed to do, rather than having those 20,000 contacts clogging up the resources of the Child Safety Service, we're assisting people with other referrals, support and information that can help them, whilst triaging out those that the Child Safety Service needs to deal with urgently.

Ms WHITE - Of the 21 per cent that took longer, can you provide further information about those numbers? I haven't done the maths, but you gave a figure, then you talked about percentages. How many calls are we talking about in that 21 per cent and what was the longest time that somebody needed to wait before their matter was dealt with?

Mr JAENSCH - The 21 per cent applied to the approximately 2000 calls per month between January and July. The advice I have is that the majority of those were mainly lower priority follow-up actions such as awaiting admin reporting and closure of files or cases as opposed to there being an outstanding need for support, help, or intervention in the care of a child. I have some more details here if that helps. Thank you very much. Characterising low-priority matters are those which require little or no follow-up, held pending allocation to an ARL worker, or consultation review for potential closure, as I said before. I'm comfortable with that answer. If you have any further questions, happy to take them on notice.

Ms WHITE - I would be keen to know how it compares the similar time last year.

Mr JAENSCH - We could do that.

Ms C. LOVELL - Daily average contacts awaiting allocation at ARL during the quarter ending 30 June 2023 compared to 2024, so there was a daily average of 1058.9 contacts awaiting and that's compared to 390 during the same period in 2023.

Ms WHITE - What percentage are referred to child safety services for investigation or intervention?

Ms C. LOVELL - Of conversations, 1.6 per cent of conversations at the Advice and Referral Line.

Ms WHITE - That's from this financial year, is that correct?

Mr JAENSCH - That was 2023-24.

Ms WHITE - Okay, thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - That's extraordinary, though. That's 98.4 per cent of the contacts that arrive through the ARL don't end up being child safety business. It's fantastic.

Ms WHITE - It's good that people are raising them. How do you, then, communicate back to those people who've notified, if they're not anonymous? I know that's something that is raised, people have made a notification and they don't hear anything else about it.

Mr JAENSCH - No feedback loop, yes.

Ms WHITE - Is there a way to do that? Are you solving that problem?

Ms C. LOVELL - The Advice and Referral Line certainly strives to provide feedback to callers. A lot of the contacts that they receive are not from callers, they're system-generated contacts. There's a lot of data from Tasmania Police, for example. When it is a caller, they do strive to give feedback whenver that's possible and appropriate.

Mr JAENSCH - I note that in some circumstances, there's limited information you can provide about matters that have proceeded to police or legal or others without - to provide details of other people's lives and legal matters is a little limited.

Ms WHITE - I appreciate that. At the very least, being able to go back to someone who made a notification to say, 'We've investigated, there's nothing to worry about', or 'We're investigating and it's ongoing', would allay a lot of concerns people have.

Mr JAENSCH - To know that it's registered?

Ms WHITE - It sounds like you're doing that. You're confident that in the majority of cases, where you have an individual who's raised a complaint, they do get feedback about that?

Ms C. LOVELL - I'm confident that's what ARL strives to do. I take on board that feedback that that may not be satisfactory to every caller on every occasion. Advice and Referral Line, though, as the name indicates - it is there to provide not just protection to children, but advice to callers. So, the feedback loop is very important to Advice and Referral Line because that really is a measure of their success, the quality of the advice, and satisfaction of the caller.

Ms ROSOL - A question about the ARL as well, or the process. If a call comes in and the ARL assess that a child and family would benefit from an IFES (Intensive Family Engagement Service) worker, does that go via Child Safety Services, or is that immediately referred to the community-service organisation that provides the IFES?

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes, that can go directly to IFES without needing to go to the Child Safety Response Team.

Ms ROSOL - How many children referred by the ARL for IFES support are referred back to the ARL due to incomplete referrals, and how many are referred back due to lack of capacity in the community-service organisations?

Ms C. LOVELL - I don't have that granular level of detail around IFES referrals and those outcomes.

Mr JAENSCH - Is that a failure of referral that you're mentioning? I'm just wondering if it's something we count.

Ms ROSOL - Do you count the referrals that bounce back when they're not accepted by an organisation?

Ms C. LOVELL - Referrals don't necessarily 'bounce back'. IFES is a very intensive family support service right at the tertiary end, where sometimes if a family doesn't engage with IFSS, then the Child Safety Service will need to intervene. It might be that IFES undertake an assessment and find that that family aren't suitable, they're not ready for that type of service intervention, and it does need to progress to the Child Safety Service. It might bypass IFES, rather than bouncing back to the Advice and Referral Line. It might be that IFES determine that a less intensive service is appropriate, in which case they can refer it into our Intensive Family Support System.

Ms ROSOL - Are you aware of any issues with capacity for IFES, where they're not able to accept referrals because they don't have the capacity?

Ms C. LOVELL - I don't believe there are capacity issues at the moment.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Around that, whether IFES is to provide crisis support or preventative support. My understanding is, that originally it was developed to provide preventative support so that we're helping families early before the issues become so significant that child safety services need to be involved.

What we're hearing from the community is that organisations are receiving more and more intense referrals that go beyond what they can provide for preventative support. That means, while they're funded to provide preventative support, they're actually providing crisis support, which is much more intense, expensive, and difficult for them. Are you aware of that situation and what will you do to address that shift towards crisis level rather than a preventative level of support?

Mr JAENSCH - I have heard some similar comments, possibly from speaking with similar providers in the market. I haven't had specific advice as to whether there's a change in the complexity of the cases being referred, or a different threshold being applied for those who might be sent through for an IFES assessment. Clare may speak to that.

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes. I want to make sure we're using the correct terminology. What you're referring to I believe is the Integrated Family Support System (IFSS), which is a less intensive public-health model than IFES.

Ms ROSOL - My understanding is that it's an issue for both across the board.

Ms C. LOVELL - Yes, we have recognised that. When we've been working the integrated family support providers to map the nature of need that they're responding to, we are finding that they are responding to a higher level of need than what was originally intended through that model. We have the opportunity to remodel so that there's a different approach to families who have higher needs than what IFSS was intended for, but aren't yet at that IFES level. We're doing that modelling at the moment and working with those providers around what that might look like.

Mr JAENSCH - I think it's been doing its job though, as part of the system, the ARL, and IFES have contributed to fewer cases progressing to a statutory intervention statistically over time since they were introduced.

Ms WHITE - Minister, how many staff are on workers compensation in child safety services at the moment and what's the average amount of time they're on workers compensation and what's the longest length of time please?

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask Jennyto please provide those figures if we have them.

Ms WHITE - If we run out of time can I place it as a question on notice?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

CHAIR - We are about to run out of time.

Ms WHITE - Can I place it as a question on notice?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I'll take that on notice.

CHAIR - The time for estimates of the Minister for Children and Young People has expired. The committee will now adjourn.

The Committee adjourned at 4.39 p.m.

Tabled by Premier
9-10 23/10/24

Keeping Children Safe

Routine Disclosure relating to Commission of Inquiry matters

This document contains the following fact sheets and routine disclosure tables relating to Commission of Inquiry (CoI) matters of concern:

1. Fact sheet Information – section 34A Notices
2. Fact sheet Information – section 18 Notices
3. Assessment and actions by Heads of Agency in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report – State Service employees (**Alleged Perpetrators**)
4. Assessment and actions by Heads of Agency in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report – State Service employees (**Alleged Non-Perpetrators**)
5. Assessment and actions by Commissioner of Police in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report (**Tasmania Police officers)**
6. Notifications of **State Service employee suspensions** from duty as a result of allegations of child sexual abuse – cumulative since October 2020
7. Joint Referral Review Team (JRRT) matters of interest identified through the CoI (section 34A Notices and other data sources – **State Service employees and general public persons of interest**)

These tables are routinely updated and published on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website www.dpac.tas.gov.au.

Note: the information in these tables is valid as at the reporting date and drawn from complex live datasets which are subject to change. Care should be exercised in the interpretation and reporting of these datasets. As new disclosure tables are added or tables expanded, it is important to note that the tables may not be mutually exclusive, individuals may be listed in one or more tables, and some tables are point in time whilst others are cumulative from a point in time.

Fact Sheet Information - Section 34A Notices

What is a section 34A notice?

A Section 34A Notice in the *Commissions of Inquiry Act* 1995 allows the Commission to communicate information to another authority. If a Commission of Inquiry has any information that may be relevant to a criminal prosecution or disciplinary matter, that information is referred to the appropriate authority.

Did the Commission make referrals under a section 34A notice to an appropriate authority?

The Commission made section 34A referrals naming individuals and shared information received to the relevant authorities/agencies regarding risks or potential risks to the welfare of children.

These referrals named individuals that were current state service employees, former state service employees or general members of the public (never worked in the state service).

The referrals include a wide range of alleged conduct – including criminal, civil or administrative conduct and include historical allegations (e.g. 1970s) to contemporary allegations to the closure of the Commission of Inquiry.

Who were referrals made to?

Referrals were made to a range of organisations and people, including the:

- Registrar of the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Scheme
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency ('Ahpra')
- Assistant Commissioner, Tasmania Police
- Secretary, Department for Education, Children and Young People and, before that, the Secretary, Department of Communities and the Secretary, Department of Education
- Secretary, Department of Health
- Teachers Registration Board.

Has action been taken on the referrals?

Every person identified in the report as an alleged perpetrator of child sexual abuse has been referred to the appropriate authority, be it Tasmania Police, Ahpra, the Teachers Registration Board and/or the Working with Vulnerable People Register.

The Joint Referral Review Team (JRRT) has reviewed all received Section 34A Notices.

Employment outcomes relating to alleged perpetrators that are current or former state service employees are publicly disclosed on the DPAC Website, with routine updates as information changes or new information becomes known.

Fact Sheet Information - Section 18 Notices

What is a section 18 notice?

Section 18 of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act* provides that if a Commission of Inquiry wishes to make an allegation of misconduct against a person, the Commission must give notice of the allegation to the person, state the evidence that supports it, and provide the person with a right to be heard.

Section 18 Notices are issued to individuals – not institutions or the State – to make individuals aware of what is alleged against them and to give individuals an opportunity to be heard during the course of a Commission of Inquiry.

Section 18 Notices are procedural steps and not final findings of guilt or breach.

A section 18 notice can be withdrawn, after an individual has been heard or provided additional or alternative evidence to the Commission that satisfied the Commission that the allegation should be dismissed.

Did the Commission make misconduct findings?

The Commission ultimately made one finding of misconduct and named this individual. The Commission also made 75 findings and published adverse commentary, identifying individual state servants or their position title.

How did the Commission advise the State of any concerns with staff?

Report Findings and section 34A referrals are the mechanism by which the Commission advised the State of issues with its staff (and other risks) and these have all been acted on.

The Commission was able to refer matters to appropriate authorities, including to Tasmania Police, Teacher's Registration Board, Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and Working with Vulnerable People Register, as well as State Government Agencies.

Routine Disclosure of assessment and actions by Heads of Agency in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report

State Service employees (Alleged Perpetrators)

17 September 2024

	Dept of Health	Dept of Education, Children and Young People		Other TSS Agencies	Total employees identified
		Youth Justice and Child Safety	Education		
Total number of employees referred to in the COI report	**3**	**11**	**8**	**0**	**22**
Former employees	3	6	6	0	15
Current employees	0	5	2	0	7

Head of Agency Assessment Outcomes:					
ED5 processes commenced	1	11	3	0	15
ED5 process will commence if individual seeks re-employment in the TSS	1	0	2	0	3
Assessment recommended no further action due to:					
- Deceased	1	0	0	0	1
- Convicted of criminal charges and imprisoned	0	0	2	0	2
- No reasonable grounds to believe a breach of the Code of Conduct occurred	0	0	1	0	1
Head of Agency assessments completed	**3**	**11**	**8**	**0**	**22**

Routine Disclosure of assessment and actions by Heads of Agency in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report

State Service employees (Alleged Perpetrators)

	Dept of Health	Dept of Education, Children and Young People		Other TSS Agencies	Total employees identified
		Youth Justice and Child Safety	Education		
Action taken / final outcomes:					
Deceased	1	0	0	0	1
Convicted of criminal charges and imprisoned, which is a matter of public record	0	0	2	0	2
Terminated (due to breach determined)	1	2	1	0	4
Sanction of termination recommended but employee resigned prior to finalisation	0	0	1	0	1
Breach determined and sanction other than termination applied, and employee returned to duty	0	0	1	0	1
Resigned or contract expired prior to ED5 process commencing. Employee advised ED5 process will commence if individual seeks re-employment in the TSS.	1	0	2	0	3
Resigned or contract expired prior to ED5 process completing. Employee advised ED5 process will commence if individual seeks re-employment in the TSS.	0	4	0	0	4
Active ED5 process underway (noting that these employees are suspended)	0	4	0	0	4
No further action based on assessment or ED5 determination	0	1	1	0	2
Total outcomes	**3**	**11**	**8**	**0**	**22**

Routine Disclosure of assessment and actions by Heads of Agency in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report

State Service employees (Alleged Non-Perpetrators)

17 September 2024

	Dept of Health	Dept of Education, Children and Young People		Other TSS Agencies	Total employees identified
		Youth Justice and Child Safety	Education		
Total number of employees referred to in the CoI report	**17**	**20**	**2**	**3**	**42**
Former employees	12	4	2	1	19
Current employees	5	4	0	2	11
Not determined	0	12	0	0	12

Head of Agency Assessment Outcomes:					
ED5 process commenced	5	1	0	3	9
ED5 process will commence if individual seeks re-employment in the TSS	6	1	0	0	7
Assessment recommended no further action due to:					
- Deceased	0	0	2	0	2
- No reasonable grounds to believe a breach of the Code of Conduct occurred	6	11	0	0	17
Head of Agency assessments completed	17	13	2	3	35
Assessment not yet completed:					
- Underway	0	4	0	0	4
- Not yet able to identify individual employees	0	3	0	0	3
Head of Agency assessments not yet completed	0	7	0	0	7

Routine Disclosure of assessment and actions by Heads of Agency in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report

State Service employees (Alleged Non-Perpetrators)

	Dept of Health	Dept of Education, Children and Young People		Other TSS Agencies	Total employees identified
		Youth Justice and Child Safety	Education		
Action taken / final outcomes:					
Deceased	0	0	2	0	2
Terminated (due to breach determined)	0	0	0	0	0
Sanction of termination recommended but employee resigned	0	0	0	1	1
Breach determined and sanction other than termination applied, and employee resigned	1	0	0	0	1
Resigned or contract expired prior to ED5 process commencing. Employee advised ED5 process will commence if individual seeks re-employment in the TSS	6	1	0	0	7
Resigned or contract expired prior to ED5 process completing. Employee advised ED5 process will commence if individual seeks re-employment in the TSS	0	1	0	0	1
Active ED5 process underway (noting that these employees are suspended or resigned)	4	0	0	0	4
No further action based on assessment or ED5 determination	6	11	0	2	19
Total outcomes	**17**	**13**	**2**	**3**	**35**

Routine Disclosure of assessment and actions by Commissioner of Police in relation to matters referred to in the CoI report (Tasmania Police officers)

17 September 2024

	Alleged Perpetrators	Non-alleged Perpetrators	Total officers identified
Total number of Tasmania Police officers referred to in the COI report	**1**	**5**	**6**
- Former Tasmania Police officers	1	2	3
- Current Tasmania Police officers	0	3	3
Commissioner of Police Assessment Outcomes:			
Assessment against ABACUS commenced (the *Commissioner's Directions* relating to conduct, complaint management and compliance review)	1	3	4
Assessment recommended no further action due to there being no evidence of the officer acting in an unethical or unprofessional way and no grounds for an internally raised complaint	0	2	2
Commissioner of Police assessments completed	1	5	6

Action taken / final outcomes:			
Professional Standards inquiry not completed due to officer being deceased	1	0	1
Breach of Code of Conduct found and sanction determined	0	3	3
No further action based on assessment	0	2	2
Total outcomes	**1**	**5**	**6**

Routine Disclosure - Notifications of State Service employee suspensions from duty as a result of allegations of child sexual abuse (cumulative since October 2020)

17 September 2024

	Total notifications
Cumulative total since October 2020	**92**
North	54
South	38
Historical[1]	41
Contemporary[1]	51
ED5 processes commenced	87
ED5 processes not commenced[2]	5
ED5 processes completed:	48
- Outcome determined: Breach	11
- Outcome determined: No breach	37

Action taken / final outcomes:	
Terminated (due to breach determined)	6
Would have been terminated (due to breach determined) but for resignation or contract ending	4
Breach determined and other sanction applied, and returned to duty	1
No breach determined from ED5 process completed, and resigned	5
No breach determined from preliminary assessment or ED5 process completed, and returned to duty	33
Currently suspended with active ED5 investigation underway	34
Resigned or contract expired prior to ED5 process completed	9
Total outcomes	**92**

Police are aware of all cases and the appropriate regulatory bodies have been notified where applicable.

1. Definitions of historical and contemporary:
   - Historical allegations of child sexual abuse are where the alleged misconduct occurred prior to the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in December 2017.
   - Contemporary allegations of child sexual abuse are where the alleged misconduct occurred from the commencement of 2018 to present.

2. An ED5 process may not have commenced due to:
   - Awaiting the outcome of a police assessment or court proceedings
   - The preliminary assessment found no evidence of wrongdoing
   - The employee has already resigned from the Tasmanian State Service.

Routine Disclosure - Notifications of State Service employee suspensions from duty as a result of allegations of child sexual abuse (cumulative since October 2020)

Length of suspension for State Servants currently suspended on full pay*

As at 17 September 2024	Duration of suspension on full pay (calendar days):
1	28
2	65
3	84
4	86
5	91
6	94
7	112
8	154
9	168
10	172
11	283
12	291
13	291
14	291
15	302
16	312
17	312
18	322
19	337
20	353
21	423
22	456
23	574
24	719
25	869
26	931
27	940
28	1051
29	1059
30	1380
31	1411
32	1431

*In some cases an employee can be suspended without pay for reasons such as their Working with Vulnerable People Registration having been suspended.

For the 12 employees currently suspended on full pay with length of suspension over 365 days:

- 1 ED5 investigation is paused pending court proceedings;
- 1 ED5 investigation is paused pending police investigation;
- 8 ED5 investigations have been subject to additional allegations requiring investigation; and
- 2 ED5 processes are in the final stages of determination and response.

There are many factors that Agencies must take into account in progressing these investigations with due process, including:

- Accessing key witnesses - the timing has to be right – particularly when a child or young person is involved.
- New evidence obtained during an investigation requires additional allegations to be put to the employee and further engagement may be necessary with existing and new witnesses.
- All of these elements must be trauma-informed.

Routine Disclosure - Notifications of State Service employee suspensions from duty as a result of allegations of child sexual abuse (cumulative since October 2020)

- We must appoint appropriately skilled investigators with regard to the potential complexity and seriousness of cases.
- We may also need to pause an investigation where Police investigation is underway or the matter moves to criminal prosecution.
- Where a civil case progresses for the same allegation this may cause delays to the ED5 whilst the civil claim is progressing.
- In addition, we must provide support and ongoing engagement to witnesses, complainants, victims, and respondents; and support to case managers.

Routine disclosure – Joint Referral Review Team (JRRT) matters of interest identified through the CoI (section 34A Notices and other data sources) – State Service employees and general public persons of interest

17 September 2024

The following table represents consolidated information collected through the review of all Section 34A Notices as well as pre-existing information holdings collected from the Commission of Inquiry's Draft and Final Reports, and the previous work of the Joint Safety and Accountability Team (JSAT). This has supported the development of a comprehensive dataset of all persons of interest relevant to the Commission of Inquiry.

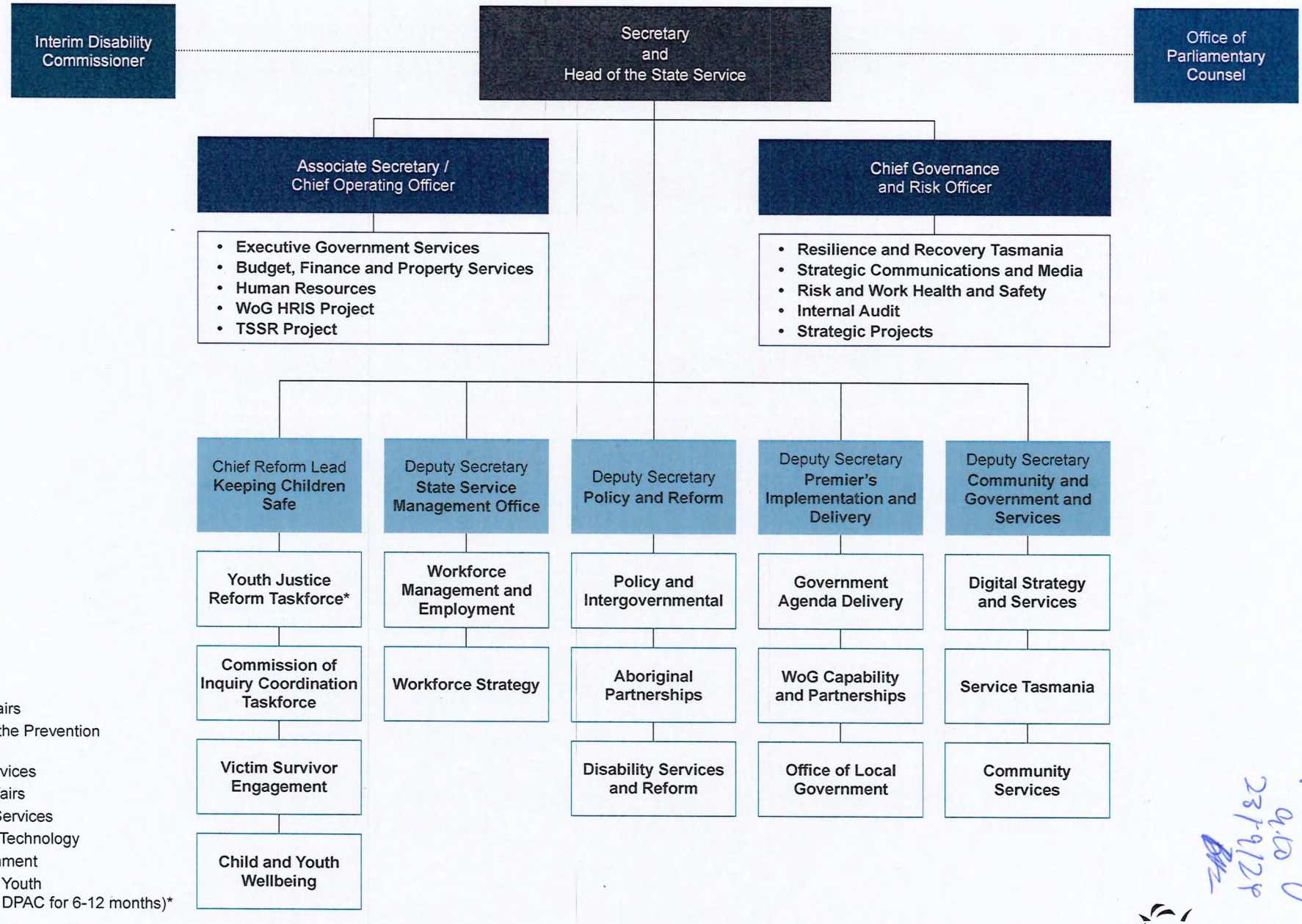
Total Section 34A Notices received	**195**
Department of Health	5
Department for Education, Children and Young People	60
Tasmania Police	52
Registrar – Working with Vulnerable People	71
Teachers Registration Board	7
Integrity Commission	0
Australian Federal Police	0
Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency	Not able to be disclosed

Persons of Interest Identified – from <u>all</u> JRRT data sources[1]	**214**
Advised by Commission of Inquiry via Section 34A Notices	161
Additional persons identified through pre-existing information holdings collected by agencies	53
Number of alleged perpetrators of child abuse (sexual and/or physical)	**149**
Current State Service employees	29
Former State Service employees (including 12 deceased)	71
Never employed by the Tasmanian State Service (general public)	49
Status of actions relating to <u>current</u> State Service employees	
No breach determined from preliminary assessment or ED5 process completed, and cleared to return to duty	7
Breach determined and other sanction applied, and returned to duty	1
Breach determined, and remains suspended awaiting finalisation of sanction	1
Currently suspended with active ED5 investigation underway	14
Not a current employee at time of allegation, matter reviewed by appropriate regulatory authority	2
Under assessment[2]	4
Total actions	**29**

[1] All Persons of Interest identified have been referred to the relevant regulatory and/or law enforcement entity.

[2] 1 employee subject to an allegation of child sexual abuse is not in workplace, 3 employees are subject to allegations relating to physical (not sexual) abuse which remain under assessment.

Department of Premier and Cabinet | Organisational Chart



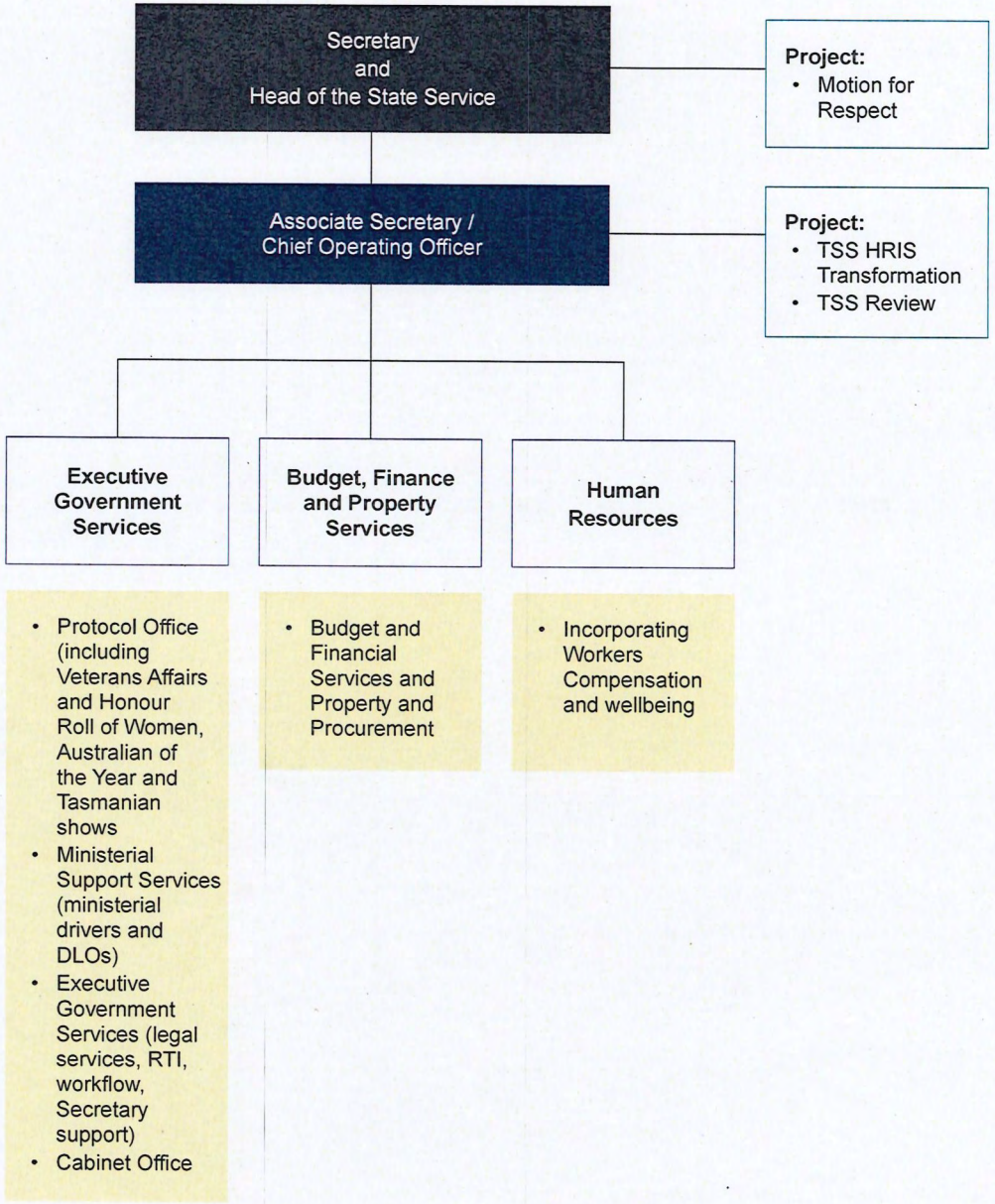
Supporting:

Premier
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Science and Technology
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Children and Youth
(YJ reform transferred to DPAC for 6-12 months)*

Tasmanian Government

Tabled by Premier
9.00
23/9/24

Group: Office of the Sectretary



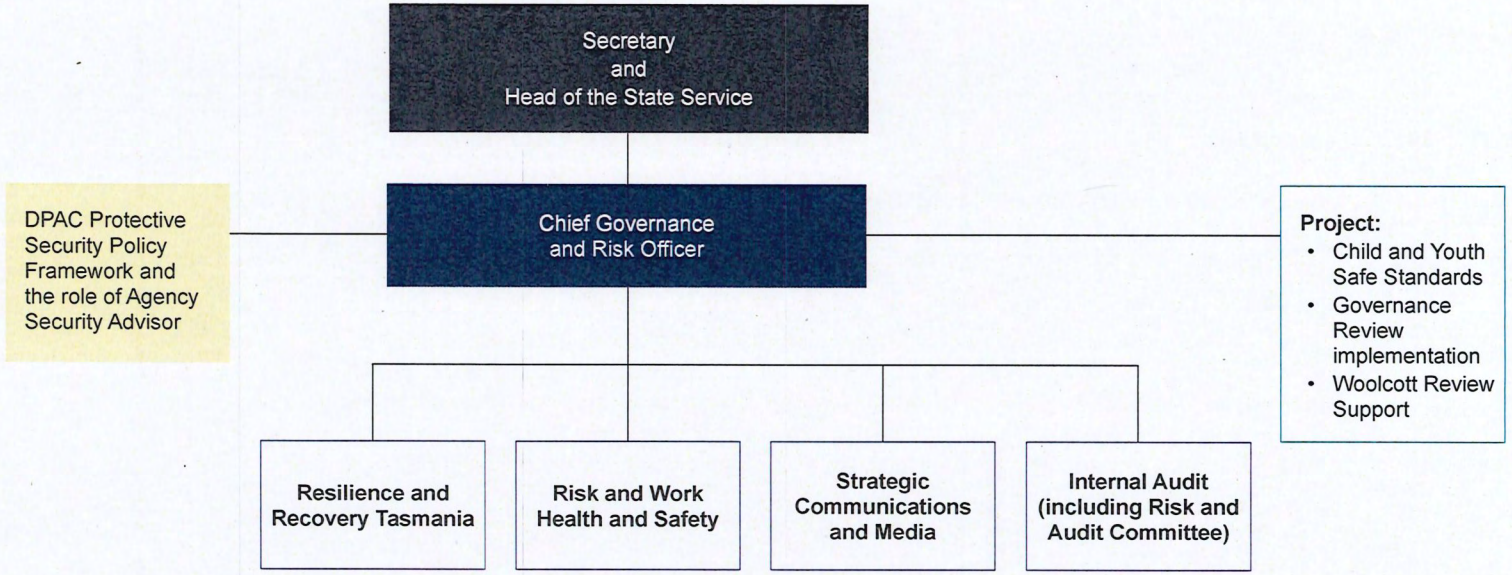
Supporting:

Premier

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

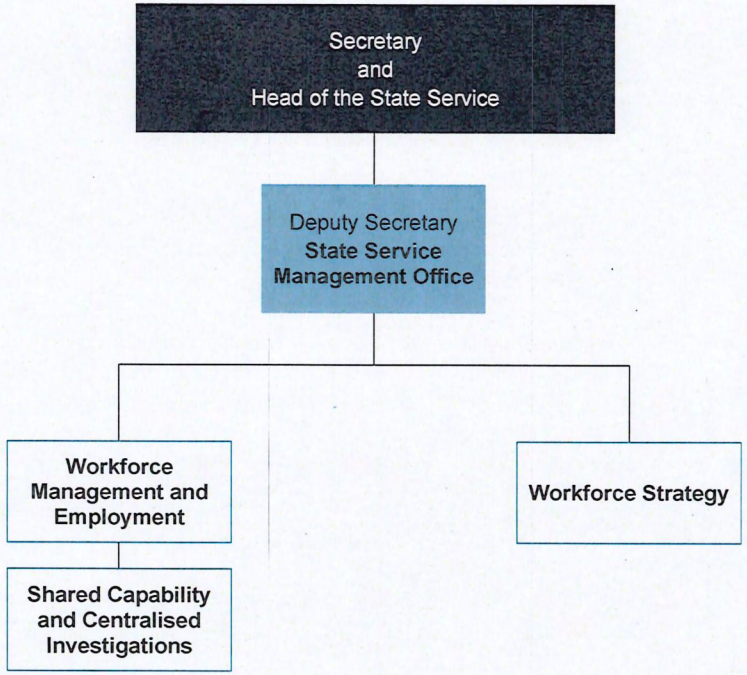
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

Group: Governance and Risk



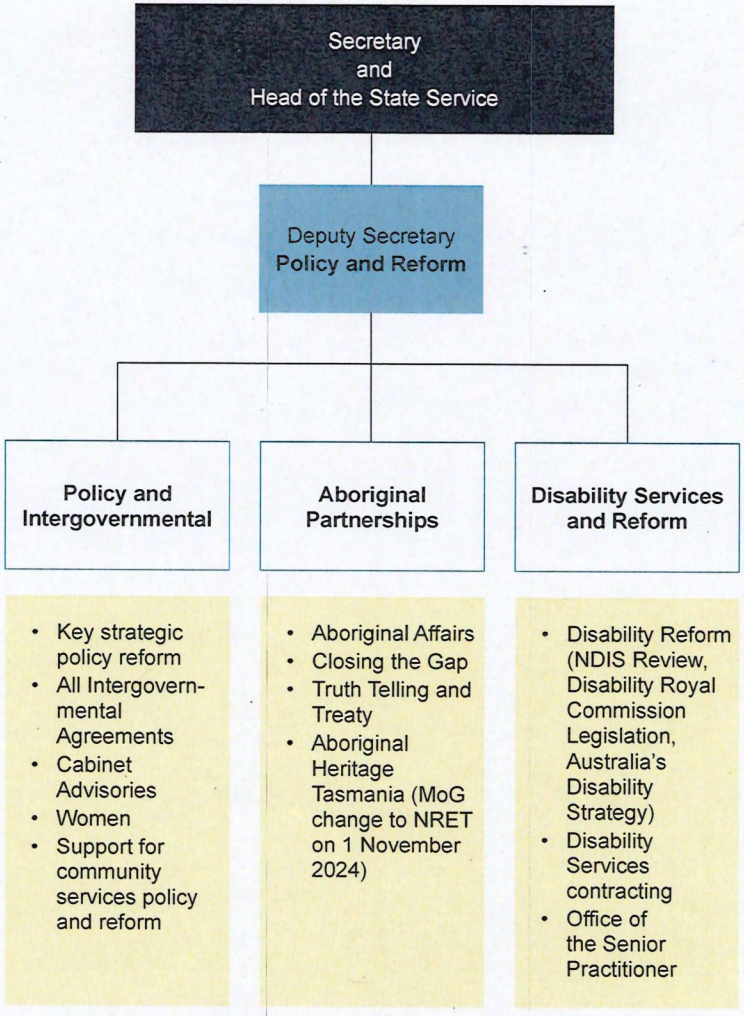
Supporting:
Premier
Cabinet Ministers

Group: State Service Management Office



Supporting:
Premier

Group: Policy and Reform



Supporting:

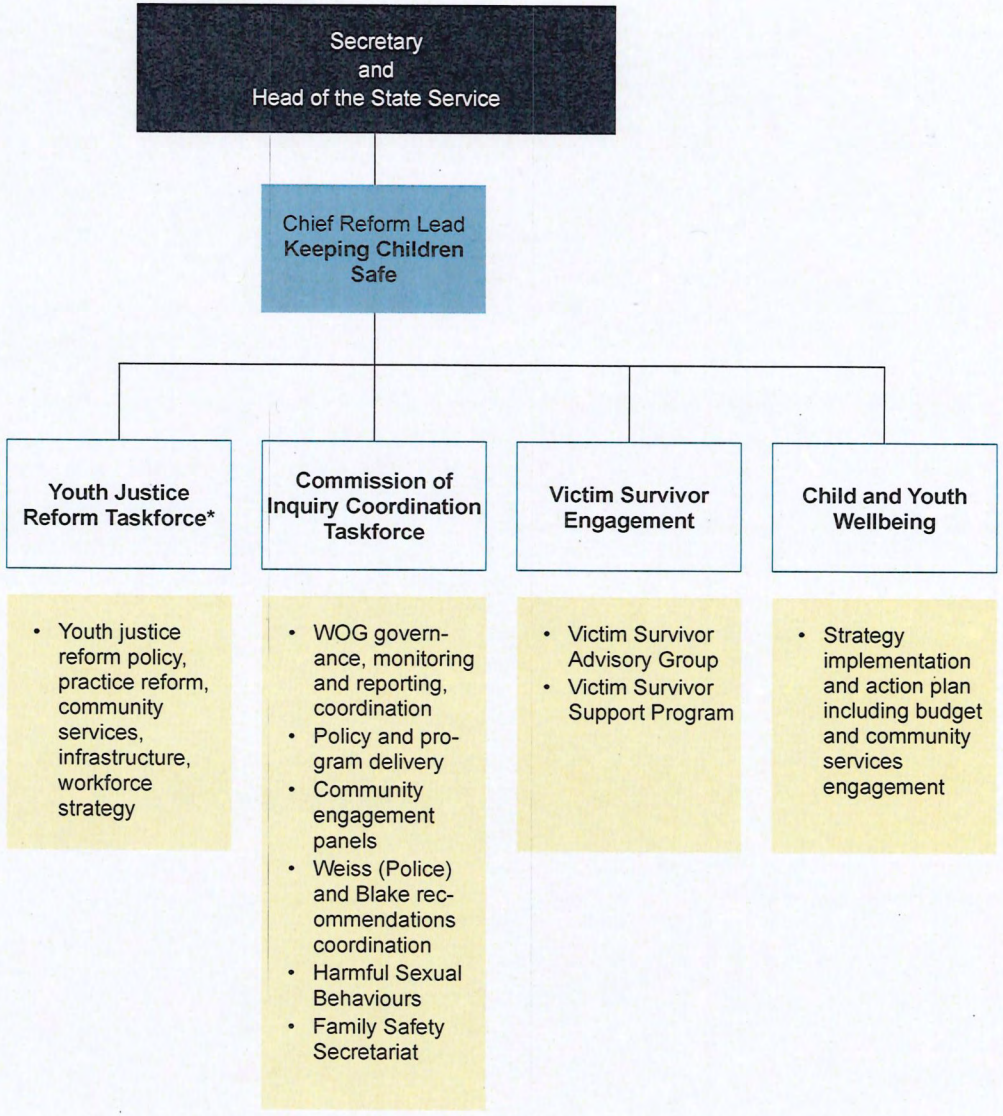
Premier

Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

Minister for Disability Services

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Group: Keeping Children Safe Reform



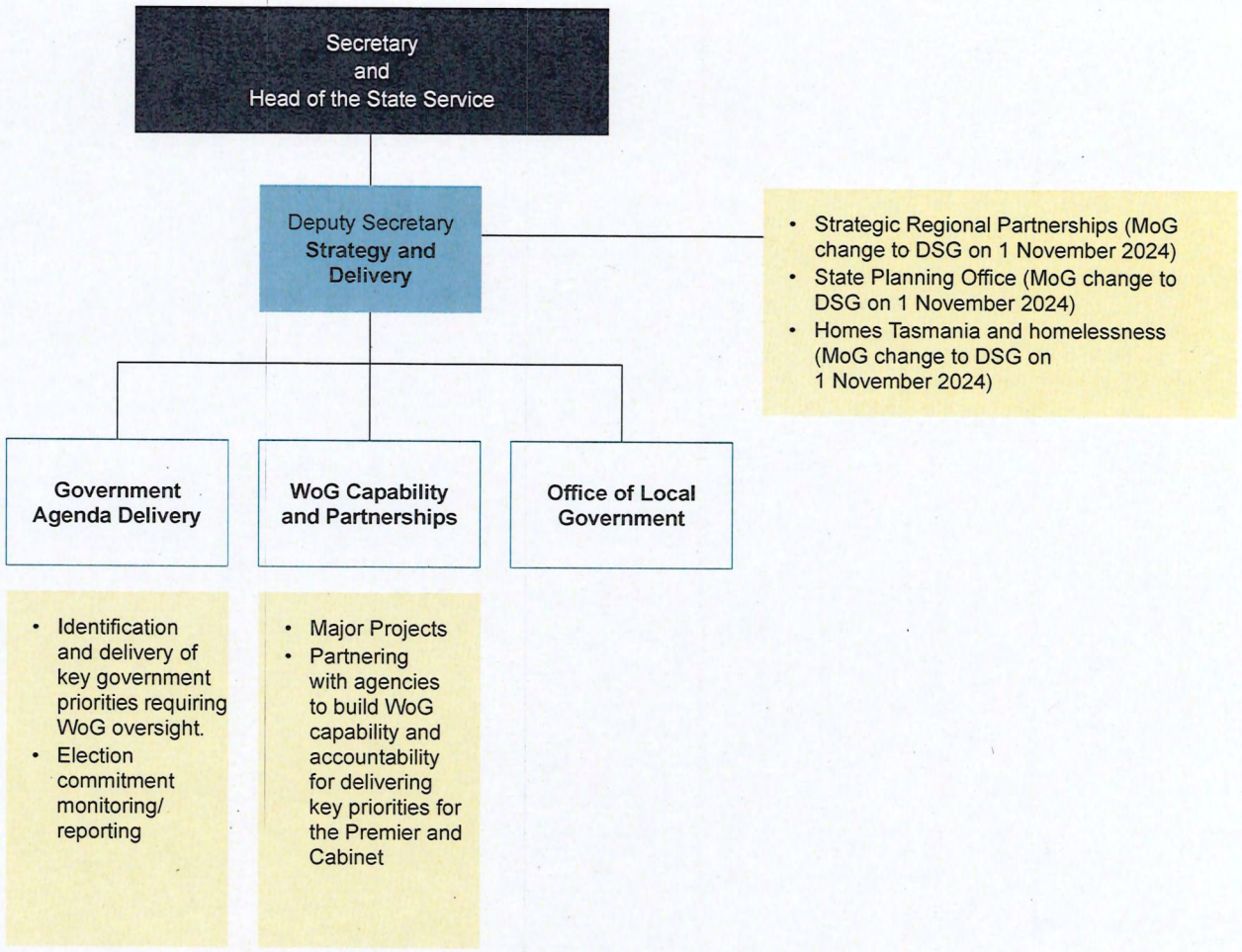
Supporting:

Premier

Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

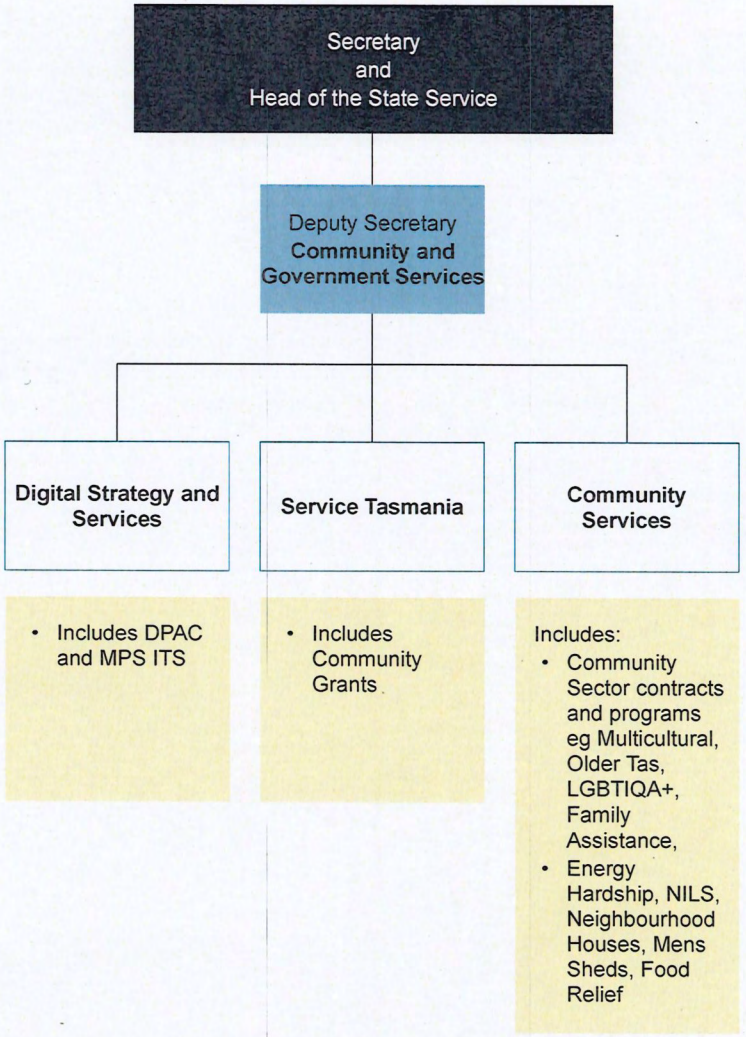
Minister for Children and Youth
(YJ reform transferred to DPAC for 6-12 months)*

Group: Premier's Implementation and Delivery



Supporting:
Premier
Cabinet Ministers
Minister for Local Government

Group: Community and Government Services



Supporting:
Premier
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Science and Technology

Service Tasmania highlights 2023-24

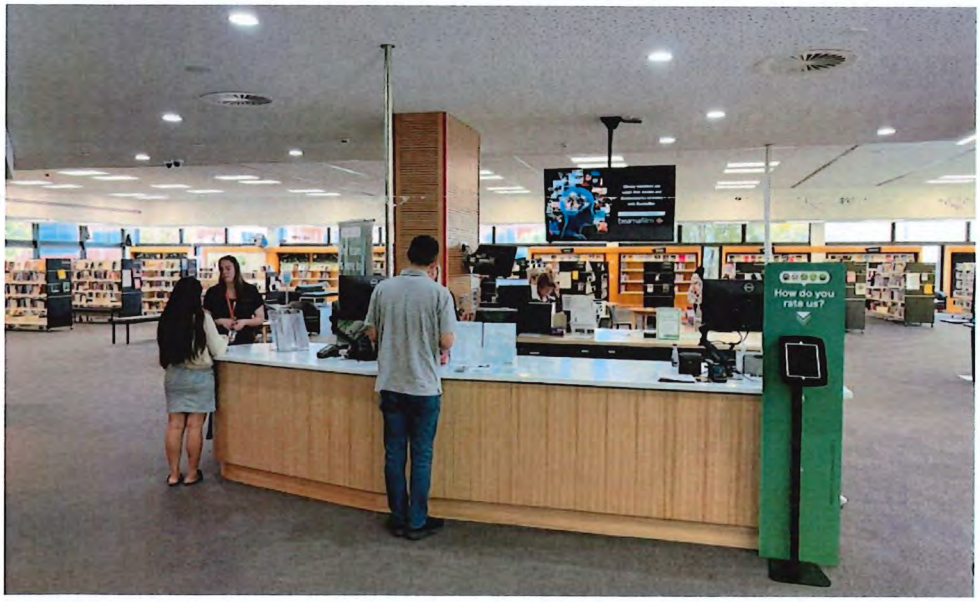
Tabled by Premier 9.10 23/9/24

Celebrated 25 years

- Service Tasmania marked 25 years of serving our communities! Launching in 1998, the organisation was the first of its kind in Australia and continues to provide an essential and valued service all these years later.

Service Centre investment

- St Helens and Wynyard service centres received comprehensive upgrades in line with Service Tasmania's contemporary look and feel, to improve the customer experience, including signage, painting, joinery and improved spaces for customer interactions.
- Launceston and Glenorchy service centres received new internal signage to support an improved customer experience.
- Burnie (meeting room space) and Triabunna (back office workstations) service centres received upgrades to improve operational capability for staff.



Picture 2 – Glenorchy service centre – new concierge

Customers

- Service Tasmania staff handled over 950,000 customer enquiries, in person and over the phone, and 4,461 email queries.
- Additionally, there were 2.5 million unique page views on the Service Tasmania website, a 47% increase from the 2022-23 figure of 1.7 million views over the same period.
- The customer satisfaction rating across all services was 85%.

New programs join Service Tasmania

- In 2024, Service Tasmania has expanded its community program delivery functions, in addition to its more traditional transactional services:
    - The Seniors Card and Companion Card programs, and Tasmanian Government Concessions Guide joined Service Tasmania in June 2024 and will benefit from Services Tasmania's transactional, marketing and client management expertise, as well as its emerging digital capabilities.
    - DPAC's Community Grants unit subsequently joined Service Tasmania on 16 September 2024, providing opportunities to better promote grant programs and support grant applicants.



Picture 3 – Seniors card

Community Engagement

Continuing with a customer-centric approach, Service Tasmania increased its community engagement at events to help them understand government services.

Highlights included:

- Working with the University of Tasmania to educate international students on Tasmanian vehicle licence requirements;
- Presenting at several high schools to promote the key steps for young people to start their learner driver journey; and
- Attendance at the North West Carers Expo in Burnie to highlight the services that are available to carers and their clients; and

- Attendance at AgFest, offering a full mobile service centre as well as the ever-popular children's activity of making licences.



Picture 4 and 5 – Agfest



Picture 6 – Staff at the North West Carers Expo

Workforce Planning and Service Improvement

- A new workforce planning system and app called Time2Work was introduced for frontline staff, so they can easily access their rosters, pick up extra shifts and manage leave.
- A new knowledge management system called Compass was developed for frontline Service Tasmania staff to support the delivery of hundreds of services over the phone and face-to-face.
- Service Tasmania partnered with A Fairer World to deliver tailored training for frontline staff on unconscious bias and inclusive language to ensure improved interactions with the communities we serve.
- Introduced a regional staffing model to increase flexibility in working arrangements for existing staff, and to alleviate staffing pressures.
- Introduced new thermal printing to replace ageing old-style receipting.

Service Tasmania, Department of Premier and Cabinet

21 Kirksway Place, Battery Point, TAS, 7000

Email: ask@service.tas.gov.au

Tabled by Premier
9.30 23/9/24
BF

Community Recovery Initiatives – Severe Weather Event (Aug/Sep 2024)

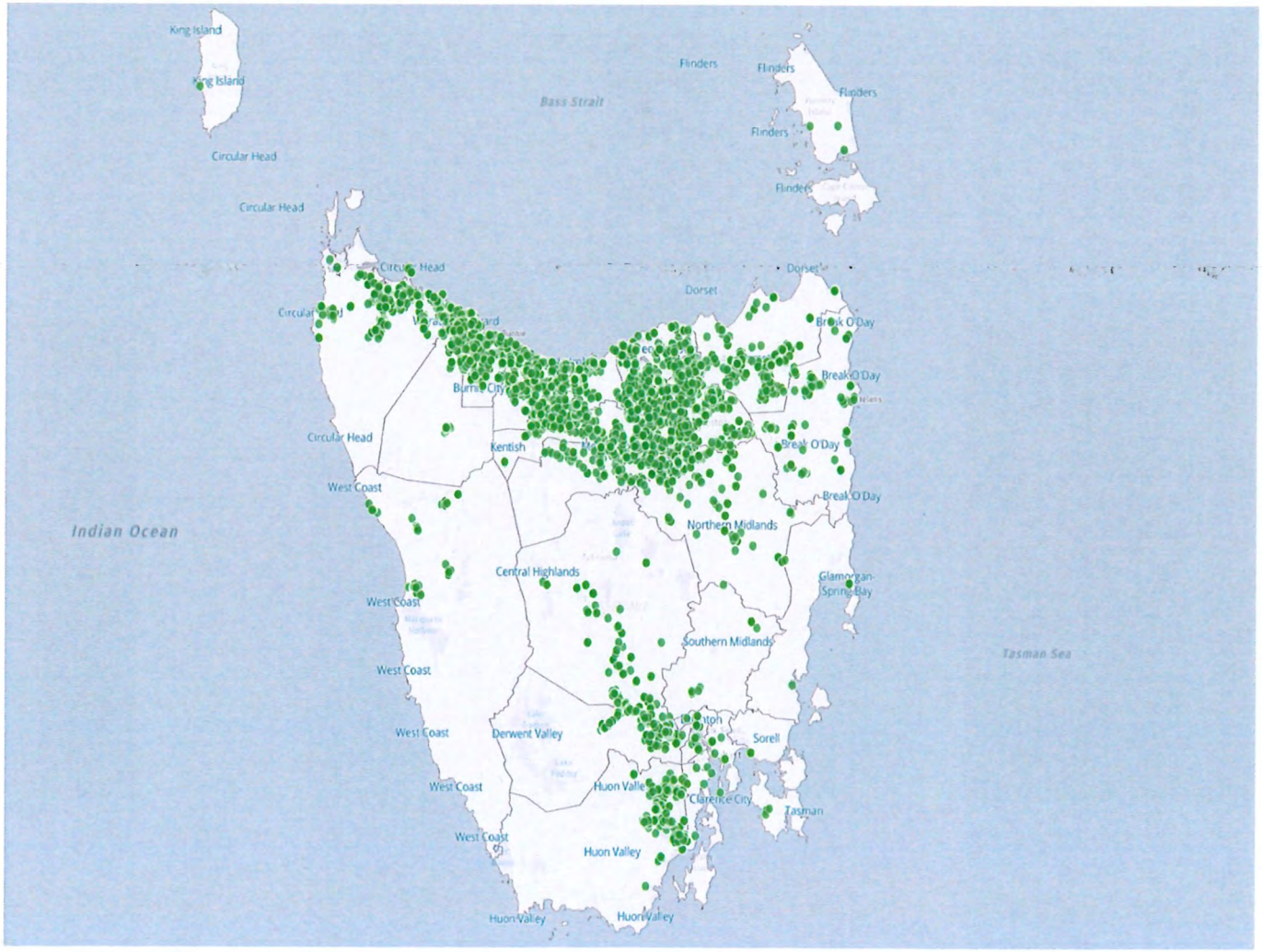
- A severe weather event occurred in late August to early September 2024 and affected all three regions of Tasmania.
- This event caused significant wind damage resulting in extended power and telecommunications outages, particularly in the North and North West. It also caused minor to moderate flooding in a number of catchments and major flooding in the Derwent River between Meadowbank and New Norfolk.
- Derwent Valley Council opened two evacuation centres in New Norfolk to support impacted residents. Centres were staffed and managed with support from Hobart City Council, Kingborough Council, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC).
- Councils and community organisations established locations for communities impacted by power outages to charge their devices and access amenities.
- The Tasmanian Government provided recovery grants to communities across the State impacted by flooding, power outages and damage to their homes (refer Table 1), and is also waiving the gate fees for disposal of storm waste.
- The Tasmanian Government also provided grants of $255,000 to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and $50,000 each to Foodbank and Loaves and Fishes to bolster food relief services.
- Derwent Valley Council held community information sessions in locations across the Upper Derwent Valley. Other recovery partners attended, including DPAC staff who assisted with recovery grant information and applications.
- DPAC engaged recovery partners to perform outreach visits and calls to communities, to deliver Psychological First Aid, check on wellbeing, and connect people with available supports.
- The Tasmanian Emergency Information Service (TEIS) was activated on 1 September 2024 to support public enquiries. TEIS has managed over 3,000 calls to date.
- The Whole-of-Government *Interoperability Arrangements for Sharing Skilled Resources in Tasmania* were activated to support TEIS, the State Operations Centre and DPAC's Community Grants and Recovery functions. Staff from across Government continue to assist with some of these functions.

Table 1 - Severe Weather Event August/September 2024 Recovery Grants

Grant	Criteria	No. of approved applications*	Total paid
Emergency Assistance Grants (Derwent Valley only)	$250 per adult and $125 per child, up to $1,000 per household	632	$267,000
Emergency Food Grant	$350 per household if without power for 72 hours or more	11,487	$4.02 million
Temporary Living Support Payment	$2,000 per household for every 7-day period with no power / house is uninhabitable due to damage	1,445	$2.89 million
Replace/repair household items Repair and restoration of principal place of residence	Maximum amount of $11,450 for each grant, subject to eligibility criteria	3	$2,799

**Approved applications only – as at 10.30am on the 20 September 2024*

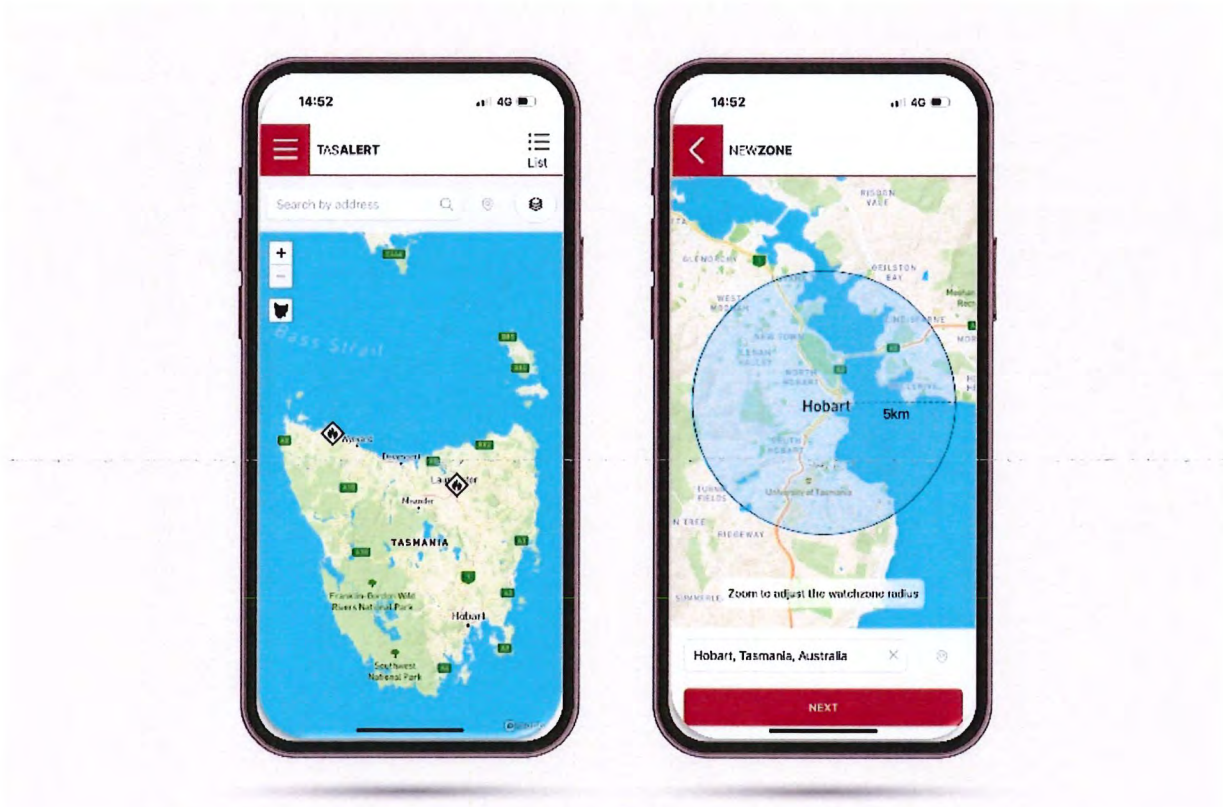
Approved Grant Applications



Extracted from *SmartyGrants* MAPS on 20 September 2024 at approximately 11.30am

TasALERT

- TasALERT is the primary source of emergency information and warnings in Tasmania.
- The TasALERT App was launched on 25 August 2024 and is extension of the website. The App allows users to create watch zones for geographical areas they are interested in and select push notifications for information and warnings they wish to receive.
- Following the severe weather event, the App has been installed 50,000 times, over 9,000 watch zones have been created by users, and almost 700,000 notifications have been sent out to users.



Tabled by Premier 9.30 23/9/24

Severe Weather Event (Aug/Sep 2024)

Community Recovery Initiatives



13,567 recovery grants applications approved



$7.17 million provided in grants



3,400+ calls to our TEIS call centre



50,000 installations of the TasAlert App



almost 700,000 app notifications sent



53,010 visits to the DPAC Community Grants web page since September 1, 2024

Office of the Secretary
Department of Premier and Cabinet

Tasmanian Government

Tabled by the Premier 23/9/24

Sorell Service Centre

Service Tasmania and Services Australia co-location

Overview

- Service Tasmania will soon co-locate with Services Australia at a new, purpose-designed site in Sorell.
- The new shared service space is located on a greenfield development on Dubs and Co Drive, Sorell, and will bring together State and Commonwealth staff together, making it easier for Tasmanians to do business with multiple layers of government in one place.
- The new site builds on a history of collaboration between the two organisations. There are three Service Centres currently co-located, whilst 13 Service Tasmania sites act as agents for Commonwealth business including Centrelink, Medicare and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- The build is currently scheduled to complete in October 2024, with occupancy planned for late November 2024.
- The co-location supports recommendation #66 of the Review of the Tasmanian State Service to enhance service delivery partnerships with other layers of government.

Benefits for the Sorell region

- Sorell is a growing population centre, and this co-location will offer a greatly improved amenity for the local community.
- Site co-locations provide tangible benefits to the Tasmanian community by making it easier to find the right place to access government services.
- This facility is significantly larger than the existing service centre, providing ample space to serve Service Tasmania customers, in addition to those seeking Services Australia assistance such as Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support services.
- Given current population growth in the area, an improved service centre presence, with contemporary service delivery models, would likely have been required in the foreseeable future.
- Services Australia is currently a tenant in Service Tasmania's service centre space in Sorell. Similar arrangements are also in place at Service Tasmania's Kingston and Huonville sites.

Financial Impacts

- The financial implications of moving to the new facility are minimal, with only a small increase in ongoing rental costs which is being met via operational budgets. A modest capital commitment is required, which can be met via Service Tasmania's annual Capital Improvement (CIP) allocation.
- Ongoing rental and other property costs will increase marginally at the new site, which can be met within existing operational budgets.
- Existing staff will transfer to the new site with no change to current FTE levels.
- Capital costs will be minimal, with the majority of these being met by the Commonwealth. Service Tasmania is contributing capital fit-out costs directly related to its service model such as IT and other dedicated equipment, as well as specific marketing elements.

Service Centre statistics

- The Sorell Service Centre is open 9am – 4:30pm, five days per week.
- The site has four staff members (across 2.76 FTE) and serve an average of 144 customers per day.



Picture 1 - Architect impression



Picture 2 - Construction progress at 16 September 2024



Picture 3 – Aerial view of the Sorell site

Service Tasmania, Department of Premier and Cabinet

21 Kirksway Place, Battery Point, TAS, 7000

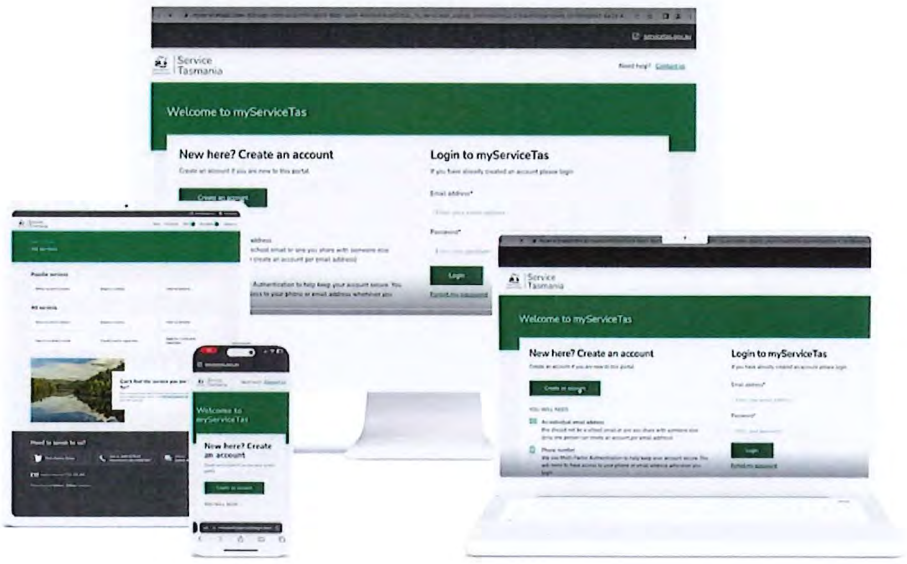
Email: ask@service.tas.gov.au

Tabled by Premier
23/9/24

myServiceTas Digital Account

myServiceTas digital account

- DPAC launched the new myServiceTas service in April 2024
- Tasmanians can create a secure personalised account to access selected government services in one place, 'anytime, anywhere'.
- In the first five months, over **42,700** accounts have been created, with just over **15,500** registration and driver licence renewals successfully processed.
- myServiceTas complements Service Tasmania's existing service channels of 27 locations, phone services and website.
- Service Tasmania worked with local Tasmanian business Intuit Technologies to build this first of its kind portal in Tasmania.
- The Government initially committed $4.3 million over four years in the 2021-22 Budget to develop the digital Service Tasmania portal.
- Funding of $8.3m over four years has been provided in the 2024-25 Budget to keep myServiceTas operational and enable further services to be developed on the platform.
- A new service was added to myServiceTas on 29 August 2024, giving the ability for landowners to apply for a fire permit or to register an intention to burn.



Picture 1 – myServiceTas accessible on different platforms

WHS FORM

SF-315 ACTIVITY RISK ASSESSMENT

Purpose of form
ARAs are used to deal with activities that are, undertaken in a division or across the divisions. These activities are usually undertaken on a regular basis. ARAs can be used to develop Standard Operating Procedures.

Responsibility for completion
The form should be compiled from the LHRs for each division by senior managers.

Frequency of completion and review
It should be completed before work activity commences and if significant changes occur or new hazards and risks are identified.

Division:	Parks	**Date of assessment**	8/05/2024
Branch:	Operations and Property Services	**Date of Next Review: (max every 2 years)**	
Activity Description / Scope:	Beauty Point "Divo" platform - current structure	**Version/Status:**	
Assessment prepared by:	Jason Jacobi	**Reference Documents**	Tasmanian WHS Act 2012, Tasmanian WHS Regulations 2012
Assessment review by WHS Advisor:	John Johnson		
Assessment approved by / date: (GM or above)			
Position title of approving officer:			

Plan • Determine the works groups and approach
Do • Identify hazards, determine risk
Check • Implement the controls
Act • Monitor and review to ensure they are effective in controlling risk

Ref	Hazard or issue (task)	Potential harm that may occur	Initial Risk (In the absence of controls)			Controls (See hierarchy of controls)	Management actions	Residual Risk (following implementation of controls			Action Status
			Consequence	Likelihood	Rating			Consequence	Likelihood	Rating	
1	Fall from height	Death or permanent disability	Major	Possible	H 12	Signage and removal of ladder	Place signage on the beach and on the structure advising not to dive and remove ladder so that structure cannot be climbed.	Major	Unlikely	H 8	In progress

Any additional hazards from specific jobs can be additional to this ARA								
Worker sign off								
NAME	SIGNATURE				NAME	SIGNATURE	Date	
							8/5/24	
ARA Changes Reason	CHANGE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS (e.g. actions taken to communicate changes)							
EMERGENCY CONTACTS								
NAME	CONTACT DETAILS							

WHS FORM

SF-315 ACTIVITY RISK ASSESSMENT

Purpose of form
ARAs are used to deal with activities that are, undertaken in a division or across the divisions. These activities are usually undertaken on a regular basis. ARAs can be used to develop Standard Operating Procedures.

Responsibility for completion
The form should be compiled from the LHRs for each division by senior managers.

Frequency of completion and review
It should be completed before work activity commences and if significant changes occur or new hazards and risks are identified.

Division:	Parks	**Date of assessment**	8/05/2024
Branch:	Operations and Property Services	**Date of Next Review: (max every 2 years)**	
Activity Description / Scope:	Beauty Point "Divo" platform - replacement of "like for like" elevated diving platform.	**Version/Status:**	
Assessment prepared by:	Jason Jacobi	**Reference Documents**	Tasmanian WHS Act 2012, Tasmanian WHS Regulations 2012
Assessment review by WHS Advisor:	John Johnson		
Assessment approved by / date: (GM or above)	13/05/2024		
Position title of approving officer:	Manager WHS&W		

Plan
- Determine the works groups and approach

Do
- Identify hazards, determine risk

Check
- Implement the controls

Act
- Monitor and review to ensure they are effective in controlling risk

Ref	Hazard or issue (task)	Potential harm that may occur	Initial Risk (In the absence of controls)			Controls (See hierarchy of controls)	Management actions	Residual Risk (following implementation of controls			Action Status
			Consequence	Likelihood	Rating			Consequence	Likelihood	Rating	
1	Fall from height	Strike head/neck on shallow bottom Death or permanent disability	Major	Unlikely	H 8	Signage warning of shallow water risk	Place signage on the beach and on the structure advising not to dive.	Major	Unlikely	H 8	In progress
2								-	-		-

Any additional hazards from specific jobs can be additional to this ARA								
Worker sign off								
NAME	SIGNATURE				NAME	SIGNATURE		Date
								8/5/24
ARA Changes Reason	CHANGE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS (e.g. actions taken to communicate changes)							
EMERGENCY CONTACTS								
NAME	CONTACT DETAILS							

WHS FORM

SF-315 ACTIVITY RISK ASSESSMENT

Purpose of form
ARAs are used to deal with activities that are, undertaken in a division or across the divisions. These activities are usually undertaken on a regular basis. ARAs can be used to develop Standard Operating Procedures.

Responsibility for completion
The form should be compiled from the LHRs for each division by senior managers.

Frequency of completion and review
It should be completed before work activity commences and if significant changes occur or new hazards and risks are identified.

Division:	Parks	**Date of assessment**	8/05/2024
Branch:	Operations and Property Services	**Date of Next Review: (max every 2 years)**	
Activity Description / Scope:	Beauty Point "Divo" platform - replacement pontoon structure.	**Version/Status:**	
Assessment prepared by:	Jason Jacobi	**Reference Documents**	Tasmanian WHS Act 2012, Tasmanian WHS Regulations 2012
Assessment review by WHS Advisor:	John Johnson		
Assessment approved by / date: (GM or above)			
Position title of approving officer:			

Plan - Determine the works groups and approach

Do • Identify hazards, determine risk

Check • Implement the controls

Act • Monitor and review to ensure they are effective in controlling risk

Ref	Hazard or issue (task)	Potential harm that may occur	Initial Risk (In the absence of controls)			Controls (See hierarchy of controls)	Management actions	Residual Risk (following implementation of controls			Action Status
			Consequence	Likelihood	Rating			Consequence	Likelihood	Rating	
1	Fall from height	Drowning or permanent disability	Major	Unlikely	H 8	Signage	Place signage on the beach and on the structure advising not to dive.	Major	Rare	M 4	In progress

Any additional hazards from specific jobs can be additional to this ARA								
Worker sign off								
NAME	SIGNATURE				NAME	SIGNATURE	Date	
							8/5/24	
ARA Changes Reason	CHANGE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS (e.g. actions taken to communicate changes)							
EMERGENCY CONTACTS								
NAME	CONTACT DETAILS							

WHS REGISTER

HAZARD AND RISK REGISTERS

Plan
- Determine the work groups and approach

Do
- Identify hazards, determine risk

Check
- Implement the controls
- Monitor and review to ensure they are effective in controlling risk

Act
- Revise controls where required

Risk Matrix

Consequences (what type of harm and how server is it)

Description	Example
1. Insignificant	Minimal physical injury- First aid only- stress related issues impacting on workplace efficiencies. No lost time related to injuries and vey low financial loss
2. Minor	Medical treatment or stress requiring professional clinical support. Lost time less than 1 day. Minor financial loss
3. Moderate	Hospitalisation or medical treatment. Stress resulting in temporary disability being unable to work. Lost time injury less than 5 days. Minor permanent disability. Potential for moderate financial loss
4 . Major	Extensive or multiple injuries. Major back, neck arm, leg, face or external injury. Extended absence of one or more employees. Potential for major financial loss
5. Extreme	Death. Permanent or severe health effects for one or more employees permanent disability having severe impact. Potential for huge financial loss

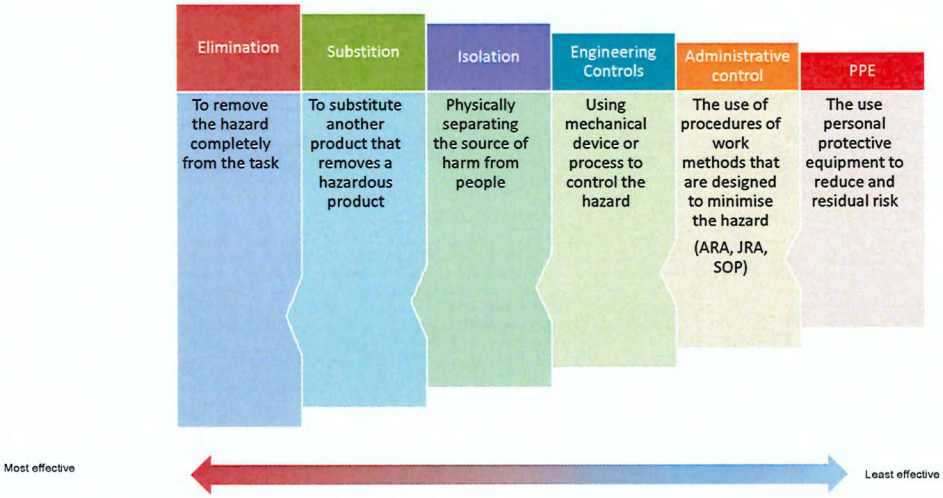
Likelihood (how likely is the it that harm will occur)

1. Rare	May only occur in exception circumstances. Less than 1 in 100 chance of occurring
2. Unlikely	Could occur at some time 1 in 100 chance. Occurs once in every ten years
3. Possible	Might occur at some time 1 in 20 chance. Occurs yearly
4. Likely	Will probably occur in most circumstances. Occurs monthly
5. Almost certain	Expected to occur in most circumstances. Occurs weekly

Level of Risk (Risk level = Consequences x Likelihood)

	CONSEQUENCES				
LIKELIHOOD	Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Moderate 3	Major 4	Extreme 5
Rare. 1	L.1	L.2	M.3	M.4	H.5
Unlikely. 2	L.2	L.4	M.6	H.8	H.10
Possible. 3	L.3	M.6	H.9	H.12	VH.15
Likely. 4	L.4	M.8	H.12	VH.16	VH.20
Certain. 5	M.5	H.10	VH.15	VH.20	VH.25

Hierarchy of controls



Three Capes Track Experience Actual Expenditure 2023-24

Expenditure Category	**$**
Employee costs	1 279 311
Third party contractors[1]	2 676 530
General maintenance works – public track, toilets, huts etc	722 204
Helicopter – servicing and maintenance operations	554 022
Travel and transport[2]	231 302
Promotion and marketing	211 364
Other operational[3]	438 364
Total Expenditure	**6 113 097**

Notes:

1. Reflects payments to partner organisations (Port Arthur Historic Site and Pennicott Wilderness Journeys)
2. Including track ranger overnight allowances
3. Other operating costs includes cleaning, fuel and gas, minor equipment purchases and general administration costs.

Tabled by
Minister Duigan 25/9/24

Climate Change Office





Climate Change Activity Statement 2024

Contents

Minister's message 3
Our plans 5
Our greenhouse gas emissions target 6
Our key achievements 7
Summary of our progress 9
1 – Information and knowledge 10
2 – Transition and innovation 17
3 – Adaptation and resilience 32
Acronyms and abbreviations 41

Cover images: Chris Crerar

The Climate Change Office acknowledges the traditional owners of this Country and recognises Aboriginal people's continuing connection to Land, Sea, Waterways, Sky and Culture. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

Climate Change Activity Statement 2024
© Crown in Right of the State of Tasmania
Author: Climate Change Office | Renewables Climate and Future Industries Tasmania
Publisher: Department of State Growth
Date: September 2024
ISBN: 978-1-921527-84-5

Minister's message

I am proud to present Tasmania's first Climate Change Activity Statement, which provides a summary of our action on climate change over the past financial year.



The statement summarises how we have delivered on the actions in *Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25*.

Since the launch of the action plan, 11 of the plan's 98 actions have been completed, eight are nearing completion, 49 actions are in progress and 29 are ongoing.

Some of our key achievements over the past financial year are:

- providing financial support to help Tasmanians transition to electric transport. The e-mobility program provided $200,000 to 501 Tasmanians with rebates for their electric bikes, cargo e-bikes and personal mobility devices, such as e-scooters. Nearly 200 rebates of $2,000 have also been provided for Tasmanians to purchase battery electric vehicles
- developing Tasmania's first climate change risk assessment, which will help us prioritise actions that support Tasmania to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate
- awarding TasFarmers a grant of $4 million to reduce emissions from livestock. TasFarmers will work with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), Fonterra, Annandale Dairy Farm, Sea Forest and AEON Tasmanian feedlot to trial seaweed feed supplements to reduce an estimated 16,350 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent over the next three years
- supporting 14 small to medium-sized businesses to reduce their waste, through the Business Resource Efficiency Program.

Across other areas of government, we are also taking action on climate change, for example we have:

- provided half price fares for buses and the River Derwent Ferry until 30 June 2025 and $20 million to expand the River Derwent Ferry Service with three new ferry terminals
- provided $4.5 million to councils to improve active transport infrastructure
- committed $900,000 over three years support Tasmanian landholders to enter carbon markets through the Landcare Action Grants Program
- invested in the new Dulverton Organics Treatment facility to reduce the organic waste sent to landfill, and opened consultation on an approach for phasing out single use plastics
- launched the $300 million Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub project at Bell Bay, with funding from both the Tasmanian and Australian governments
- provided over 4,100 no-interest loans since to help fund the purchase and installation of energy efficient products and upgrades in Tasmanian households, not-for-profits and businesses.

In line with our legislation, the government is currently preparing Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans for six Tasmanian sectors. The plans will help Tasmania reduce emissions, as well as support our businesses and industries in the transition to a low emissions economy and build resilience to climate-related risks.

The transport sector plan is due to be published in mid-2024. Draft plans for the energy, industrial processes and product use, agriculture, and land use, land use change and forestry sectors are currently open for public consultation. The final plans for these sectors, and the waste sector, are expected to be released in late 2024.

The Tasmanian Greenhouse Gas Report, released in August 2024, showed that our state has achieved net negative emissions for the ninth reported year in a row. However, our net negative status is not guaranteed and there is more we can do to reduce our emissions and prepare for a changing climate.

We will continue to implement the actions in our action plan over the next financial year.

Nick Duigan MLC

Minister for Energy and Renewables



Image: Chris Crerar

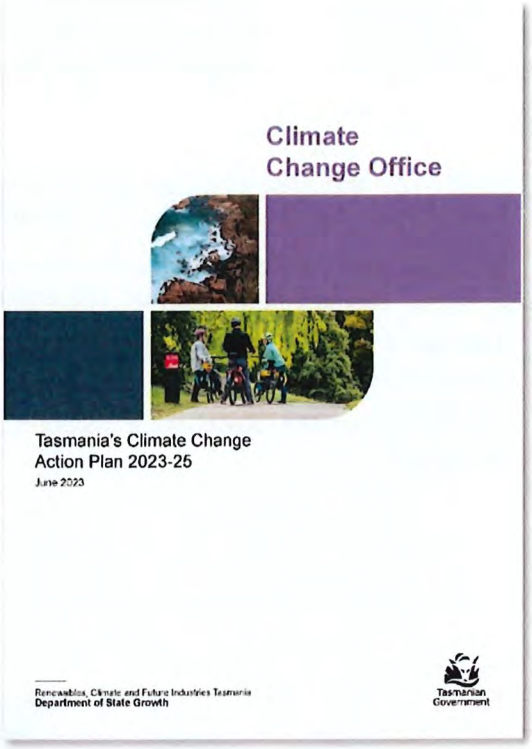
Our plans

Action Plan

In June 2023, the Tasmanian Government released *Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25* (the Action Plan) and *Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25 – Implementation Plan*. These documents detail the Tasmanian Government's plans for action on climate change.

The action plan has three priority areas:

1. Information and knowledge
2. Transition and innovation
3. Adaptation and resilience



The Climate Change Office (CCO), in Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT) is implementing the action plan, along with other agencies across the Tasmanian Government. The Plan was prepared in collaboration with relevant business, industry, scientific, environmental and community bodies, children and young people, local government, relevant unions, and the broader Tasmanian community. ReCFIT is a division of the Department of State Growth.

This activity statement provides an update on the progress of the actions and is a requirement under the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* (the Act).

Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans

To help us achieve our legislated target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions, or lower, from 2030, the Act requires the government to develop sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans every five years, in consultation with business and industry. The plans will support a practical and balanced approach for our key sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate change.

The Act requires that this Activity Statement will report on progress against the plans.

Progress on the plans:

- targeted consultation has been completed for all sectors
- public consultation has been completed for the transport and waste plans
- the draft plans for the remaining sectors were released for public consultation in September 2024
- the final transport plan is expected to be released in mid-2024, and the final waste plan is expected to be released with the other final plans in November 2024.

The next Climate Change Activity Statement will report on progress against the sector-based plans, as required under the Act.

Our greenhouse gas emissions target

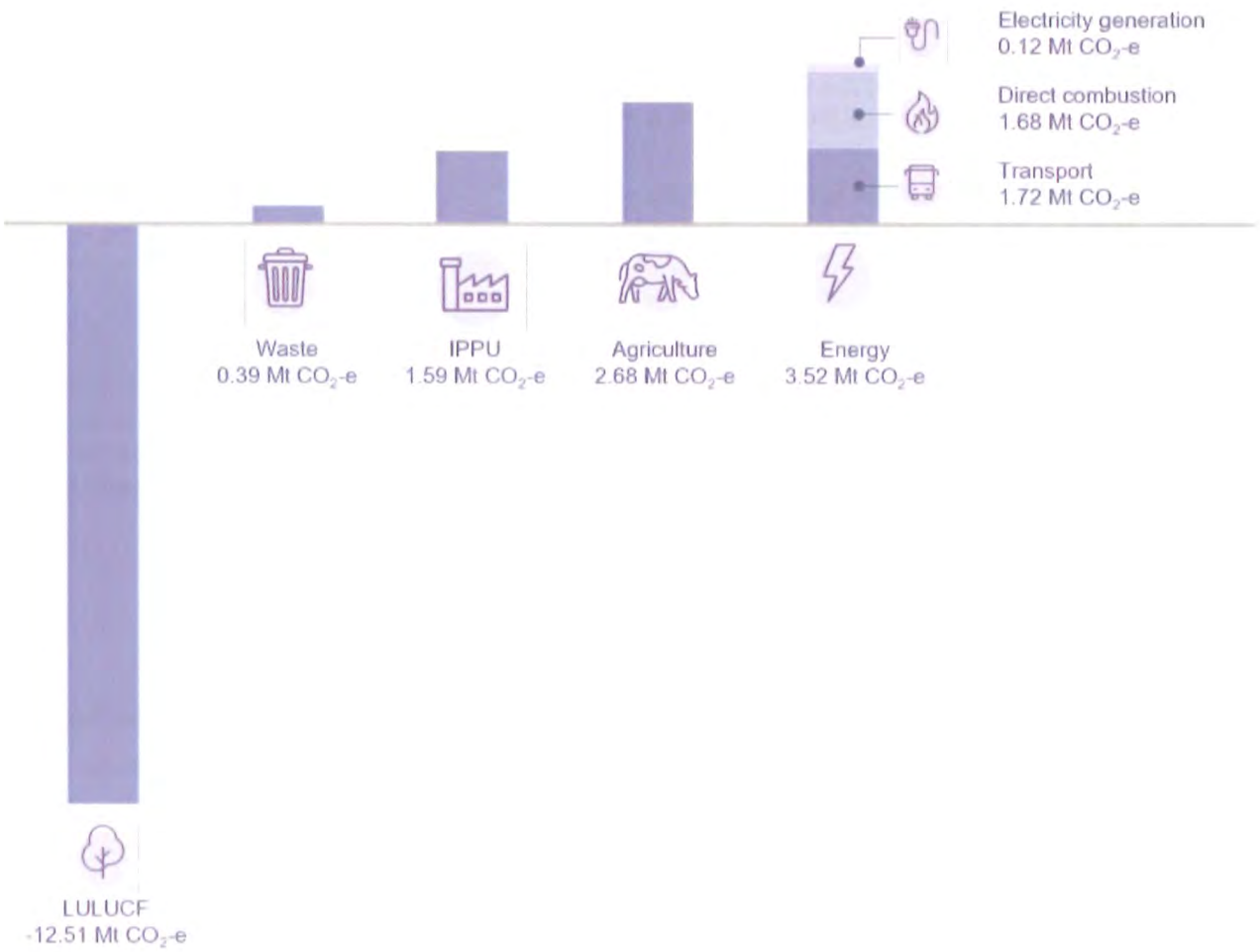
The Tasmanian Government has committed to net zero emissions, or lower, from 2030 – the most ambitious legislated emissions reduction target in Australia.

Each year, the Australian Government releases its annual State and Territory Greenhouse Gas Inventories. The latest figures, for the 2022 reporting period, were released in April 2024.

In 2022, Tasmania's net emissions were **minus 4.34 megatonnes** (Mt) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2-e). This is a **reduction of 122.2 per cent** from 1990 levels.

Tasmania has achieved its legislated target of net zero emissions, or lower, by 2030 for the past nine reported years.

Tasmania has the lowest net emissions, and the lowest emissions per person, of all Australian states and territories.



Our key achievements

Over the past year, the Tasmanian Government has delivered a range of programs to help reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate.

Low Emissions Livestock Grant Program

TasFarmers was recently awarded the $4 million Low Emissions Livestock Grant funding.


Image: Chris Crerar

The funding will support a commercial-scale trial of feed supplements to reduce emissions from livestock, and demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of these technologies, to encourage broader uptake.

TasFarmers will be working with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), Fonterra, Annandale Dairy Farm, Sea Forest and AEON as key partners.

The TasFarmers proposal will introduce Sea Forest's *Asparagopsis* seaweed feed supplements to approximately 24,000 head of livestock, across both dairy and beef, to reduce an estimated 16,350 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent over the next three years.

The project will also include education and awareness activities and the development of tools and resources for livestock producers to support them to adopt low emissions technologies on their farms. The data and learnings from the trial will be used to develop the resources.

E-mobility rebates



Image: Pixabay

Between November 2023 and March 2024, the government offered incentives to help reduce Tasmania's transport emissions, by encouraging people to swap their daily commute for an electric alternative, such as an e-bike.

The program distributed $200,000 in rebates for purchases of e-bikes, cargo e-bikes and personal mobility devices, such as e-scooters. A total of 501 rebates were provided: 110 in the state's north, 171 in the north west and 220 in the south.

Electric vehicle rebates

In November 2023, the government launched a $750,000 rebate program to support the purchase of battery electric vehicles. There was a total of 375 rebates available, at $2,000 each.

As of the end of June 2024, 181 rebates were approved and paid, totaling $362,000. One hundred and forty were to applicants in the south of the state, 28 to applicants in the north and 13 to applicants in the north west.

Business Resource Efficiency Program

The $200,000 Business Resource Efficiency Program (BREP) aimed to help small to medium-sized Tasmanian businesses reduce their waste and use of resources, through waste audits, working groups, and online resources.

There have been two rounds of BREP, both delivered by Business Action Learning Tasmania and funded by the Tasmanian Government.

The most recent round was completed in early 2024. Fourteen businesses, made up of 19 individual participants, took part. Seven businesses were located in the north of the state, six in the south and one in the north west.

Resources from the program are publicly available on the ReCFIT and BALT websites.


Image: BALT

Youth Climate Leadership Program

The Youth Climate Leadership program aims to develop students' understanding of climate change and actions that can contribute to the global effort to address climate change and build sustainability.

In March 2023, Sustainable Living Tasmania was awarded a Tasmanian Government grant of $180,000 to deliver the Youth Climate Leadership program, over two years, in partnership with the University of Tasmania.

There were over 200 participants across 22 schools and homeschool students from around Tasmania, delivering 23 climate action projects in their region.

Two sets of conferences are held each year. The first set aims to build participants' knowledge in climate science, skills to engage with others to take climate action, and hope and resilience for the future. The second set of conferences focus on students sharing the outcomes of climate action projects implemented in their schools.

The project outcomes and learnings were shared by students at the second set of conferences in September 2024.

Energy Saver Loan Scheme


Image: Chris Crerar

The Energy Saver Loan Scheme provides no-interest loans to help fund the purchase and installation of energy efficient products and upgrades.

The Scheme supports households, small businesses and community organisations, by providing interest-free loans of up to $10,000 for eligible applicants to invest in energy efficient products to help lower their electricity bills. Supported products include solar panels and battery storage systems, heating and cooling systems, electric and solar hot water systems, insulation, window glazing and energy efficient appliances.

The Scheme has been extremely popular. Over 4,100 loans have been provided since the scheme launched, valued at $34.6 million.

Summary of our progress

Our progress against *Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25*

Tasmania's climate change action plan has 98 actions across three priority areas. This activity statement shows progress against each of the actions in the action plan.

The following table summarises the status of the actions in the action plan. Actions are shown as in progress, nearing completion, complete, or ongoing.[1]

◉◉◉
In progress

◉◉◉◉
Nearing completion

☑
Complete


Ongoing

	In progress	Nearing completion	Complete	Ongoing
Priority Area 1: Information and Knowledge	13	3	1	4
Priority Area 2: Transition and Innovation	24	2	9	12
Priority Area 3: Adaptation and Resilience	12	3	1	13
Total	**49**	**8**	**11**	**29**

[1] One action has been discontinued. The Emissions Reduction Loan Support Scheme (action 2.7.2) did not commence as expected in 2024. The funding has been reallocated to the implementation of the sectoral emissions reduction and resilience plans.

1 – Information and knowledge



We will ensure our businesses, industries, governments and communities can make informed decisions by providing up-to-date, high quality and user-friendly information about Tasmania's emissions, our future climate, and emissions reduction, sequestration and adaptation opportunities.

1.1 Tasmanians will have up-to-date information about our changing climate

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.1.1 Updating the fine-scale climate projections for Tasmania	Develop new fine-scale or "down-scaled" projections for Tasmania using the latest global climate models (CMIP6). The updated projections will support business, industry, community and government to understand the projected future climate for Tasmania, and plan for and build resilience to the impacts of a variable and changing climate.	ReCFIT (CCO)	Stakeholder consultation and user needs analysis is underway. Consultation is expected to commence in mid to late 2024.	In progress
1.1.2 Updating our information on the impacts of climate change on Tasmania's natural environments and resources	Prepare a State of the Environment report that documents baseline environmental data, trends and risks across Tasmania to inform strategic priorities and land use planning, including in relation to environmental management and sustainability issues.	Tasmanian Planning Commission	Drafting of the Tasmanian 2024 State of the Environment Report is well advanced and is due for release in mid to late 2024.	Nearing completion
1.1.3 Updating our information on the impacts of climate change on Tasmania's natural environments and resources	Explore options for updating hydrological estimates of water catchment yields using contemporary climate change projections, through the Water Catchment Yield Science Update.	NRE Tas	The research phase has been completed and a pathway developed. Funding has been obtained via the National Water Grid Authority to implement the program. New catchment yield estimates are expected by June 2027.	In progress
1.1.4 Updating our information on the impacts of climate change on Tasmania's natural environments and resources	Work with the University of Tasmania under the Sustainable Marine Research Collaborative Agreement (SMRCA) to better understand the effects of climate change on marine ecosystems, marine industries and cultural practices, and develop options for adaptation.	NRE Tas	The climate-related research undertaken through the SMRCA will inform future fisheries and aquaculture management by government. Core funding is set at $2.6 million a year and the Tasmanian Government has recently committed to an additional $2 million over four years. The SMRCA has a target to leverage funding from external organisations. Additional Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) funding can be provided for supplementary projects.	Ongoing

1.2 Tasmanians will have improved access to resources about climate change and skills training in key industries

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.2.1 Improving accessibility and useability of information about climate change	Deliver a public education program on climate change impacts and opportunities	ReCFIT (CCO)	This program of work is currently being scoped and has strong links to the climate change resources for schools program. The program will focus on empowering and educating children and young people, and the Tasmanian community, to understand the causes and consequences of climate change on the Tasmanian environment, and ways to take action and adapt.	In progress
1.2.2 Improving accessibility and useability of information about climate change	Develop a suite of resources that meet user needs to support state and local government, industry and the community make informed decisions about managing climate risks and opportunities.	ReCFIT (CCO)	After the statewide climate change risk assessment is complete, decision support tools and resources will be developed to support stakeholders to apply the findings from the risk assessment in a practical way. This project is funded under the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund.	In progress
1.2.3 Improving accessibility and useability of information about climate change	Raise awareness about the links between climate change and health, and the ways communities can take action and respond to climate change.	Health	A range of activities have been delivered to raise awareness about the links between climate change and health, including: • Presentations at the Annual Climate Change Symposium, Statewide Health Environmental Steering Committee and Regional Mental Health Council Tasmania meetings. • Ongoing engagement with local government. • A webinar on sustainable healthcare projects in partnership with WA Health Sustainable Development Unit. There is also a commitment to the Monash Consortium on Transitions to Sustainable Health Systems – an initiative to develop a roadmap to decarbonise the health system.	Ongoing
1.2.4 Updating Tasmania's enterprise suitability mapping	Update Tasmania's enterprise suitability maps to incorporate the latest climate projections and extend the maps out to 2100 to support decision making in our agriculture sector.	NRE Tas	The 2022 baseline climate layers for the Digital Climate Map Dataset Repository are complete (76 datasets). The project is now awaiting the new Global Climate Models (GCMs) to extend these maps to the year 2100 using the enterprise suitability mapping downscaling workflow.	In progress
1.2.5 Promoting science engagement	Participate in and promote citizen science engagement in the Range Extension Database and Mapping Project (Redmap) in partnership with the Centre for Marine Socioecology at the University of Tasmania.	NRE Tas	Support has been provided to RedMap to undertake an assessment of marine species moving location in Tasmania because of climatic changes. The overall objective of this project is to enable RedMap Tasmania to track the next ten years of marine species moving into new locations.	In progress

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.2.6 Investing in skills	Continue to provide subsidised training in key transition industries, agriculture, aquaculture and primary industries.	State Growth	Skills Tasmania administers a range of competitive funding programs for delivery of nationally recognised training to address the government's current workforce development and training priorities. Key transition industries are supported through these programs.	Ongoing
1.2.7 Investing in skills	Build the skills and capacity of the energy sector workforce to deliver Battery of the Nation, Marinus Link, major renewable energy and other projects, including hydrogen and transport electrification.	State Growth	Industry Skills Compacts for the Energy and Building and Construction centres have both been signed. (Industry Skills Compacts are agreements between industry bodies and the Tasmanian Government to progress training and workforce development.) A demand and supply study has been completed for electrotechnology skills and training. The north west training facility is in the scoping stage.	In progress

1.3 Climate change considerations will be embedded in government decision making

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.3.1 Ensuring government entities consider climate change	Develop a whole-of-government policy framework to embed climate change consideration into government decision making by late 2024. The framework will consider Ministerial guidelines, guidance material and decision support tools, information on scientific, legal and market developments, and training opportunities. It will be informed by the principles recommended by the independent review of the Act.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The government is progressing a framework to build capability and embed climate change consideration in whole-of-government policy. The next steps involve analysing agency baseline information to understand the current consideration of climate change in decision making (plans, policies and strategies) and introducing educational material to enable agencies to include climate change considerations in risk assessments.	In progress
1.3.2 Ensuring government entities consider climate change	Develop a whole-of-state sustainability vision and strategy for Tasmania, which includes the social, environmental and economic objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.	DPAC	In the second half of 2023, a discussion paper was released for public and targeted consultation, inviting Tasmanians help create Tasmania's sustainability vision and goals. The consultation website attracted 173 contributions, and 38 written submissions were also received. A draft sustainability strategy is being finalised with agencies before release for public consultation.	In progress

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.3.3 Ensuring government entities consider climate change	Work with Government Business Enterprises and State-owned Companies to continue to improve their understanding of the impact of climate-related risks and the provision of information on those risks.	Treasury	Treasury has embedded the requirement to consider and provide information on climate-related risks into the annual corporate planning process for Government Business Enterprises and State-owned Companies. The emphasis is on the businesses understanding the risks, potential impacts, and mitigation strategies in relation to these risks.	Complete

1.4 Our children and young people will be empowered to shape their future

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.4.1 Developing climate change resources for schools	Develop climate change resources for Tasmanian schools. The resources will aim to build a generation of young Tasmanians who are critical thinkers, involved in exploring and understanding the science of climate change, its causes and solutions, and how society and our economy will need to build resilience and adapt to its impacts.	ReCFIT (CCO), DECYP	CCO is working with the Department for Education, Children and Young People to incorporate climate change into the school curriculum. Work is underway to develop the curriculum and resources for teachers to implement the new materials.	In progress
1.4.2 Supporting the delivery of Youth Climate Leaders	Support a tailored program for Tasmanian high school students to inspire, educate and empower young leaders. The program will include a climate change initiative, sustainability solutions for local communities, potential national and international collaborative opportunities, mentoring and support, and presentations from keynote speakers, as well as conferences in each region.	ReCFIT (CCO)	Sustainable Living Tasmania was awarded a Tasmanian Government grant of $180,000 to deliver the Youth Climate Leaders program over 2023-24. The first set of conferences in March were a great success. There were over 200 participants across 22 schools and homeschool students from around Tasmania, delivering 23 climate action projects in their region. The second set of conferences will be held in September 2024.	Nearing completion
1.4.3 Consulting with children and young people	Work with key partners to develop appropriate mechanisms and resources for consulting with children and young people, in accordance with the Act.	ReCFIT (CCO), DECYP	CCO has drafted an Engagement Strategy for Children and Young People, aimed at improving the ways in which we engage and consult with Tasmania's youth. The Engagement Strategy is expected to be published and available on the ReCFIT website in late 2024.	Nearing completion

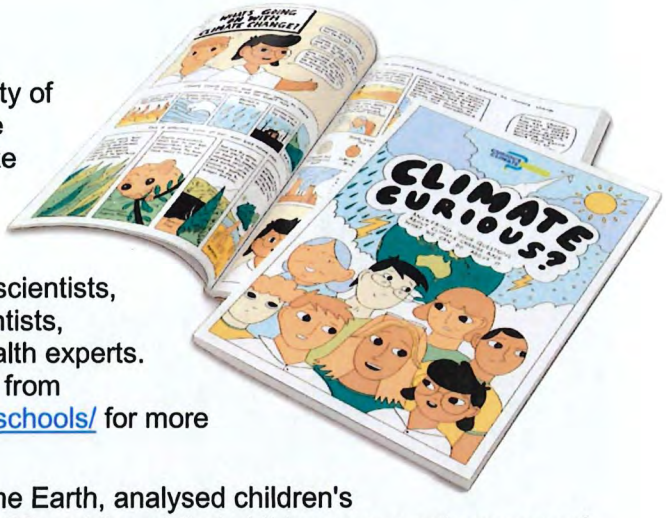
Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.4.4 Addressing the impacts of climate change on mental health and wellbeing of children and young people	Work with key partners to explore additional options to address the impacts of climate change on the mental health and wellbeing of Tasmanians, with a focus on children and young people.	ReCFIT (CCO)	Work is underway, in collaboration with the Department of Health, to consider options to address the impacts of climate change on mental health, with a focus on children and young people. There are already various projects being undertaken or scoped for delivery by the Department of Health that address the impacts of climate change on mental health. CCO is planning to share information and resources to support children and young people on the ReCFIT website.	In progress

1.5 We will be continuing to collaborate and consult with key stakeholders to improve our understanding of climate change impacts, risks and opportunities

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
1.5.1 Improving climate change governance in Tasmania	Consult with the Climate Change Reference Group on the government's strategic priorities and emerging opportunities in climate change mitigation and adaptation.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The Climate Change Reference Group provides strategic advice and feedback to the Minister for Energy and Renewables and ReCFIT and held its first meeting in 2023. The Reference Group supports the achievement of Tasmania's net zero emissions target and is consulted on the government's priorities and emerging opportunities in climate change mitigation and adaptation.	Ongoing
1.5.2 Improving climate change governance in Tasmania	Review climate change governance arrangements in Tasmania.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The governance review will be considered as part of the next independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*, due to commence in late 2024.	In progress
1.5.3 Incorporating Tasmanian Aboriginal knowledge	Explore options for incorporating Aboriginal knowledge into action on climate change.	ReCFIT (CCO), DPAC	CCO is continuing work to build relationships with Aboriginal people and organisations. This work will consider the perspectives and needs of palawa people in current work programs where possible, as well as in future policies and programs from the design phase onwards.	In progress

Information and knowledge case studies

Curious Climate Schools



The Tasmanian Government has supported the University of Tasmania to deliver their award-winning Curious Climate Schools program. Students from schools around the state send in their climate change questions, which are answered online and in person at school visits. Questions are answered by a broad team of experts, including climate scientists, conservation biologists, fire scientists, chemists, lawyers, engineers, psychologists, social scientists, oceanographers, Indigenous knowledge holders and health experts. The team has so far answered more than 600 questions from Tasmanian school students. Visit curiousclimate.org.au/schools/ for more information about the program.

A recent research paper, published in science journal One Earth, analysed children's questions submitted to Curious Climate Schools in 2021-22 and found that children are most concerned about how to take action on climate change. Other major themes in children's questions were the impacts of climate change, and worries about the future of the planet. As well as a scientific paper, Curious Climate Schools has teamed up with local cartoonist Rosie Murrell to answer these 'most asked' questions in a new illustrated guide for children.

"Our new Climate Curious? cartoon guide responds to the questions we know children are asking about climate change, and offers some great ideas for students and teachers about how to cope with climate distress, and ways to take action yourself or with friends. We're looking forward to getting it out to schools around Tasmania"

Dr Chloe Lucas

Coordinator, Curious Climate Schools, University of Tasmania

Youth Climate Leaders Conference

The most recent Youth Climate Leaders Conferences were held in March 2024 at schools, community spaces and at the University of Tasmania in the north, north west and south of Tasmania. Supported by the Tasmanian Government, the program has been delivered by Sustainable Living Tasmania since 2023.

Over 200 participants from 22 schools and homeschool students participated in the conferences, which aimed to build participants' knowledge and understanding in three key areas: climate science, climate feelings and climate action.

Thirty three mentors and five support team volunteers, with a range of backgrounds, participated in the conferences. Mentors and volunteers included staff from the university, the agricultural institute, CSIRO and not-for-profits. They focused on bringing a variety of topics of interest to each conference. Students were able to engage and interact in meaningful conversations with mentors.

The second set of conferences were held in September 2024. Between the first and the second sets of conferences, students work on delivering climate action projects in their schools. Youth Program Officers work with students to develop their projects and explore meaningful ways to report back on their projects at the second conferences.



Image: Sustainable Living Tasmania

"Given the importance of climate action to Tasmanian young people in their communities, their identified climate anxiety and the vibrancy of this year's projects, this project is the key support for the Climate Change Action Plan: Priority 1 supporting the empowerment of our children and young people to shape their future."

Margaret Steadman
President, Sustainable Living Tasmania

"The youth climate leaders program is an incredible way to engage youth in their local community. It encourages students to question their actions and to consider how best they can take climate action as we move into the future."

Iola Fleming
Youth Program Officer, Sustainable Living Tasmania

2 – Transition and innovation



We will reduce our emissions by making the most of opportunities using existing and emerging technologies, and support businesses, industry and the community through the transition to a low emissions economy.

2.1 We will have plans in place to support our key sectors to transition to a low emissions future

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.1.1 Developing and implementing Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans	Develop sector-based Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans, in consultation with business, industry and the community, to ensure that a practical and balanced approach is taken to reduce emissions and build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The plan for the transport sector will be released in mid-2024, and the remaining plans are on track to be prepared by November 2024. Public consultation opened in mid-2024. Further information on the plans is available on the ReCFIT website.	In progress
2.1.2 Developing and implementing Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans	Support research into climate change risks and opportunities for our key sectors, to inform the development of sector-based Emissions and Reduction and Resilience Plans.	ReCFIT (CCO)	CCO is using existing research and data, as well preliminary findings from the statewide climate change risk assessment and feedback from consultation, to prepare the plans. Further research into climate change risks and opportunities for the transport, waste, energy, IPPU, agriculture and LULUCF sectors will be a considered in the plans.	In progress
2.1.3 Developing and implementing Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans	Establish a fund to implement priority actions identified in the Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans, with an initial focus on the transport sector.	ReCFIT (CCO)	All plans are on track to be delivered by November 2024, when the government will detail its approach to funding priority initiatives in all six Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans.	In progress

2.2 Our communities and businesses will be supported to innovate and reduce emissions

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.2.1 Delivering a community climate action grants program	Deliver an open grants program to support community-level actions to improve information and knowledge about climate change, reduce emissions and build resilience.	ReCFIT (CCO)	A Community Climate Change Action Grants Program launched in mid-August 2024. The grants will support a wide range of community-level actions and projects of varying scales throughout the state. Successful applicants are expected to be notified in November 2024.	In progress

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.2.2 Supporting electrification and energy efficiency in homes and businesses	Continue the Energy Saver Loan Scheme to support households, small businesses and community organisations, by providing interest-free loans of up to $10,000 for eligible applicants to invest in energy efficient products to help lower their electricity bills. Supported products include solar panels and battery storage systems, heating and cooling systems, electric and solar hot water systems, insulation, window glazing and energy efficient appliances.	ReCFIT	The Energy Saver Loan Scheme has been an extremely popular initiative. Over 4,100 loans have been provided since the scheme launched (value $34.6 million).	In progress
2.2.3 Supporting electrification and energy efficiency in homes and businesses	Help natural gas users in Tasmania make informed choices and investment decisions.	ReCFIT	The Tasmanian Future Gas Strategy was released in November 2023, setting out the government's vision for the role of natural gas in Tasmania and the pathways available to reduce emissions. The government's strategy supports consumer choice, while noting the longer-term challenges expected for gas price and availability. Government programs, including the Energy Saver Loan Scheme and the Business Energy Efficiency Scheme, are available to support households and businesses interested in switching to efficient electric appliances.	Complete
2.2.4 Supporting electrification and energy efficiency in homes and businesses	Develop a Tasmanian Housing Strategy which considers the impacts of climate change and energy efficiency on housing sustainability and ongoing standards of liveability.	Homes Tasmania	The *Tasmanian Housing Strategy 2023-2043* and accompanying Action Plan 2023-27 were released on 16 November 2023. The Action Plan includes: • Action 1.2.6 – Improve energy efficiency of Tasmanian homes and provide assistance to further reduce household energy costs with the Energy Saver Loan Scheme and No Interest Loans Scheme (ReCFIT and DPAC). • Action 1.2.7 – Develop a policy to improve sustainability of the design, construction and occupation of the Homes Tasmania portfolio, including the renovation and maintenance of existing homes (Homes Tasmania).	Complete

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.2.5 Reducing emissions from tourism and hospitality	Deliver a program to support tourism and hospitality operators to undertake carbon audits, implement measures to reduce their emissions, promote the stories of tourism and hospitality businesses who have actively reduced their emissions, and develop a business case to consider how visitors to Tasmania may voluntarily contribute to local offset projects.	State Growth, Tourism Tasmania	A Tourism Emissions Reduction Grant Program was developed. Round 1 is complete and 14 tourism and hospitality businesses are currently undertaking emissions reduction projects. Round 2 is planned for 2024-25. A funding agreement has been developed with the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania to support 150 tourism and hospitality businesses to undertake emissions audits and develop emissions reduction plans. The program will be completed and evaluated by February 2025.	In progress
2.2.6 Providing energy price relief	Work with the Australian Government to deliver the jointly funded National Energy Price Relief Plan to provide temporary financial support to vulnerable customer groups and small businesses.	Treasury	Eligible households received $250 in bill relief in 2023-24 and eligible small businesses received $650 in bill relief in 2023-24. Eligible households will receive a further $250 in bill relief in 2024-25.	In progress
2.2.7 Supporting community solar power installation	Continue to roll out solar panels for schools. The energy savings from the $5 million Renewable Energy Schools Program will be reinvested to fund further solar installations and sustainability improvements in our schools.	DECYP	Twenty one solar installations have been completed. Ten solar installations are currently under construction.	In progress
2.2.8 Supporting community solar power installation	Continue to support Tasmanian sporting clubs with their broader infrastructure needs, including installation of solar power systems.	State Growth	The 2023-24 Tasmanian Active Infrastructure Grants Program provided $5 million to sport and active recreation infrastructure programs. Items such as the installation of solar panel systems were eligible projects under the program guidelines. No applications were received seeking funding to install solar panels. The program will run again in 2024-25.	Ongoing
2.2.9 Improving business resource efficiency	Continue to deliver the second Business Resource Efficiency Program to improve productivity, and reduce waste and emissions of Tasmania's small- to medium-sized businesses.	ReCFIT (CCO)	Funding of $200,00 was provided to Business Action Learning Tasmania to deliver the program. Fourteen businesses took part. A final program forum was held in Launceston in September 2023, where participants shared their project outcomes. Resources, including fact sheets and case studies, are available on the ReCFIT and Business Action Learning Tasmania websites.	Complete

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.2.10 Supporting innovation	Maximise opportunities through existing programs such as Enterprize to support establishment of innovative, high growth startups in renewable energy.	State Growth	The office continues to work with Enterprize to support startups, through programs such as Enterprize Elevate, Enterprize Spark and Enterprize Activate.	Ongoing

2.3 We will have reduced emissions from our transport sector by increasing the uptake of electric vehicles and public and active transport

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.3.1 Supporting the uptake of electric vehicles	Provide financial incentives to support the uptake of electric vehicles in Tasmania.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The $750,000 Electric Vehicle Rebate Program was launched in November 2023. The program provides rebates of $2,000 each to support the purchase of eligible battery electric vehicles. As of the end of June 2024, 181 rebates had been approved and paid. Of the 181 paid, 140 were to applicants located in the south, 28 to applicants in the north and 13 to applicants in the north west.	Nearing completion
2.3.2 Supporting the uptake of active transport	Deliver a grant program to support Tasmanians to purchase an e-bike or e-scooter.	ReCFIT (CCO)	A $200,000 e-mobility support program was delivered between November 2023 and March 2024. The program provided rebates on e-bikes, cargo e-bikes and personal mobility devices, such as e-scooters, and supported the purchase of a total of 501 e-mobility devices.	Complete
2.3.3 Supporting the uptake of active transport	Update the Tasmanian Walking and Cycling for Active Transport Strategy to capture the contemporary policy and infrastructure context regarding active transport across all levels of government.	State Growth	A draft updated strategy has been developed, which is expected to be finalised in 2024-25.	In progress
2.3.4 Supporting the uptake of active transport	Work with local government to improve active transport and micro-mobility infrastructure and facilities.	State Growth	Round 1 of the Better Active Transport Grant Programs distributed $4.5 million to local governments across the state in 2023-24 to improve active transport infrastructure.	In progress
2.3.5 Trialling zero emissions public transport	Continue to work with Metro Tasmania to trial zero emissions buses. An electric bus trial is due to commence in the north of the state in 2023 and work is underway to commence a hydrogen bus trial in the south.	ReCFIT, State Growth	The Battery Electric Bus trail has commenced in the north. The Hydrogen Electric Bus (HEB) trial is expected to start with three HEBs by the end of 2024 and will run for three years. The HEBs are currently going through user acceptance testing.	In progress

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.3.6 Supporting the uptake of public transport	Continue exploring ways to improve Tasmania's public transport network. For example, the introduction of a statewide fare structure in mid-2023 will deliver fare reductions to a majority of passengers travelling to and from non-urban localities to urban interchanges. This will help to encourage people living in regional areas to use public transport.	State Growth	Implementation of a statewide fare structure was completed on 10 July 2023. Half Price fares for a 12 month period were introduced on 1 June 2024.	Complete
2.3.7 Transitioning the Tasmanian Government vehicle fleet	Continue to progress the commitment to transition the fleet to 100 per cent electric vehicles by 2030, including consideration of infrastructure, procurement, education and policies. This will reduce emissions from the government fleet and increase the number of electric vehicles available in the secondhand market.	ReCFIT (CCO), Treasury	In 2023-24, ReCFIT finalised an assessment of government parking sites and provided charging infrastructure plans to agencies. Agencies were also provided with fact sheets and educational videos to support the transition. As of 30 June 2024, there were 33 battery electric vehicles and 29 plug-in hybrid vehicles in the government fleet.	In progress
2.3.8 Planning for electric vehicles	Embed consideration of electric vehicle charging infrastructure into the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and develop a whole-of-government master plan for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.	DPAC, ReCFIT (CCO)	All planning schemes operating in Tasmania, with the exception of Sullivans Cove, have an exemption from requiring a planning permit for electric vehicle charging infrastructure as part of a car park.	Complete
2.3.9 Chairing the EV Working Group	Continue bringing together key partners to develop a coordinated approach to support the uptake of electric vehicles in Tasmania.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The Electric Vehicle (EV) Working Group has transitioned to an information sharing group. This change recognises the growth of the EV market in Australia, as well as the leading role taken by the Australian Government in EV policy.	Ongoing

Tasmanian Government fleet transition

In 2021, the Tasmanian Government set a target to transition its vehicle fleet to 100 per cent electric vehicles (EVs) by 2030. ReCFIT is working with the Department of Treasury and Finance to support the transition. A range of policies and initiatives to support the fleet transition are being implemented, including:

- a new whole-of-government contract for purchasing passenger and light commercial vehicles
- education resources for staff, including fact sheets and short instructional videos
- assessing 110 government parking sites across the state for EV charging infrastructure
- providing advice to agencies about installing charging infrastructure on their sites
- updating operational fleet management policies
- a procurement process for a panel of charging infrastructure suppliers
- financial support for agencies to purchase EVs and charging infrastructure.

As of 30 June 2024, there were 33 battery electric vehicles and 29 plug-in hybrid vehicles in the government fleet.

2.4 We will be implementing emissions reduction opportunities for the agriculture sector, including new livestock feed supplements and precision agriculture

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.4.1 Supporting research and development to reduce emissions from livestock	Support a large-scale trial of *Asparagopsis* (seaweed) or other feed supplements to reduce emissions from livestock.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The $4 million Low Emissions Livestock Grant has been awarded to TasFarmers, in collaboration with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), Fonterra, Annandale Dairy Farm, Sea Forest and Tasmanian feedlot AEON. The TasFarmers proposal will introduce Sea Forest's *Asparagopsis* feed supplements to 24,000 head of livestock, across both dairy and beef, to reduce an estimated 16,350 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent over the next three years.	In progress

$4 million Low Emissions Livestock Grant

"This project is world-leading, as the Sea Forest *Asparagopsis* initiative holds international significance in its efforts to go from concept to commercialisation, positioning Tasmania as a leader in agricultural innovation. With a total of 24,000 head of cattle, spanning both dairy and feedlot operations, the impact will be significant. For farmers, this translates to the ability to market environmentally sustainable beef and dairy products. Tasmanian consumers can have confidence that they will be able to eat meat and dairy which is climate friendly."

Nathan Calman, CEO TasFarmers



Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.4.2 Supporting the transition to low carbon agriculture	Continue to encourage farmers and other businesses to understand the growing carbon market, through the Carbon Farming Advice Rebate Pilot Program.	NRE Tas	In the 2023-24 financial year there were four approved primary producer applications and eight approved adviser applications. The program remains open and available for applications.	Ongoing

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.4.3 Supporting the transition to low carbon agriculture	Expand the Landcare Action Grants program of practical on-ground works for sustainable agriculture to support carbon farming initiatives.	NRE Tas	The Tasmanian Government has committed an additional $900,000 over three years to expand the Landcare Action Grants program. The expansion will enable landholders to access grant funding for on-ground works that are required to access the carbon credit market. The delivery of these grants will assist Tasmanian landholders to enter the carbon credit market, through the Australian Government's Emissions Reduction Fund.	 Ongoing
2.4.4 Supporting the transition to low carbon agriculture	Encourage dairy farmers to participate in the DairyTas 'The 10 Steps' program, which provides information to reduce the carbon footprint of Tasmanian dairy farms.	NRE Tas	'The 10 Steps for Reducing the Carbon Footprint for Tasmania Dairy' resources have been produced and are available for dairy farmers.	 Ongoing
2.4.5 Supporting the transition to low carbon agriculture	Support the adoption of precision agriculture through the Strategic Industry Partnership Program, including a pilot program to develop and test a grower-led agtech adoption framework in Tasmanian agriculture.	NRE Tas	The project is being coordinated by the Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group and is underway.	 Ongoing
2.4.6 Supporting seaweed production	Support emerging seaweed production activities, including *Asparagopsis*, to support decarbonisation in other sectors and expand ocean carbon sequestration.	NRE Tas	The Tasmanian Government's Agricultural Development Fund has invested $542,000, along with additional funds with industry partners, towards the project 'Production of an *Asparagopsis* pellet that will be suitable for farmers to integrate into their feeding systems'. The project is due to be completed in May 2025. Support for research and industry development for seaweed is being implemented through the establishment of an emerging marine industries team within NRE Tas. Team activities include involvement in seaweed research being undertaken by the Marine Bioproducts Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), the Blue Economy CRC and the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, through the Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement. NRE Tas is also facilitating the Tasmanian Seaweed Working Group.	 In progress

2.5 We will have increased the carbon stored in our forests by increasing new timber plantations, expanding the adoption of agroforestry and reducing the conversion of plantations to other land uses

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.5.1 Supporting landowners to sequester carbon on their properties	Support Private Forests Tasmania to deliver grants for landowners to plant more trees on their properties, building on its successful Integrated Farm Forestry Program. This will increase Tasmania's carbon sequestration and has additional benefits, including improved farm productivity, water quality and biodiversity, and reduced soil erosion.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The government has provided funding of $600,000 to Private Forests Tasmania to deliver the Stems for CO2 program. The program is providing $450,000 in grants to support three farmers to plant more trees on their properties. The remaining funding is to undertake modelling of the carbon sequestration from the plantings and to develop case studies and educational resources to encourage more landowners to increase tree plantings.	Ongoing
2.5.2 Supporting landowners to sequester carbon on their properties	Support Private Forests Tasmania and the Tasmanian Forestry Hub to deliver the Farm Forestry Carbon Tool. The tool will enable landowners to estimate their carbon emissions and sequestration and potential tree offset opportunities, with the goal of encouraging landowners to plant more trees on their properties.	NRE Tas	Created by the Tasmanian Forestry Hub, in collaboration with Private Forests Tasmania, the Farm Forestry Carbon Tool was developed by Tasmanian tech company Indicium Dynamics and launched at Agfest in 2023. It is highly effective to support farmers as they start conversations and planning around carbon neutrality on their farms. In less than two minutes farmers can estimate two important factors: what their current emissions profile looks like and, if they are a net carbon emitter, how many trees would be required to bring them back to neutral. The tool is available at pft.tas.gov.au/farm-forestry-carbon-tool	Complete
2.5.3 Supporting a sustainable forestry sector	Work with the forestry sector to develop a policy framework that identifies barriers to agroforestry and plantation forestry, promotes plantations and wood products, promotes using locally-sourced timber instead of more emissions-intensive building materials, and explores opportunities for bioenergy and biofuels to reduce fossil fuel use.	NRE Tas	NRE Tas has been developing a range of policies and legislation to support a sustainable and adaptive forestry sector, including rewriting the Sustainable Timber Tasmania (STT) Ministerial Charter to formalise STT's participation in carbon markets. The Tasmanian Government committed to a range of deliverables, including unlocking Future Potential Production Forest Land to support industry and to make available an additional 10 per cent of high-quality sawlogs. This supply will be available exclusively to existing Tasmanian customers. The government has also committed an additional $5 million to the on-island processing program, to value add to timber products produced around the state. *This action was transferred to the Department of State Growth on 1 July 2024.*	Ongoing

2.6 We will have reduced the volume of organic waste sent to landfill by 50 per cent and be moving towards a circular economy

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.6.1 Increasing organic waste reprocessing capacity in Tasmania	Partner with the Australian Government and industry to deliver two state-of-the-art composting facilities, reducing the volume of organic material sent to landfill and reducing emissions.	NRE Tas	Dulverton in-vessel compost facility is on track. Barwicks facility is in the approval process. The development application from the Council is expected by September 2024, and construction will begin after that. The final completion date is to be confirmed depending on revised engineering and budgets. Together, the projects will provide an additional approximately 74,000 tonnes of processing capacity.	In progress
2.6.2 Growing the circular economy	Phase out single use plastics by 2025 and continue to improve plastic recycling in Tasmania.	NRE Tas	Public consultation on a proposed approach to phasing out certain single use plastics is open until 1 October 2024. Feedback will then inform legislation development over the following 12-18 months.	In progress
2.6.3 Growing the circular economy	Support improved recycling in remote communities	NRE Tas	There have been some delays to projects due to challenges faced by remote communities. The Tasmanian Government is providing additional support through rebates of landfill levy and additional grants through the Waste and Resource Recovery Board. The revised completion date is June 2026.	In progress
2.6.4 Growing the circular economy	Continue to support the use of recycled materials such as crumb rubber from waste tyres in the construction and maintenance of the state road network, and research the use of other recycled products and the feasibility of increasing their use in state road construction in Tasmania.	State Growth	Sixty sites were completed using crumb rubber in the 2023-24 resurfacing season (nine sites were specified in contracts). Crumb rubber has now been incorporated into a number of sites for the 2024-25 resurfacing season.	In progress

2.7 We will be supporting our industries to improve their energy efficiency and reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.7.1 Providing financial support for businesses and industry to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency	Continue the $50 million Business Energy Efficiency Scheme (BEES) to support electricity customers with annual consumption of more than 150 MWh to invest in energy efficiency and electrification opportunities.	ReCFIT	BEES offers support to businesses in the form of an interest-free loan of up to $10,000 over three years, and a low interest loan of up to $50,000 over three years. Business Tasmania has promoted BEES to businesses.	Nearing completion

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.7.2 Providing financial support for businesses and industry to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency	Support large Tasmanian greenhouse gas-emitting businesses and industries to trial existing clean technologies, or test new innovative production processes, that will lead to reduced emissions. Ensure the program scope and design complement relevant state and national programs.	ReCFIT (CCO)	This program did not commence as expected in 2024. A request has been made to reallocate the funding to the implementation of the sectoral emissions reduction and resilience plans.	Discontinued
2.7.3 Advocating to the Australian Government	Continue to advocate for the best outcomes for Tasmanian business and industry under the Australian Government's initiatives to reduce industrial emissions, including reforms to the Safeguard Mechanism and establishing the Powering the Regions Fund.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The Tasmanian Government advocates for Tasmania at a Ministerial level, through the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council (ECMC). CCO sits on a large number of officials-level intergovernmental working groups. At all levels, the government will continue to seek to maximise the opportunities for Tasmania through relevant Australian Government climate change policies and programs, including through the development of a national net zero plan and national sectoral decarbonisation plans.	Ongoing

2.8 We will have achieved our target to generate 150 per cent of our 2020 electricity generation capacity from renewable energy sources, and be continuing to increase our renewable electricity generation to reach 200 per cent in 2040

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.8.1 Increasing renewable energy generation	Continue to implement the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan (TREAP) and Renewable Energy Coordination Framework (RECF).	ReCFIT	The government has made significant progress implementing actions under the TREAP and the RECF. Recent highlights include consultation on establishing Tasmania's first Renewable Energy Zone, and release of the Renewable Energy Approval Pathway to support new projects.	In progress

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.8.2 Increasing renewable energy generation	Continue to implement the Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan to become a significant producer of renewable hydrogen for local use and export by 2030.	ReCFIT	The Blue Economy CRC's project to produce Tasmania's first green hydrogen is targeted for completion by the end of 2024, and will provide 250kg per day of green hydrogen. This will supply the hydrogen bus trail and other demonstration projects. CountryWide Hydrogen aims to produce up to 690 tonnes per annum of green hydrogen for transport and local use, at two to three sites in Tasmania by 2025-26. The $300 million Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub project has commenced. This includes funding of $70 million from the Australian Government and additional funding from the Tasmanian Government. This project will provide the common use transmission, water and port infrastructure required to support one or more export-scale hydrogen production facilities in Bell Bay. A first stage will support up to 300MW electroliser capacity and be producing green hydrogen or a derivative in 2028.	In progress
2.8.3 Increasing renewable energy generation	Update the Renewable Energy Action Plan to develop the Powered by Tasmania Plan, focusing on accelerating renewable energy developments.	ReCFIT	The government's updated renewable energy plan was announced at the 2024 election. The plan includes a focus on accelerating renewable energy developments by updating Hydro Tasmania's charter and removing legislative roadblocks to development.	Complete
2.8.4 Increasing renewable energy generation	Continue to invest in hydro-electricity assets, considering the findings of relevant studies to further Tasmania's renewable electricity generation, and progressing opportunities for further renewable energy development.	ReCFIT	The Tasmanian Government has recently updated the Hydro Tasmania Ministerial Charter, which sets the Government's strategic expectations including working cooperatively on Tarraleah Redevelopment and Cethana Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Projects. The generation potential is being supported by investment in Marinus, North West Transmission Development and Renewable Energy Zones. The Australian Government's Capacity Investment Scheme also provides underwriting support. The first generation tender includes a minimum 300MW Tasmanian capacity target.	Ongoing

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.8.5 Attracting renewable energy investment	Continue to progress national-scale renewable energy projects such as Marinus Link and the Battery of the Nation.	ReCFIT	As of March 2024, Marinus Link Pty Ltd changed ownership structure and is now owned by the Australian Government (49%), the Victorian Government (33.3%), and the Tasmanian Government (17.7%). Under the new ownership structure, the Marinus Link project continues to progress through the design and approvals phase, working towards a Final Investment Decision (FID). A commissioning date is planned for 2030. The Marinus Link is heavily interconnected with and essential to supporting the Battery of the Nation and, together with the North West Transmission Developments (NWTD), these projects are key to attracting renewable energy investment and advancing Australia's national-scale renewable energy infrastructure.	◉◉◉ In progress
2.8.6 Attracting renewable energy investment	Continue to work with and support a wide variety of proponents across renewable energy projects.	ReCFIT	The Renewable Energy Approvals Pathway was announced in January 2024. A case management team is to be established as part of the government's 200 day commitments. The Renewable Energy Zone Bill has been released for consultation as part of the government's first 100 day commitments. A 300MW Tasmanian allocation has been provided as part of the Australian Government's first auction, as part of their Capacity Investment Scheme. Successful projects are expected to be announced by the end of 2024.	◉◉◉ In progress


Image: Chris Crerar

2.9 The government will be leading by example

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
2.9.1 Reducing emissions from government operations	Develop an Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan for Government Operations in conjunction with the whole-of-government policy framework, which will incorporate emissions reduction, transition to a low emissions economy, and resilience to climate-related risks.	ReCFIT (CCO)	A baseline emissions inventory for government operations has commenced, and key priorities developed for consultation across departments.	In progress
2.9.2 Reducing emissions from government operations	Continue to monitor the government's energy use and the associated greenhouse gas emissions from its operations.	ReCFIT (CCO)	Government agencies currently use whole-of-government software to monitor energy use and emissions. Any additional opportunities to monitor emissions identified by the Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan for Government Operations will be considered.	Ongoing
2.9.3 Reducing emissions from government operations	Develop a boiler replacement action plan to guide the replacement of fossil fuels used in government boilers with renewable alternatives, with a focus on bioenergy solutions.	ReCFIT	Expert advice has been provided to government on the best renewable alternative for displacing fossil fuels across all 65 government-owned boilers. Based on this advice, ReCFIT identified priority sites and is working with relevant agencies to progress these projects.	Complete
2.9.4 Reducing emissions from government operations	Implement renewable energy alternatives for government-owned fossil fuel boilers, with a focus on bioenergy solutions.	ReCFIT	ReCFIT is currently working with three government agencies to progress projects to displace fossil fuels used in existing boilers. These projects include a combination of bioenergy and renewable electricity options.	In progress

Transition and innovation case studies

Business Resource Efficiency Program

The Business Resource Efficiency Program (BREP) aims to help small to medium-sized Tasmanian businesses reduce resource consumption and waste, through waste audits, working groups, and online resources.

There have been two rounds of BREP, both delivered by Business Action Learning Tasmania (BALT) and funded by the Tasmanian Government. The most recent round was completed in early 2024. Fourteen businesses took part (seven from the north, six in the south and one in the north west).

Resources from the program are publicly available on the ReCFIT and BALT websites.

"Collaboration is at the heart of the Business Resource Efficiency Program, creating relationships that advance Tasmania's circular economy. The program focuses on practical learning through the implementation of circular economy principles, regenerative design, and resource efficiency. As a result, participating businesses have achieved measurable reductions in waste and decreased their emissions. The program also brings benefits such as cost savings, improved sustainability practices, and stronger industry connections, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable economy."

Genevieve Cother
Sustainable Systems Designer, Business Action Learning Tasmania

Reducing our transport emissions

E-mobility rebates

Between November 2023 and March 2024, the government offered incentives to help reduce Tasmania's transport emissions, by encouraging people to swap their daily commute for an electric alternative, such as an electric bike (e-bike).

The program distributed $200,000 in rebates on purchases of e-bikes, cargo e-bikes and personal mobility devices, such as e-scooters. A total of 501 rebates were provided: 110 in the state's north, 171 in the north west and 220 in the south.

"Purchase cost can be a significant barrier for some people who want to ride an e-bike, which is why the government's e-bike rebate trial was such a welcome support."

"E-bikes are a cleaner, cheaper replacement for some car trips, so we should be doing as much as possible to promote their use."

Alison Hetherington
Public Affairs Manager Tasmania, Bicycle Network



Electric Vehicle rebates

In November 2023, the government launched a rebate program to support the purchase of battery electric vehicles. There was a total of 375 rebates available, at $2,000 each. As of June 2024, 181 rebates have been approved and paid.

Rebates have been paid to applicants in 23 local government areas around the state. Of the 181 paid, 140 were to applicants in the south, 28 to applicants in the north and 13 to applicants in the north west.

"The Australian Electric Vehicle Association (AEVA) commends the state government on the electric vehicle rebate program, and its goal of reducing Tasmania's transport emissions through electrification. We are pleased to see the government's ongoing plans for growing the share of electric vehicles on Tasmania's roads. The eMobility Rebate on electric scooters, bikes and cargo bikes was a national first, and deserves praise for such a progressive initiative other states would do well to replicate. With 100 per cent renewable electricity within reach, Tasmania's transport future is fully electric."

Jon Ettershank, State Branch Chair, AEVA


Image: Chris Crerar

Electric bus trial

The government has allocated $6 million over two years to Metro Tasmania to trial four battery electric buses. A further $11.3 million from the Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Industry Development Fund will support a trial of three hydrogen electric buses for up to three years. The battery electric buses will be trialled in Launceston, and the hydrogen electric buses trialled in Hobart. The zero emission bus trials will provide valuable operational data and insights to help Metro explore and plan for a longer-term, future transition of its fleet to zero-emission technologies.

The battery electric buses started services in early 2024. Updates on the trials can be found on Metro's website (www.metrotas.com.au/).

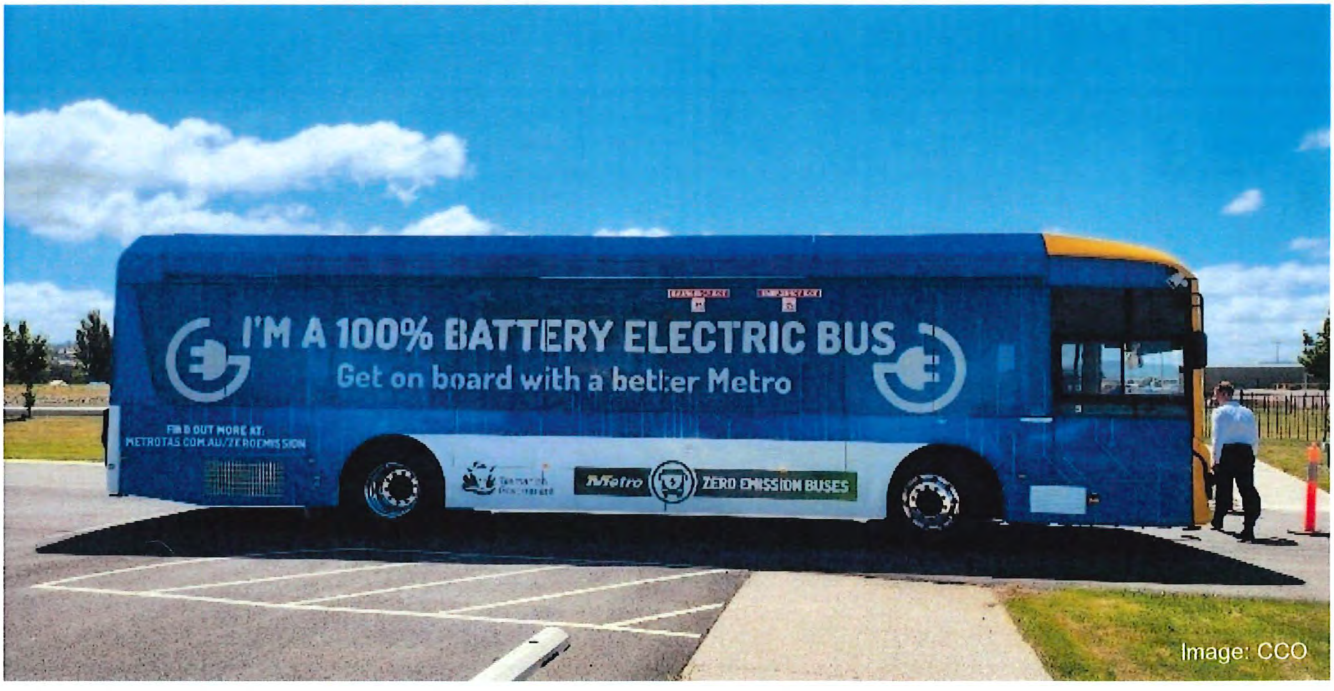


Image: CCO

3 – Adaptation and resilience



We will manage the risks and take advantage of the potential opportunities from climate change, supporting planning and decision making, and build the resilience of our communities, environments, industries and infrastructure.

3.1 Our response to climate change will be informed by an improved understanding of its economic, social and environmental implications

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.1.1 Preparing Tasmania's first Statewide Climate Change Risk Assessment	Develop a statewide climate change risk assessment by November 2024. The Risk Assessment will assist the government to prioritise actions that support adaptation to the impacts of climate change.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The first-pass risk and opportunity assessment is complete. The detailed risk and opportunity assessment is nearing completion. The risk assessment is on track for delivery by November 2024.	Nearing completion
3.1.2 Analysing Tasmania's strategic disaster risks	Pilot a horizon scanning framework that will analyse and prioritise Tasmania's strategic disaster risks across a range of threats and hazards (including climate change). This action includes developing an implementation plan to embed an ongoing horizon scanning process into Tasmania's whole-of-government disaster prevention and preparedness arrangements.	DPAC	In 2023, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) partnered with the University of Tasmania to undertake a pilot that explored and trialled strategic foresight tools (including horizon scanning). The pilot explored poly-crisis scenarios with a 10 year time horizon that considered driving forces such as climate-driven natural and environmental disasters, and climate change adaptation. An implementation plan has been developed to build systemic risk management skills across the Tasmanian Government.	Complete

3.2 We will have plans in place to support our key sectors to adapt and build resilience

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.2.1 Developing and implementing Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans	Develop sector-based Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans (Plans) in consultation with business, industry and the community, to ensure that a practical and balanced approach is taken to reduce emissions and build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. Plans will be developed for the Energy; Transport; Waste; Agriculture; Industrial Processes and Product Use; Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry; and government sectors. All Plans are due to be completed by late 2024, with the exception of the transport Plan, due for completion by November 2023.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The plan for the transport sector will be released in mid-2024, and the remaining plans are on track to be prepared by November 2024. Public consultation opened in mid-2024. Further information on individual plans is available on the ReCFIT website.	In progress

3.3 We will continue to collaborate with local government to prepare for the impacts of climate change

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.3.1 Building climate change action capability in local government	Work with local government to co-design and implement a program of statewide climate change action in local government that builds the sector's capacity to respond to the impacts of a changing climate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	ReCFIT (CCO)	The program has been initiated and the co-design phase is underway. The program Steering Committee meets quarterly. The Project Manager, Local Government Association of Tasmania, is working closely with the local government sector and the Working Group to co-design and progress the program.	In progress
3.3.2 Managing coastal hazards	Work with coastal managers across the state and local government to develop a consistent statewide approach to managing the impacts of coastal hazards under a changing climate.	ReCFIT (CCO)	Initial scoping for this project has commenced.	In progress
3.3.3 Developing a Risk Information Portal	Explore the development of a Risk Information Portal for Tasmania that spatially enables municipal emergency risk assessments. The risk assessments will identify and utilise hazard models (for example: flood, fire, coastal hazards, drought) that incorporate climate projections.	DPAC	The Australian Government and the Tasmanian Government are funding the Risk Information Portal Tasmania project under the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund. The first stage of the project is the development of resources to support consultation with local government and other stakeholders to understand their user requirements.	In progress

3.4 We will have improved our preparedness for natural disasters

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.4.1 Improving bushfire preparedness	Deliver a six-week program in spring 2023 to empower Tasmanians to improve their bushfire preparedness. The program will support Tasmanians to understand their bushfire risk, create a bushfire plan and prepare their properties.	Tasmania Fire Service	Across September 2023, 1,736 individuals and 579 households received weekly bushfire planning and preparedness challenge tasks, such as getting to know their bushfire risk, creating a bushfire plan, and preparing their property. The Bushfire-Ready Challenge will run again in September 2024 using a new interactive online platform. Over 135 community members have registered.	Ongoing
3.4.2 Improving bushfire preparedness	Continue delivering the Statewide Fuel Reduction Program to reduce the risk of bushfires impacting on communities.	NRE Tas, Tasmania Fire Service	During 2023-24, 81 fuel reduction burns (encompassing 27,680 hectares) were completed in strategic locations to protect Tasmanian communities.	Ongoing
3.4.3 Improving bushfire preparedness	Continue to work with Tasmania Fire Service to mitigate the risk of ignition on the road verge and undertake vegetation management in accordance with Machinery Operating Guidelines.	State Growth	State Roads continues to work with Tasmania Fire Service to better understand and mitigate the risk of bushfires next to the State Road network – including consideration of risks on Coles Bay Road and on the Bass Highway near Port Latta.	Ongoing
3.4.4 Improving Tasmania's disaster resilience	Develop Tasmania's Disaster Resilience Strategy 2026-2030 that will outline the government's vision, goals and priority actions to improve Tasmanians' resilience to disasters.	DPAC	A project has commenced to develop Tasmania's next disaster resilience strategy.	In progress

3.5 We will have increased the resilience of our natural environments and unique biodiversity

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.5.1 Managing the risk of fire in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area	Undertake planned burning in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) to reduce the risk of bushfire and protect natural and cultural values.	NRE Tas	As part of the Statewide Fuel Reduction Program, the Parks and Wildlife Service has undertaken nine burns in Autumn 2024 in the TWWHA. A number of reserve value protection plans have been written to assist in the protection of critical values in the TWWHA. A cache of fire equipment has been established at Melaleuca to assist with rapid response to fires. Remote cameras have been deployed to strategic locations in the TWWHA to assist with early fire detection.	Ongoing

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.5.2 Mitigating biosecurity risks	Assess the increased risks of temperate and sub-tropical pests and diseases establishing in Tasmanian marine and terrestrial environments. Prioritise those pests and diseases of highest risk and impact and develop mitigation strategies to address the highest risk species.	NRE Tas	Biosecurity Tasmania's risk assessment methodologies and processes account for the impacts of climate change in terms of addressing future risk with a changing climate scenario. Prioritisation of pests and diseases for risk assessment and analysis is continually reviewed and considers a wide range of risk factors, including climate change.	 Ongoing

3.6 We will have increased the resilience of our communities and built environments

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.6.1 Addressing the impacts of climate change on the physical health and wellbeing of Tasmanians	Support actions that protect vulnerable Tasmanians from the impacts of climate change, such as bushfires, extreme heat and cold weather events.	Health	Engagement and scoping are underway to develop a climate distress youth mental health project. The Nature Connection Youth Mental Health project will commence in mid-2024. There is a dedicated climate change and health focus area of the Tasmanian Public Health Research and Action Collaboration. The initial focus is on air health. There is Public Health collaboration in Tasmanian emergency management liaison (for example on climate change and heatwave preparedness planning).	 Ongoing
3.6.2 Addressing the impacts of climate change on the physical health and wellbeing of Tasmanians	Support community action on climate change and health through the Healthy Tasmania Fund - Healthy Focus Grants.	Health	Healthy Tasmania currently supports six grants that enable community action on climate change and health. Projects cover flood preparedness, building community resilience, climate healthy councils, food waste, and active living.	 Ongoing

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.6.3 Addressing the impacts of climate change on the physical health and wellbeing of Tasmanians	Create more liveable communities that improve health and wellbeing and address climate change. This includes active living strategies and supporting local food production, as well as actions to support good water and air quality.	Health	The Tasmanian Government has engaged in the development and implementation of the National Health and Climate Strategy (Australian Government-led) including involvement with the Health Adaptation leads network on risk and adaptation planning. Health, in collaboration with key partners, has initiated the Sustainable Institutional Food Procurement Tasmania project to conduct research, engagement and planning to develop healthy and environmentally sustainable food procurement practices in Tasmanian Government (and government-funded) institutions. The Tasmanian Active Living Coalition works together to influence and inform policies, decisions and strategies encouraging the creation of active living environments, food security and social inclusion, benefiting health and wellbeing. Business-as-usual public health activities for water and air quality management are ongoing.	 Ongoing
3.6.4 Improving the resilience of Tasmanian businesses	Promote information and capability-building opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses and not-for-profit organisations to improve continuity planning and build resilience to the physical and transitional impacts of climate change.	State Growth	A grant program is planned for delivery across 2024-25 and 2025-26 to assist small businesses to design and implement continuity plans and build resilience. The program will be funded by DPAC and delivered by State Growth's Small Business Unit. The Small Business Unit has also started planning and delivery of an online business continuity planning tool, due for completion by October 2025.	 Ongoing
3.6.5 Improving the resilience of Tasmanian businesses	Promote and support cross-sectoral opportunities for businesses to work together to improve their capacity and capability to respond to climate change.	State Growth	This project is currently being scoped and will be expanded to include other challenges businesses are facing such as changing consumer behaviour and other economic conditions.	 In progress
3.6.6 Embedding climate change in planning	Ensure the impacts of climate change are considered in Tasmania's planning polices and regional land use strategies, and planning regulations.	DPAC	The Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs) include a climate change statement about each topic. The Tasmanian Planning Commission has reviewed the TPPs and they are close to finalisation. The TPPs are required to be implemented through the regional land use strategies that are currently being reviewed.	 Nearing completion

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.6.7 Embedding climate change in planning	Ensure climate change modelling is incorporated into strategic planning and decision making at state and local level to inform land release and the location of future housing. This action aims to mitigate the impacts of climate change on future residents and housing developments.	DPAC	The Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs) require consideration of the impacts of climate change when mapping hazards, such as bushfire, flooding and coastal erosion and inundation. The TPPs also require consideration of climate change impacts when assessing strategic planning processes and rezonings.	Nearing completion
3.6.8 Delivering sustainable and resilience infrastructure	Work across state agencies to establish sustainability and resilience best practice principles in the planning and delivery of infrastructure.	State Growth	Infrastructure Tasmania is working on a whole-of-government Strategic Infrastructure Framework, including guiding principles to support better sustainability outcomes. This framework builds on the commitment of the Building Tasmania's Future Memorandum of Understanding to improve sustainability in building and construction.	In progress
3.6.9 Delivering sustainable and resilience infrastructure	Identify opportunities for improving resilience as part of the upfront planning work when developing corridor strategies for state roads.	State Growth	Infrastructure Tasmania (ITas) has updated its corridor strategy guidance materials to highlight challenges and improvement opportunities specific to resilience and the environment. ITas will continue refining its planning materials to further incorporate resilience and sustainability into the planning process.	In progress

3.7 We will have increased the resilience of our agriculture and fisheries sectors

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.7.1 Supporting the agriculture industry to prepare for the impacts of climate change	Deliver the joint Australian and Tasmanian Government Farm Business Resilience Program from mid-2023 to 2025, designed to give farmers the tools they need to prepare for and adapt to a changing climate and build business resilience through business planning.	NRE Tas	DairyTas and RMCG Consulting provide coaching, training and tools to farmers across the dairy and wider farming sectors, respectively. Farmers are using 'Our Farm Our Plan' (DairyTas) or the 'Farm Business Resilience Plan' process to examine the business risks and opportunities for their farm. A range of workshops is also being held across the state to engage farmers with the Program to encourage discussions about managing risk and participation in more detailed planning.	Ongoing
3.7.2 Supporting the agriculture industry to prepare for the impacts of climate change	Partner with regional development authorities, local government, industry, businesses and community stakeholders to develop Regional Drought Resilience Plans for the north, north west and south that prioritise and guide local actions to build Tasmania's resilience to future droughts.	DPAC	Community consultation is significantly progressed in each region. Draft plans will be completed by the end of 2024 and initial implementation activities are expected to commence in 2025.	In progress

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.7.3 Supporting the agriculture industry to prepare for the impacts of climate change	Partner with DairyTas to deliver a climate adaptation and environmental sustainability program for the dairy industry.	NRE Tas	Rollout of the project has commenced with DairyTas. The program activities will increase later in 2024.	In progress
3.7.4 Extending irrigation infrastructure	Roll out Tranche III of Pipeline to Prosperity to meet increased demand for irrigation schemes and support Tasmanian Irrigation to develop a business case for the south east extension scheme.	NRE Tas	The first Tranche III construction project has been completed. The Don Irrigation Scheme commenced irrigation water delivery in October 2023. The business case for the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme (GSEIS) was completed in November 2023. The Tasmanian Government has committed $75 million for construction of the GSEIS and work is underway to secure the Australian Government funding necessary to deliver this scheme. Both the Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme project and the Sassafras-Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme Augmentation project have funding approved and are approaching construction readiness. The construction on both projects is expected to commence in 2024-25.	In progress
3.7.5 Improving the resilience of our fisheries	Improve the design of Harvest Strategies for commercial and recreational fisheries to better incorporate climate resilience.	NRE Tas	Harvest strategies being developed for local species will allow fisheries to adjust regulations in real time, enabling them to adapt to changes in the environment that impact fish abundance and distribution.	Ongoing
3.7.6 Improving the resilience of our fisheries	Reduce the impacts of range-extended urchins on Tasmania's marine ecosystems caused by warming waters on Tasmania's east coast.	NRE Tas	Approximately $600,000 has been allocated in 2023-24 to the longspined sea urchin (centro) harvest sector and centro-related research, to improve harvest and processing rates. Three hundred and sixty tonnes of centro were removed this season.	Ongoing
3.7.7 Improving the resilience of our fisheries	Work with CSIRO on integration of new national climate adaptation guidelines into fishery management approaches.	NRE Tas	NRE Tas fisheries managers and industry representatives participated in the CSIRO fisheries climate change adaptation handbook workshop in 2023. Consideration of potential climate change impacts on fisheries will be incorporated in fishery assessments and management approaches as resources allow.	In progress

Action	Description	Lead agency	Commentary	Status
3.7.8 Improving the resilience of our fisheries	Work with Blue Economy CRC on a range of approaches that will promote greater resilience and adaptation by aquaculture and energy industries working in offshore marine environments (for example, co-production of finfish and seaweed).	NRE Tas	NRE Tas representatives have commenced discussions with Blue Economy CRC and industry representatives who are working to decarbonise the Tasmanian salmon industry to meet the Tasmanian Government's commitment in the Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan.	Ongoing



Image: Chris Crerar

Adaptation and resilience case study

Statewide climate change risk assessment

Tasmania's first assessment of risks from climate change is underway. The risk assessment will assist the government to prioritise actions that help us adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

Types of risks

- **physical** climate-related risks and opportunities, including:
    - climate-related acute shocks, such as heatwaves, floods, bushfires, drought, coastal erosion, coastal storm surge
    - longer-term climate trends, such as temperature change, sea level rise, seasonal distribution and intensity of rainfall, incidence of frost, distribution of invasive species and diseases
- climate-related **transition** risks and opportunities, which are driven by policy, regulation, technology development, reputation, and market shift, as a result of goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- climate-related **complex, compounding, and cascading** risks and opportunities, which involve multi-directional interactions between types of risk.

The risk assessment draws on leading practice climate risk frameworks, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)-accepted definition of climate risk, as published by Simpson et al (2021).

The first-pass risk and opportunity assessment is complete. The detailed risk and opportunity assessment is nearing completion and will explore the hazards, drivers, exposure, vulnerability, and existing adaptation responses for risks and opportunities into the future. The risk assessment is on track for delivery by November 2024.



Acronyms and abbreviations

Term	Description
CCO	Climate Change Office, Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania
CO_2-e	Carbon dioxide equivalent
DECYP	Department for Education, Children and Young People
DPAC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Health	Department of Health
NRE Tas	Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
ReCFIT	Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania
SMRCA	Sustainable Marine Research Collaborative Agreement (SMRCA), University of Tasmania
State Growth	Department of State Growth
Treasury	Department of Treasury and Finance

RECFIT
Renewables, Climate and
Future Industries Tasmania

Department of State Growth

GPO Box 536 Hobart
TAS 7001 Australia

Phone: 03 6166 4466

Email: climatechange@recfit.tas.gov.au

Web: recfit.tas.gov.au

© State of Tasmania September 2024

Tabled by Minister Duigan 25/9/24 BF

Marine Farm Development Planning Area	Huon Aquaculture	Petuna	Tassal	Grand Total
D'Entrecasteaux Channel/Huon River	6		34	40
Great Oyster Bay and Mercury Passage			1	1
Macquarie Harbour	5	-	2	7
Storm Bay off Trumpeter Bay North Bruny Island	10		2	12
Tamar Estuary		-		
Tasman Peninsula and Norfolk Bay			6	6
Grand Total	**21**	**Nil**	**45**	**66**

Mac Point Precinct Plan

August 2024

MACQUARIE POINT
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Acknowledgment of Country

The Macquarie Point Development Corporation acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the muwinina people, and pay respect to those that have passed before us.

We acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the palawa, their Elders, and their enduring custodianship of lutruwita/Tasmania.

Contents

1.0 Introduction 4

1.1 Vision 5

1.2 The Urban Renewal of Mac Point 6

1.3 Sustainability 7

1.4 Site Context 8

2.0 Design Considerations 9

2.1 Site History 10

2.2 Character Statement 11

2.3 Historic Shorelines 12

2.4 Heritage Listed Sites 13

2.5 Consultation 14

3.0 Precinct Plan 17

3.1 Mac Point Site 19

3.2 Macquarie Wharf 28

3.3 Huon Quays 29

3.4 Anticipated staged delivery of the Precinct 30

3.5 Moving to, around and through the site 31

3.6 Event day public transport 32

3.7 Road Infrastructure 34

3.8 Implementation 35

1.0 Introduction

This Precinct Plan has been prepared by the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, working with Cox Architecture as the principal consultant assisting with its development.

About Us

The Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) is a Statutory Authority established through the *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act 2012*.

MPDC's role is to remediate, redevelop and transition Mac Point into a vibrant mixed-use precinct.

On 9 May 2023, the then Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing issued a Ministerial Direction to the MPDC's Board requiring the development of this Precinct Plan. The Plan is to provide for the development of:

- a multipurpose stadium
- key projects set out in the existing masterplan for the site, specifically: a Truth and Reconciliation Park and Antarctic facilities
- a residential development including affordable housing for key workers in the health sector.

A copy of the Direction is available at macpoint.com/reporting.

The Precinct Plan

To support a whole-of-precinct approach, MPDC has worked closely with TasPorts to plan for the development of the Mac Point site in a way that is informed by and seeks to complement the current and planned uses of the Macquarie Wharf and Huon Quays.

As a result of that collaboration, the word **Precinct** comprises:

- the Mac Point site, including Crown land at Regatta Point
- Macquarie Wharf and Huon Quays

Both of these areas are illustrated and described in this Plan.

In developing this Plan we have found:

- Mac Point can deliver a mixed-use precinct with discrete but connected Zones.
- there is space and capacity to not only deliver the projects planned for the site, but for these to thrive as part of a well designed and integrated precinct.
- the site must be a place that is accessible for all Tasmanians, and an iconic destination for visitors.
- the development should acknowledge and share the site's Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural and European industrial history.
- design guidelines will be important in developing Mac Point to align with the character of the site and the spatial and built form principles of Sullivan's Cove.
- the community is passionate about the site. The majority of responses expressed excitement for the plans and, in particular, the opportunities a multipurpose stadium may offer the city, region and State.
- however, others expressed concern and strong opposition. It will be important to continue to listen to the views in the community and to explore opportunities to deliver the Zones set out in this plan in a way that is sympathetic to issues raised.

Our thanks to contributors

This Precinct Plan has been informed by two consultation processes. This included:

- more than 2000 written submissions , with just over 200 further written submissions received in response to the draft plan
- meetings with more than 100 local organisations, businesses and individuals
- collaboration with and input from TasPorts, the Department of State Growth (including Infrastructure Tasmania (ITas)), Stadiums Tasmania, Brand Tasmania, Homes Tasmania and the Department of Health.

Consultants were also engaged to provide expert, specialised advice and included:

- Cox Architecture as the principal consultant in the preparation of this plan including architectural, urban planning, and stadium expertise
- Jacobs for assisting in the development of Sustainability principles for the Mac Point site
- Inkhorn Projects, for leading engagement with the creative sector
- WSP, in collaboration with State Growth, for advice on transport mode share considerations to support event-day transport
- Burbury, in collaboration with ITas, to progress a concept design for the northern access road outlined in this Plan.



Mac Point Precinct.
Source: Macquarie Point Development Corporation

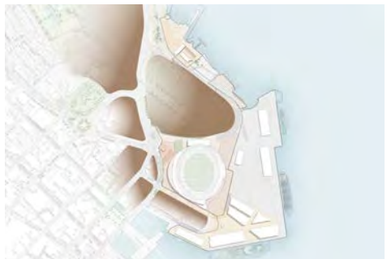
1.1 Vision

We aspire to build the Mac Point Precinct into a place to gather, celebrate and reflect, through the arts, culture, sport, events and entertainment.

We will create a mixed use precinct that is accessible to all people, offers vibrant experiences and destinations, and contributes to the delivery of the 30-Year Greater Hobart Plan.

1.2 The Urban Renewal of Mac Point

The site will be designed to honour the unique character of the area while also leveraging the opportunities it presents.



Complement and not compete with neighbouring sites

Improve compatibility between the site and other surrounding sites, taking into account current and potential future activity.



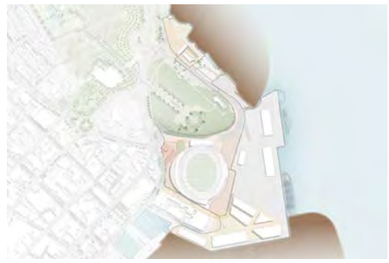
Create connections

Improve connections to nearby sites, enhance connectivity on site, and promote access to parks and green areas.



Celebrate and preserve heritage

Preserve the iconic heritage structures and character of Sullivans Cove and respect the cultural significance of the Cenotaph including considerations for significant views across the cove.



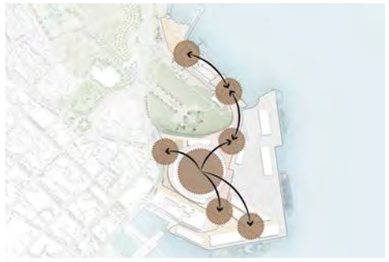
Reintegrate and address the Hobart waterfront

Explore opportunities to integrate the waterfront, allocating public spaces along the waters edge and providing physical and visual links to the Derwent River.



Prioritise the delivery of key use zones

Ensure the Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone, Antarctic facilities, a residential development that includes affordable housing for key workers in the health sector, and multipurpose stadium are included in the plan.



Enable the success of each Zone

The specified needs, space and connections required to support individual projects are considered.



Drive sustainable outcomes

Meet contemporary sustainable development standards and explore opportunities to reintroduce elements of the natural environment to the site and connect to existing open space networks.



Be an expression of the Tasmanian Brand

Create understated and special spaces, showcase quality products and produce, and use Tasmanian materials, innovations, and designs.

1.3 Sustainability

The Mac Point Precinct will be developed in keeping with the following sustainability themes and principles consistent with the UN Sustainability Development Goals.

The 5 themes consider:

- the key location specific environmental challenges
- the importance of delivering a Precinct where people can gather, celebrate and reflect through the arts, culture, sport, events and entertainment
- how the Precinct will deliver jobs, attract investment and support the growth of the Tasmanian economy, and deliver critical infrastructure to support a growing population.



Figure 1: Elizabeth Quay - A Mixed-Use Waterfront Precinct (Source: TCL)

Climate Positive and Resilient

- maximises energy efficiency in buildings and infrastructure
- reduces upfront carbon emissions and supports uptake of low carbon transport
- manages water responsibility and encourage recycling and reuse
- is adaptable and responsive to current and future climate risk and impacts

Connected and Accessible

- provides universally accessible public spaces to gather, celebrate and reflect
- prioritises travel by active and public transport
- provides well-designed, accessible, affordable housing for key workers
- prioritises positive health and wellbeing for visitors, residents and workers

Efficiently manage emissions

- manages the environmental quality of the site and its emissions
- promotes environmentally efficient systems for water and wastewater management and reuse

Honour the Site's History

- identifies, shares and highlights the site's rich historical and cultural heritage

Support Local Enterprises and Economy to Thrive

- promotes local enterprises and community organisations
- provides opportunities for local employment and industry pathways

Implementation

We will implement these goals by:

- registering for Green Star Communities. MPDC will now work towards formal Green Star Communities accreditation through the pre, during and post development phases of the site's renewal, which offers a best-practice guidance and certified system
- including requirements in construction and development contracts and guidelines for works on site
- collaborating with industry, organisations and partner delivery agencies.



Figure 2: Sofi Stadium and Lake Park (Source: Studio MLA)

1.4 Site Context

Mac Point is a 9.3-hectare site comprising largely reclaimed land nestled between Hobart's CBD and the Port of Hobart. It connects the CBD to the green heart of the city on the Queen's Domain, the Hobart Cenotaph and to the intercity cycleway and Tasman Bridge.



Figure 3: Live music and community events at The Red Square Mac Point. (Source: MPDC)



Figure 4: Decommissioned RAN drill hall - Huon Quays. (Source: The Mercury)



Figure 5: Hobart Cruise Ship Terminal, Port Quarantine Facility and event space - Macquarie Wharf No. 2 . (Source: Gandy and Roberts)

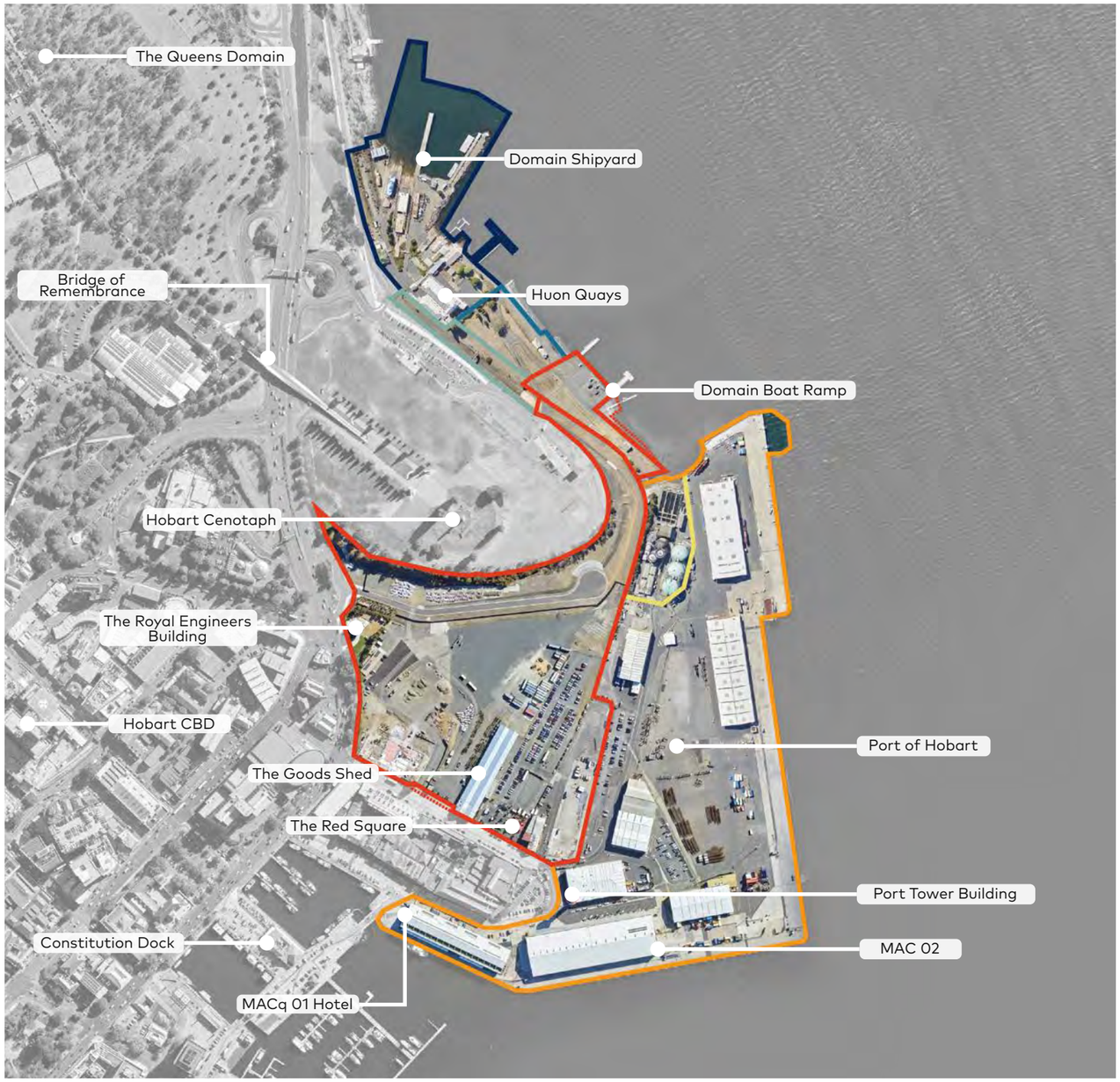


Figure 6: Existing structures and land uses within the Precinct Plan

2.0 Design Considerations



Historic shorelines of Macquarie Point
Source: Macquarie Point historic shorelines Hobart Railyards Urban Design Strategy 2008, Diagram by COX.

2.1 Site History

The site is a mixture of original and reclaimed land, with the original shoreline sitting to the west of the site. This was home to the muwinina people for thousands of years.

Mapping the previous uses of the site has been a key consideration in developing this Precinct Plan. In particular, identifying the western side of the site for an Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone.

From its original shoreline, mud flats and deep-water bay, to reclaimed land with a long industrial past leaving layers of forgotten pipes, tanks, foundations and polluted soil and groundwater, Mac Point carries a long history that establishes its cultural heritage.

The site was also an important part of the early arrival of Europeans in Hobart. It has been a farm, an abattoir, lumber yard, a gas works, cold store, goods storage. It was also a military drill yard, used for heavy industry, rubbish disposal, the military, freight, and rail. This resulted in a large amount of remediation work to do (further information is available on the MPDC website at macpoint.com/remediation) and also contributed to the heritage on site.

The site also includes the Royal Engineers Building built in 1847, which still stands, and the remains of the 'Kings Yard' below ground.



Figure 7: 1950s,c,TAHO, PH30-1-3699, Royal Engineers Building. Lower end Macquarie Street, Hobart



Figure 8: Hobart Regatta. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

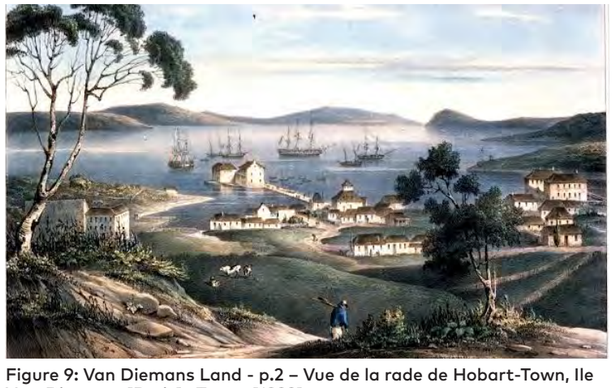


Figure 9: Van Diemans Land - p.2 – Vue de la rade de Hobart-Town, Ile Van-Diemen - [Paris] : Tastu, [1833]



Figure 10: 1950s, u.d, TAHO, Hobart Railway Station passenger train leaving station, view to Mt. Wellington over Hobart, AB713-1-6084

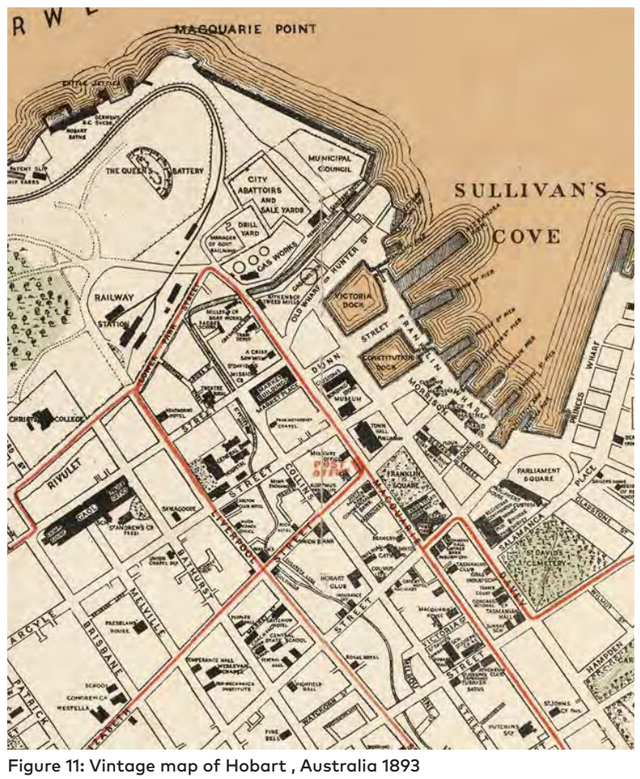


Figure 11: Vintage map of Hobart , Australia 1893



Figure 12: 1900,c., TAHO, PH30-1-722, Hobart Rivulet number 2

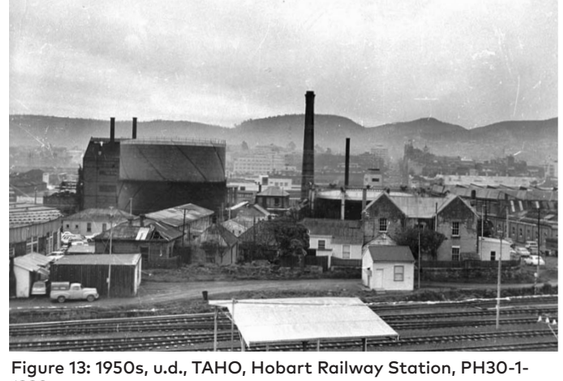


Figure 13: 1950s, u.d., TAHO, Hobart Railway Station, PH30-1-1339

2.2 Character Statement

Mac Point is part of Hobart's continually transforming waterfront. It is where the hills around the City descend to the Cenotaph headland to meet the River.

Over the last 200 years, industry and infrastructure has reshaped this edge to the City, introducing the reclaimed flat land of the Docks and the working port edge. It is the relationship between these contrasting natural and artificial landscapes that define the enduring character of Mac Point.

The grand scale of the headland and docks impart a feeling of being in a big landscape. This is contrasted by sheltered, human-scaled spaces in the gaps, where informal activity has emerged.

These characteristics create a unique space at Mac Point where a big place can have special, personal experiences.

This Precinct Plan seeks to create a future where Mac Point's rich and layered character will continue and be enhanced by introducing a unique and contemporary urban precinct that ties into the City.

Opportunities for Capturing the Tasmanian Brand at Mac Point

The Tasmanian brand is best expressed by the phrase "the quiet pursuit of the extraordinary." Tasmanians prefer the subtle and the special, the quietness and stillness of nature and artisanal production. Tasmanians are inventive, born both out of curiosity and circumstance. Isolation has forced us to work harder for everything, and it has inspired a spirit of invention and creativity. The result of this is extraordinary.

The Tasmanian renewable electricity and net-zero status serve as a benchmark and a workshop for a decarbonising country – and world. Tasmanian quality of products and produce is unrivalled and in such demand locally, nationally and internationally. There are similar opportunities that can be leveraged at Mac Point to capture and celebrate the Tasmanian brand. These opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- authentic acknowledgement and celebration of nipaluna country
- orientating the development to reflect the character of Hobart's built form
- expanding upon established community initiatives and activation of the Precinct such as the Red Square and Edible Precinct
- integrating innovative construction approaches and Tasmanian materials including timber
- precinct-scale sustainable energy generation, distribution and storage to deliver a low carbon precinct.



Figure 14: Conceptual design of a stadium with structural elements made from engineered timber - Eco Park Stadium, England. (Source: Zaha Hadid Architects)



Figure 15: Engineered timber construction used for commercial office buildings - International House Sydney, Barangaroo Sydney. (Source: Tzannes Architects)



Figure 16: Inventive use of timber structure nearby in Evans Street. (Source: IXL Atrium roof by Morris-Nunn + Associates and Gandy & Roberts (Engineer).

2.3 Historic Shorelines

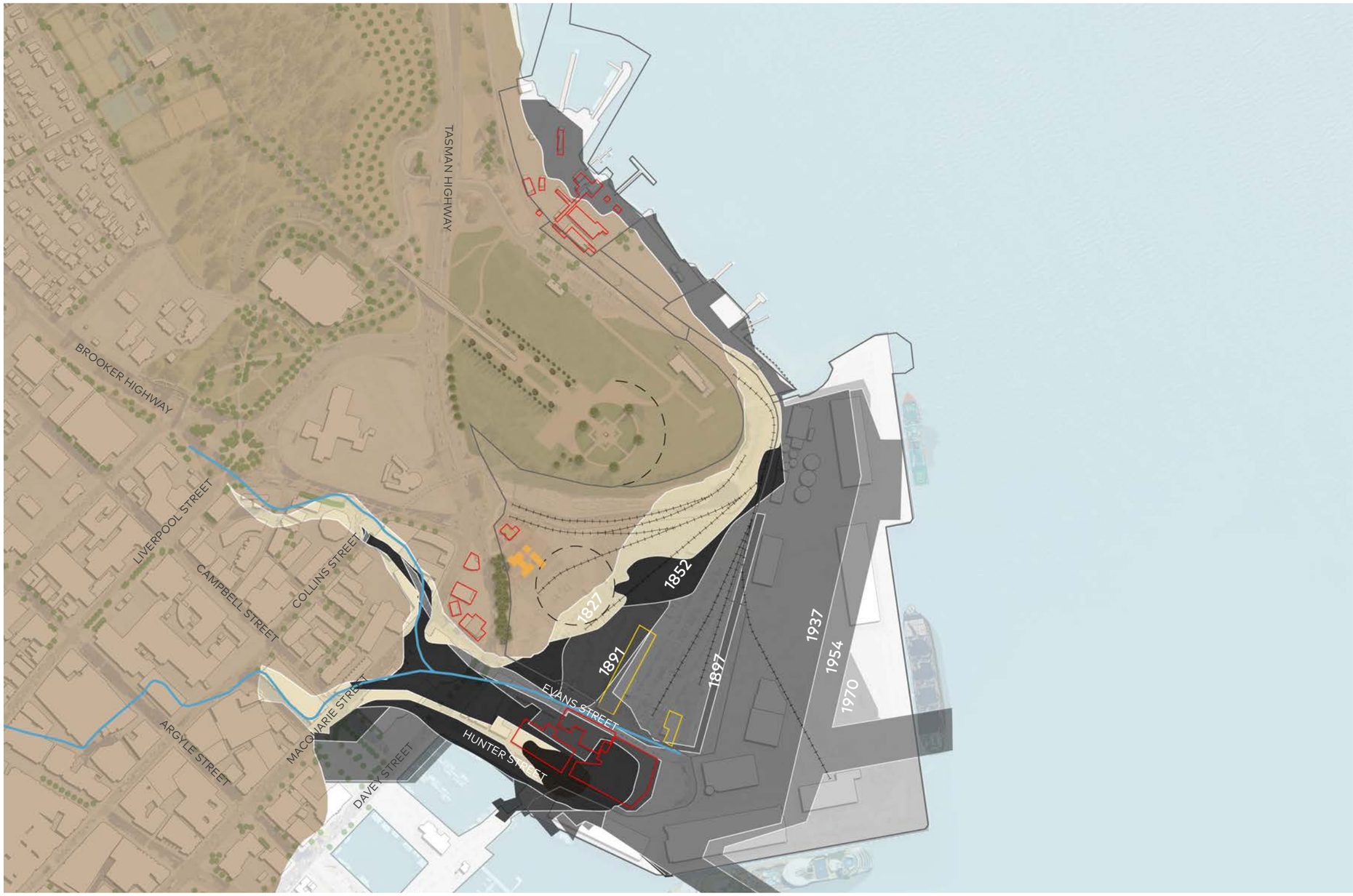
The original shore was occupied by the muwinina band of the South East Tribe for many thousands of years.

Due to the early modifications made to the shoreline from 1828 onwards, relatively little is known about the pre-20th century topography of the Mac Point site. However, several early depictions and drawings illustrate the original shoreline as being a grassed slope leading to a sandy beach, with large swathes of beach or bedrock exposed at low tide.

It is likely that the original ground level may be preserved in the south-western part of the Mac Point site, near to the site of the Lord's Residence and Engineers Yard. Ground modification in the northern part of the site may have removed much of the evidence for the original slope of the land down to the shore.

Soil disturbance due to land clearance in the early 19th century and earlier Aboriginal clearance practices is likely to have resulted in localised artefact displacement in the disturbed area.

This knowledge can be used to consider the sensitivity of the land and identify opportunities to pay tribute to the history of the place in planning for future development.



2.4 Heritage Listed Sites

The site's history and sense of place should be considered, recognised and shared.
The site's heritage includes the spatial and built form that has evolved. Preserving this heritage involves recognising and interpreting these spatial and built forms, to maintain the site's character through new developments.
Heritage listed sites include:

- to the south of the site, the structures along Evans and Hunter Street along with the street surfaces themselves comprises the Wapping precinct which reflects the original urban character of Sullivans Cove.
- the Queens Domain includes the Regatta Point Ridge and the Hobart Cenotaph and provides local and regional orientation and urban identity. The Cenotaph was built in 1925 as a memorial recognising war veterans.
- the escarpment rock face demonstrates two principle heritage values:

1. It separates the Cenotaph from the former rail yards, setting the Cenotaph apart by the dramatic change of topography - a well established relationship within Hobart.
2. It demonstrates the impact of the rail yards and development to the edge of the knoll in the 1870s and has come to define the rock face.

The Goods Shed has been listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register. The listing provides guidance on the specific features that are of cultural significance which will inform its management and relocation considerations.



Figure 17: Heritage listed sites

- Heritage Listed Sites within the Precinct
- Listed Heritage Site within the Precinct in the local planning scheme
- Heritage Listed Sites outside of the precinct
- (1) Former HMAS Huon Naval Depot (Huon Quays)
- (2) Cenotaph Landscape, Anzac Parade and Queen's Battery (including significant trees)
- (3) Royal Engineers Building, Engineers yard and Lords Residence
- (4) The Goods Shed
- (5) The Red Shed
- (6) Hunter, Evans, Davey Street - Subsurface remains - Old Wharf Probation Station & Reclaimed Land
- (7) UTAS Centre for the Arts
- (8) Henry Jones & Co. IXL Jam Factory
- (9) Zero Davey Archaeological Site
- Soldiers Memorial Avenue

0 50 100 200m

2.5 Consultation

The MPDC invited stakeholders and the community to share their ideas to support the development of this Precinct Plan between June and September 2023. This included:

Public consultation was open for submissions between 3 June 2023 and 13 August 2023, with contributions made through:

- an online survey embedded in the MPDC website
- free -from written submissions received by email or in hard copy.

Opportunities for input were promoted in shopping centres and regional newspapers statewide and supported by television advertisements and through digital marketing. More than 2000 submissions were received.

A second round of public consultation was undertaken between 15 October 2023 and 26 November 2023 inviting feedback on the implementation of the draft Plan. These were supported by an online survey and free from written submissions with 234 submissions received.

Survey and written submissions are available on the MPDC website at www.macpoint.com/precinctplan.

Meetings and engagement with stakeholders included:

- more than 50 meetings with a range of interested local individuals, and community, industry and government representatives and groups
- a tour of 5 stadia to consider how they operate and link with the spaces around them.

The stadia visited were: Blundstone Arena (Bellerive), Adelaide Oval, Kardinia Park (Geelong), Heritage Bank (Carrara stadium) and Marvel stadium (Docklands), which occurred during July.

Discussions with stakeholders continued in September.

Engagement with the creative sector
Inkhorn Projects was appointed to seek input from around 50 individuals and organisations in the creative sector.

This sector was targeted to improve our understanding of the existing facilities and needs of the local creative sector. In particular, this engagement provided an opportunity to identify gaps in the facilities currently available, that could potentially inform the redevelopment of Mac Point.

This feedback is summarised in Inkhorn's report, which is also available at www.macpoint.com/precinctplan.



Figure 19: Consultation material prepared for Precinct Plan engagement

2.5.1 Key Themes - submissions and meetings

Input and suggestions from stakeholders during the consultation were used to help shape the layout, activation and development of the site.

Connection with the site's past

- There is strong support for the inclusion of a park space to acknowledge, share, listen and celebrate Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, heritage and community.
- The site's industrial past and role in supporting the development of early Hobart was also noted as important in a number of submissions.
- The importance of developing the site in a way that shares, reflects and is sympathetic to its history was another common theme.

Key projects

- There was general support for the key projects set out in the current masterplan. In particular the Truth and Reconciliation Park and an Antarctic hub were supported, including through dedicated spaces and events.
- There was a mixture of views on housing, both in reference to the integration with the site and the types of housing (social, affordable and private) that should be prioritised on site.

Experiences and activities on site

- Creation of scalable spaces catering for small and community events as well as markets was suggested.
- Opportunity to share and celebrate the Arts including outdoor and public art, and inclusion of open, green, parkland and well landscaped spaces were strongly featured in submissions.
- There were also suggestions in conversations and submissions to support accessibility, including making the site easy to move around, supported by wayfinding (digital and analogue to support all levels of literacy), good lighting, clean spaces, accessible design, access to free wifi and the installation of security cameras were highlighted as important to make people feel safe.
- The management of sound and lighting will be an important consideration in the context of surrounding uses (such as accommodation).
- The importance of creating a destination and iconic space was highlighted regularly.
- The ways respondents currently use the Mac Point site and Regatta Point, included:
  - visiting Mac Point for festivals, concerts, workshops and events; to visit Red Square; temporary activations, car parking; and to transit through the site.
  - visiting Regatta Point for the Royal Hobart Regatta, performances and music events, fishing and boating, carparking; and picnics.

Activating a multipurpose stadium and surrounding spaces for events

- There was predominately strong support for a multipurpose stadium. However, it is important to note that there were also strong views that do not support the development of a stadium on site. These were largely focused on concerns about its size and/or a preference for delivering alternatives on site.
- The importance of the 'multipurpose' aspect of the stadium was strongly emphasised.
- The opportunity to attract new acts, events, festivals, corporate and business events, particularly in off-peak periods was encouraged.
- Opportunities for good design to support circulation, safe places to queue, and activated outside spaces were noted.
- Sensory-informed spaces and facilities, built form that considers all aspects of mobility, and function-based features such as pet-friendly spaces for assistance animals, were highlighted to support accessibility for all ages and abilities.
- Good interim and permanent activation of the space around the stadium was noted as important.

Movement in, around and out of the site

- The walkability of the site was a common theme including supporting links to the CBD, Cenotaph, Queens Domain and through to the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, and Regatta Point.
- There was a strong interest in seeing good passenger transport services in place to support access to the site, particularly on event days.
- While concerns about the need for new or onsite carparking was highlighted in some submissions, the predominate focus was on efficient and accessible public transport options, particularly on event days.

Development and activation considerations

- Sustainability of the site was an important feature. This included the use of renewable energy sources, good water and waste management and recycling, as well as minimising packaging, and inclusion of low-carbon transport options.
- Respondents wanted the site to be an expression of the Tasmanian brand including showcasing products and produce and feeling like it is a Tasmanian space and experience.
- A built-form look that complements the existing spaces was suggested.
- There were also specific development opportunities raised, including: a multi-sport hall of fame, hospitality and accommodation, night-time activation and markets, Antarctic-related events, creative and art sector spaces and enterprises, fitness and health, and sporting facilities and spaces, Tasmanian Aboriginal enterprises, connection to education, training and employment pathways, and community organisations.

Submissions that did not support the proposed approach to development

- It is important to note there were a number of concerns raised in some responses. In addition to the above notes on sight lines and impacts of the built form near the Cenotaph, other concerns raised include:
  - the ability to deliver the desired number of events on site.
  - the costs of the planned investment in the site (and budget risks)
  - concerns around existing housing and health services.
  - the impact on the capacity to deliver the Truth and Reconciliation Park as previously envisaged.
  - the impact of additional load on the transport network.

Implementation and master-planning

- The second round of consultation provided suggestions that will be considered in the master planning process and implementation of the Precinct Plan, including:
  - a transport study and modelling to implement the Precinct Plan
  - preparing a Site Development Plan and urban design guidelines to preserve and recognise the heritage and character of the site
  - to establish height considerations
  - progressing project specific planning, including for the multipurpose stadium.

2.5.2 Creative Sector Stakeholder Engagement

Summary

Further targeted consultation was conducted by Inkhorn Projects to gather specialised insight from the Greater Hobart creative and cultural sector. This helped MPDC to understand opportunities to integrate creative industries and community cultural assets within Mac Point.

The consultation process was conducted over a 4-week period in July 2023 comprising in-person and remote one-on-one interviews and group discussion with a diverse representation of stakeholders from Greater Hobart's culturally productive industries and activities.

Around 50 stakeholders were engaged across organisations considered to play current or potential future key roles within Greater Hobart's creative identity or cultural economy ranging from Government representatives and education providers, arts organisations, cultural institutions, peak organisations, and commercial businesses.

A full copy of the report is available at [macpoint.com/precinctplan.](macpoint.com/precinctplan)

Key Findings

Consultation focused on assessing the current arts infrastructure and policies in relation to the Mac Point development. The main focus was on exploring the potential opportunities within the commercial and mixed-use zones situated towards the east of the stadium footprint.

Mac Point was identified as an opportunity to provide key facilities currently missing from Tasmania's creative environment including a cultural centre, national standard exhibition venues and cultural resources for families and children.

These discussions also highlight the potential for developing complementary year-round activation of Mac Point. Suggestions included encouraging a mix of retail, hospitality, and creative development spaces to fill the demand from local and visiting artists and the expansion of the night-time economy beyond existing hospitality offerings in the city and surrounding areas.

Proposed integration of professional production, digital content creation and rehearsal spaces at Mac Point could encourage partnerships with adjoining media, broadcasting, and education facilities that could result in nationally relevant research, development, and vocational education hub at Mac Point.

Through the consultation process 6 development opportunities were identified as key enablers of a successful cultural precinct within Mac Point.

These development opportunities comprise of;

- an iconic 'arts' development.
- a contemporary music hub.
- a children and family friendly facility.
- a creative makerspace.
- a gaming and enterprise / digital screen hub.
- a concert hall / prestige capacity performance venue.



Figure 20: Public cultural space designed with First Nations groups with performance stages, hospitality offerings, market venues and interactive digital installations - Yagan Square, Perth. (Source: Ramus Illumination)



Figure 21: Purpose built E-Sports arena, entertainment and hospitality venue supporting industry events, international competitions and activation of the night-time economy - Fortress Sydney. (Source: Fortress)

3.0 Precinct Plan

To support a whole-of-precinct approach, MPDC has worked closely with TasPorts to plan for the development of the Mac Point site in a way that is informed by and seeks to complement the current and planned uses of the Macquarie Wharf and Huon Quays.

As a result of that collaboration, the word **Precinct** comprises:

- the Mac Point site, including Crown land at Regatta Point
- Macquarie Wharf and Huon Quays

Both of these areas are illustrated and described in this Plan.

This Plan sets out a mixed-use precinct comprised of interconnected discrete Zones. This includes noting indicative ground-level allocations for each Zone.

This will provide the foundations for detailed urban design guidelines to be prepared for each Zone.

The Zones will be connected through commercial and community uses on the ground floor of buildings, creating open and accessible areas, connected by pedestrian focused spaces.

The Zones are intended to encourage a variety of uses. Individual buildings and developments could span across Zone boundaries, as long as the use is consistent with the purpose of each area.

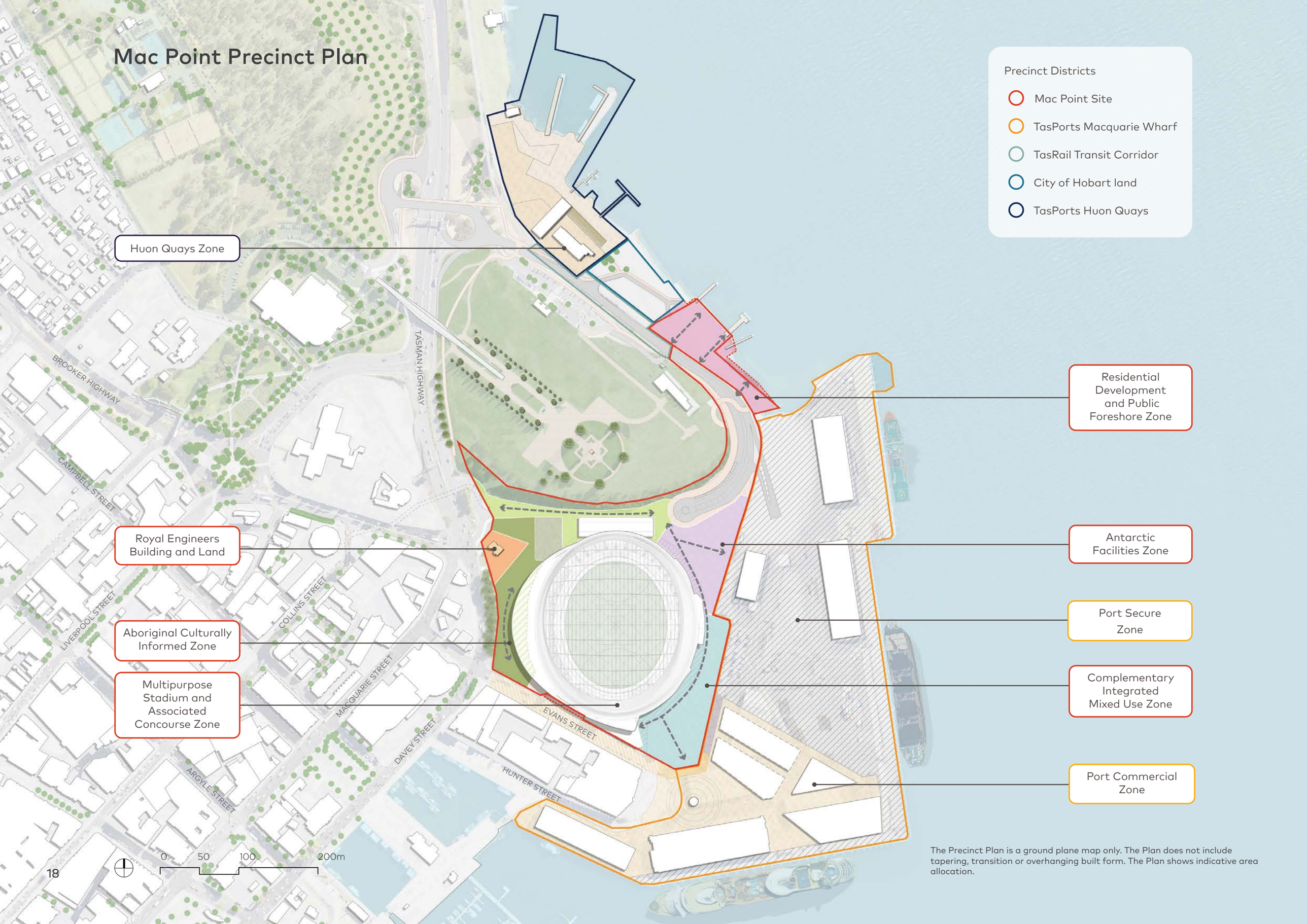
The Precinct Plan does not seek to resolve the detailed design of individual developments within these Zones. Instead it seeks to create the environment that will support businesses, people and the community to thrive.

The site will prioritise low-carbon transport, in particular pedestrian and active travel modes, and connect to passenger transport services.

Car parking will be limited, and be prioritised for tenants and operational uses. Public car-parking will be limited.

Evans Street will continue to service the area as an active road. It will be complemented by a second access road to the north, which is an existing project set out in the Hobart City Deal. The road will also support event-day passenger transport services.

Mac Point Precinct Plan



The Precinct Plan is a ground plane map only. The Plan does not include tapering, transition or overhanging built form. The Plan shows indicative area allocation.

3.1 Mac Point Site



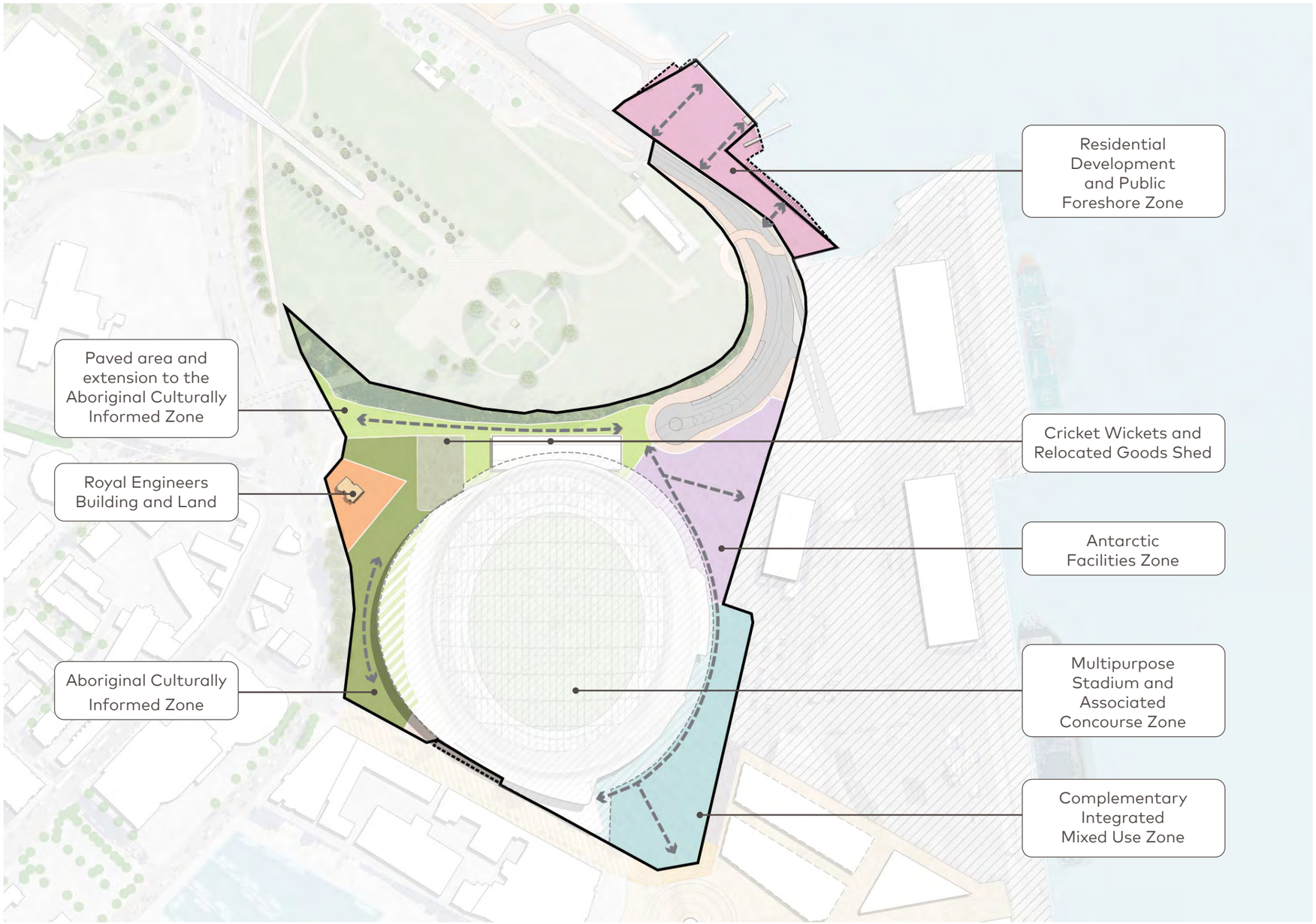


Figure 22: Mac Point Site Plan

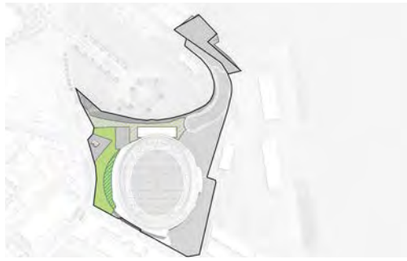
3.1.1 Site Plan

As the central component of the Mac Point redevelopment, this precinct will serve as a hub for recreation, hospitality, commercial, tourism, Antarctic, arts, entertainment and sports opportunities. Activity generated by the multipurpose stadium will be supported across the precinct by complementary commercial and hospitality spaces and distinct but integrated Zones.

Proposed uses within the Mac Point site include, but are not limited to:

- an Aboriginal culturally informed zone, provides for the primary address to the Mac Point precinct and the interface to the Hobart CBD.
- Royal Engineers Building retained and reinforced as a critical part of Hobart's built heritage
- the multipurpose stadium is the precinct's primary event venue hosting a variety of events including major sporting competitions, cultural festivals, music concerts, international artists and the expansion of Hobart's creative and cultural environment.
- a complementary integrated mixed use zone comprising restaurants, cafes, hotels, medical facilities and commercial office spaces.
- Antarctic facilities to enhance Hobart's Antarctic Gateway presence, and also include commercial spaces and connections with the complementary integrated mixed use zone.
- Regatta Point will include residential uses accommodating a variety of tenures and housing opportunities, a new public promenade and food and beverage offerings along the Derwent River.

Proposed active frontages will enhance street and laneway character, support local businesses and activities and encourage pedestrian activity across the site.



3.1.2 Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone

The front face of the site will be an Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone. This area has been prioritised for this use due to its:

- visibility, as the area of the site that locals and visitors are most likely to see and experience
- openness, size, natural light and physical connection to the Cenotaph and green heart of the city in the Queens Domain
- and, most importantly, it is where the original shoreline sits.

The Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone has an approximate area of 8,000m2 with an additional approximate area of 5,000m2 for the paved area and extension to the Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone.

Much of the Mac Point site is reclaimed land, making the western-side of the site an area to carefully protect and manage sensitively to protect the cultural heritage that is likely to lay in the ground below.

Some of this area has been disturbed through previous development over the site's long history, including for infrastructure installation and structures such as the old rail roundhouse. However, there is less evidence of disturbance in other areas making those particularly sensitive and a high priority to protect from disturbance and development.

MPDC had commenced early work to develop a Truth and Reconciliation Park at Mac Point. This included engagement with community in early 2021 and work with members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to start a co-design process to develop design principles, which were intended to inform further engagement with community.

As part of early conversations with members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to inform the development of this Precinct Plan, it became clear that there is a need for a fresh conversation with community around the delivery of an Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone at Mac Point.

The MPDC is engaging with community to:

- share what we have learnt about the site from studying the history and from site investigations.
- seek guidance on what the space should be called, and what the purpose should be.
- explore what opportunities might it present for Aboriginal enterprises to be based on site and for education and storytelling.

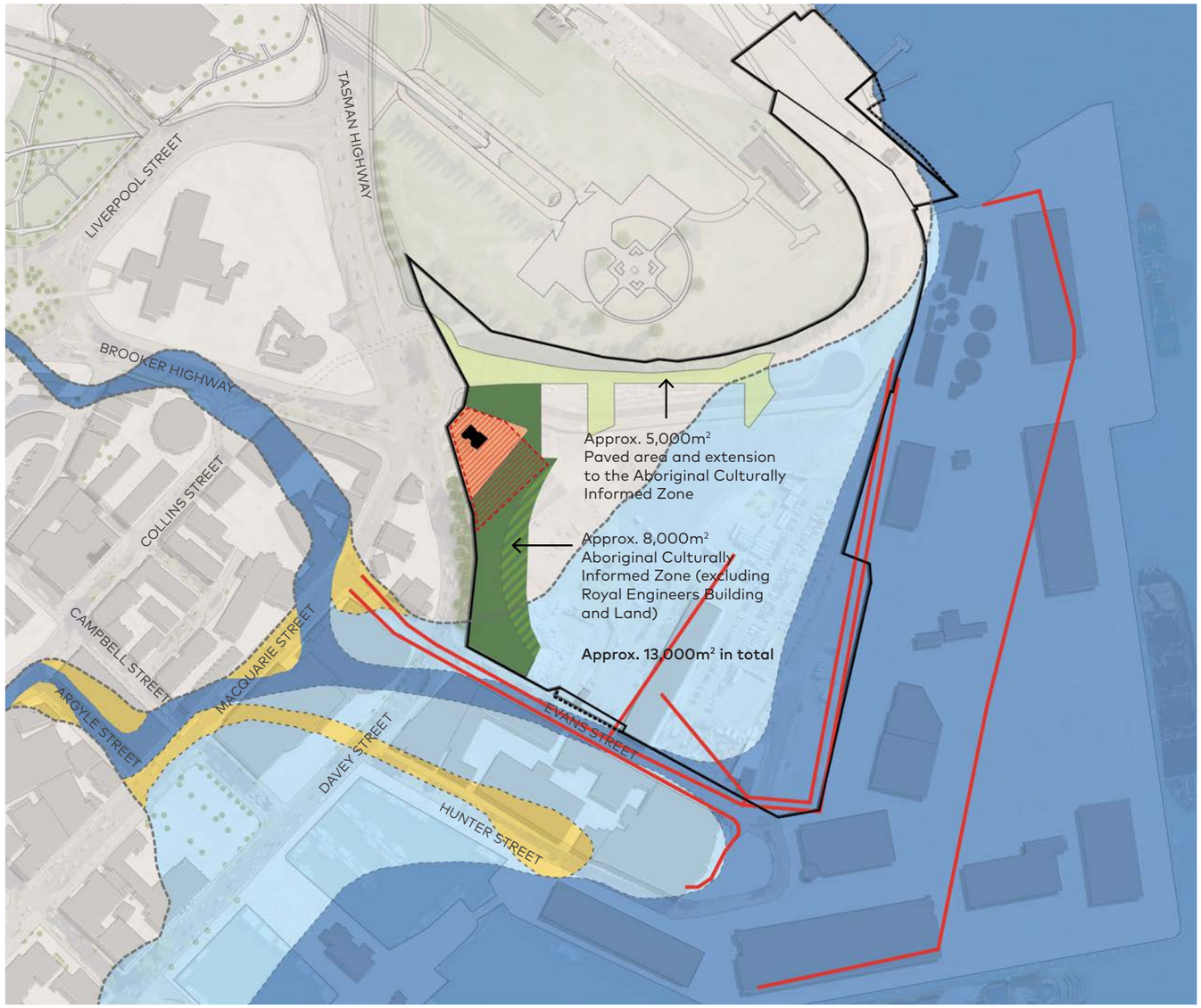
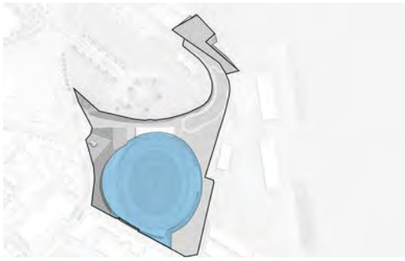


Figure 23: Historical Shoreline with overlay of the Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone



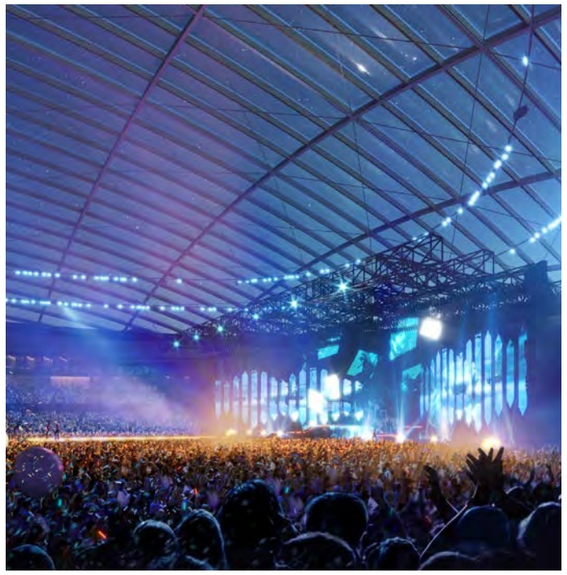


Figure 24: Artist's Impression of the Multipurpose Stadium in concert mode. (Source: Cox Architecture)



Figure 25: Artist's Impression of the view looking towards the South East entry of the Multipurpose Stadium. (Source: Cox Architecture)



Figure 26: Conference, convention and event spaces integrated within the stadium structure - Optus Stadium. (Source: Optus Stadium)



Figure 27: Family orientated events within a stadium precinct - Sydney Royal Easter Show, Sydney Showgrounds. (Source: Fotoeins Fotografie)

3.1.3 Multipurpose Stadium and Associated Concourse Zone

A multipurpose stadium at Mac Point is anticipated to provide Tasmania with a premier year-round event venue, attracting arts, entertainment, cultural, commercial and community events, offering the opportunity to attract and host events at a scale not currently available in the state, including events during off-peak periods.

This stadium footprint provides capacity for the functional requirements included in the business case for the multipurpose stadium, with capacity for flexibility and multipurpose use and management by Stadiums Tasmania.

Mac Point provides the opportunity to establish a fit for purpose stadium on the edge of the Hobart CBD with linkages to existing activity centres. It will be a walkable distance to food, beverage, accommodation and experiences in the city and will have the ability to link to both existing and planned transport services and infrastructure servicing Greater Hobart.

Designing the stadium in collaboration with key stakeholders also provides the opportunity to increase accessibility and deliver tailored facilities to meet the contemporary requirements. This includes supporting accessibility of various events and sporting codes with provisions of ancillary sites such as fitness and medical centres and the incorporation of emerging digital technologies to provide an enhanced stadium experience for spectators, athletes, and artists alike.

The world class facilities of a modern stadium can also be leveraged to create greater opportunities for young Tasmanians, through opening development pathways for athletes to excel and represent their state, encouraging greater engagement in women's sports, exposure to corporate and commercial events, conventions, access to a range of performances and events, opportunities in the development phase, and establishing alignment opportunities with Tasmania's arts and media and communications education programs.

The multipurpose stadium will be an integrated development that will contribute to, and be part of, the broader-precinct purpose, functions and design considerations set out in this plan. These include accessibility, sustainability, wayfinding, to be designed to be part of the character of the site and surrounding areas, and be a key part to establishing Mac Point as a destination.

Modern stadium are well designed inside and out, and part of activated precincts. They should be accessible, connected and integrated.

Many examples exist where this has been successfully achieved by enclosing stadiums in buildings and structures, effectively integrating them into the surrounding built form.

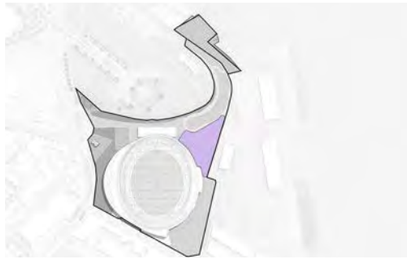




Figure 28: Australia's new ice-breaking research and supply vessel RSV Nuyina mooring at The Australian Antarctic Division's port facilities at Macquarie Wharf. (Source: ABC)



Figure 29: Consolidated research and support offices with purpose built laboratory facilities - Black Mountain Science and Innovation Park, Canberra. (Source: TTW Engineers)

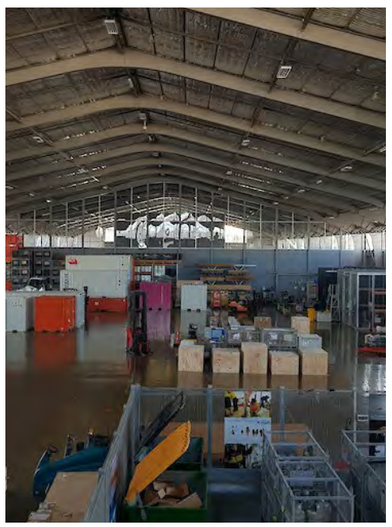


Figure 30: Current Antarctic bio-security, cargo and quarantine facilities at MAC 2 Macquarie Wharf. (Source: AAP)

3.1.4 Antarctic Facilities Zone

The Mac Point redevelopment offers the opportunity to provide facilities to support the operations of Antarctic organisations adjacent to port and logistic infrastructure.

Furthering Hobart's position as a Gateway to the Antarctic has been identified as a significant opportunity to support growth in the economy and job creation. The Antarctic sector provides over 1,185 jobs and an estimated $442 million to the state's economy[1] and the expenditure of Antarctic organisations alone contributes a direct spend of $183.09m to the state in the 2021-22 period[2].

The Antarctic Facilities zone has an approximate footprint of 7,000m^2.

Providing offices and facilities in close proximity to the port could help Tasmania's Antarctic sector further Hobart's position as the pre-eminent gateway of choice to East Antarctica for international Antarctic partners as the Gateway to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean and support business opportunities, economic activity and job creation in the region.

Antarctic sector operations at Mac Point can complement existing facilities in the precinct with the Macquarie No. 2 shed currently supporting Antarctic expedition operations including stevedoring, warehousing, and quarantine facilities, along with berthing of the ice-breaking research and supply vessel RSV Nuyina.

The redevelopment of Macquarie Wharf provides the opportunity to expand existing ports infrastructure including the construction of expanded quay lines to accommodate a permanent berth for the RSV Nuyina and dedicated warehousing facilities.

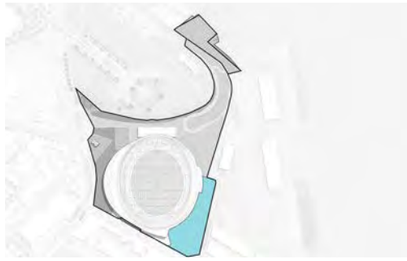
Additional complementary spaces can also be integrated in the surrounding zones to further accommodate the operational requirements of the Antarctic sector, with opportunities to consolidate conferencing and business event facilities within the footprint of the multipurpose stadium. Similarly the plan envisages that there will be complementary relationships between the uses within the Antarctic Facilities Zone and Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone, including commercial, conferencing, accommodation, tourism and hospitality.

This Zone can support office spaces, accommodate organisations and institutions. While not limited to Antarctic-related uses, organisations operating in that sector will be encouraged and prioritised, and consulted when developing design and planning requirements for this Zone.

This Zone will have activated ground floors and is anticipated to include an underground car-park to support the activation of the site and transport options for tenants.

[1] *Cth of Australia,'Maintaining Australia's national interests in Antarctica: Inquiry into Australia's Antarctic Territory - Chapter 6 Economic Opportunities'. June 2018.*

[2] *Tasmanian Government - Department of State Growth,'The Contribution of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Sector to the Tasmanian Economy 2021-22'. November 2023.*



3.1.5 Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone

The Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone will serve as an interface between Mac Point, the Macquarie Wharf Commercial Zone, and Sullivans Cove, providing a collection of boutique commercial, retail and food and beverage spaces and the continuation of the city's urban façade to address the waterfront.

The zone has an approximate footprint of 10,000m^2.

Introducing additional commercial and hospitality spaces across Mac Point provides further capacity for interaction with the site beyond stadium-based events ensuring that Mac Point remains a lively and premier destination that attracts locals and visitors alike year-round.

The Zone can provide opportunities for Tasmanian businesses to thrive, offering spaces for small-scale retail shop fronts, extensive food and beverage facilities including bars, cafes and restaurants, and venues for community events such as markets and pop-ups to support Tasmanian produce and local artisans. The Zone will also serve as a complementary extension to Hobart's creative and cultural environment, affording spaces and places for making and displaying arts and crafts.

Co-location to the stadium also provides a capacity for small businesses to capitalise on shared visitation benefits and high pedestrian foot traffic originating from stadium events. The Zone's close proximity to the stadium can also offer experiences, offerings and broader engagement with the site prior to and after stadium events through an activated ground floor, allowing for staggered crowd dispersal and a reduction in the immediate transport demand during surge periods.

Further co-location benefits can also be derived from the surrounding Macquarie Wharf District and proposed Antarctic Facilities Zone with opportunities for supporting commercial businesses and activity to agglomerate within the Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone.

The adaptability of the Zone also offers the potential for reintegrating and preserving existing commercial and hospitality spaces within the Mac Point site such as the Red Square. The current use and engagement with these spaces can also be used as a precedent for the proposed character of the Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone.

Design of The Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone should be orientated towards providing an urban fabric that supports the pedestrian scale and mobility with a focus on delivering a permeable network of active street frontages and laneways throughout the site.

Producing a pedestrian environment within the design of the Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone reflective of the surrounding context provides a capacity to taper the scale of the stadium against the existing urban framework of the Hobart CBD.

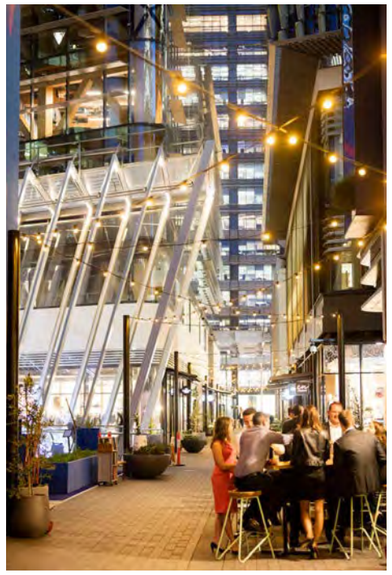


Figure 31: Fine grain retail and hospitality dining - Barangaroo, Sydney (Source: Lendlease)



Figure 32: Encouraging prolonged engagement with the site through complementary entertainment and hospitality spaces - Entertainment Quarter at Moore Park adjacent to the SCG and Allianz Stadium. (Source: Entertainment Quarter)

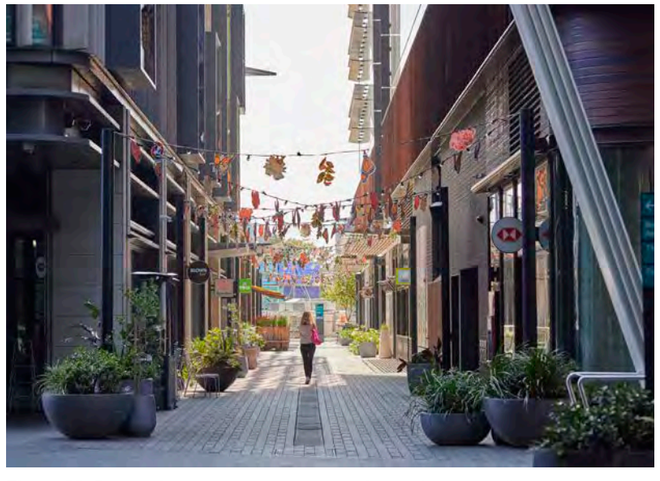


Figure 33: Pedestrian scale development with active street frontages and laneways - Barangaroo Sydney (Source: City of Sydney)



Figure 34: Red Square community event space at Mac Point - Design of the Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone should look to preserve these spaces and encourage similar land uses. (Source: MPDC)

3.1.6 Residential Development and Public Foreshore Zone

An expanded Mac Point Precinct provides the opportunity to complete the urban renewal of the site and respond to current community needs to contribute to housing supply.

The residential development provides the opportunity to create high amenity, medium density apartments with an open northeast aspect of the Derwent River.

The development will be sympathetic to the stepped topography of the foreshore and will be delivered with an activated ground floor of commercial, retail and/or food and beverage uses and enhanced public foreshore to open up and encourage public use of the space.

It will have well designed pedestrian walkways connecting it to the main activity area of the site, access to public open space and public transport connections nearby.

The foreshore will remain publicly accessible and provide a reinvigorated waterfront and enhance the amenity of a space that currently has limited year-round use.

The housing will be a mixture of:

- affordable housing to support key workers in the health sector. This will be delivered working with the Department of Health and Homes Tasmania.
- apartments for release to the general market to provide a mixed-use environment.

It will offer improved accessibility and amenity to the existing jetties and ramp for the launching of small vessels.

Facilities to support community spaces and the Royal Hobart Regatta can be integrated into the development, which will be progressed as part of the design phase.

Early feasibility work has been undertaken for the site including considering access to required services (such as power and water), environmental conditions (such as sea level rise, and flora and fauna investigations), site inspection to inform a desk top heritage assessment, and consideration of potential contamination/remediation works.

The activation of the residential development at Regatta Point will be informed by urban design guidelines, including: precinct and foreshore connectivity, energy efficiency, access to open space, water sensitive urban design, the use of natural light as well as the sustainability principles and drivers of the urban renewal of Mac Point outlined in this plan.

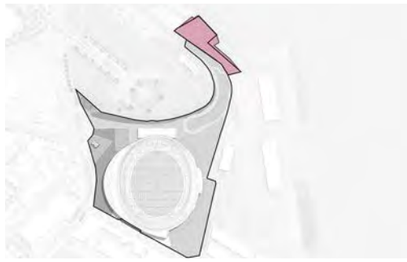




Figure 36: Indicative sketch of Residential Development and Public Foreshore. (Source: Cox Architecture)

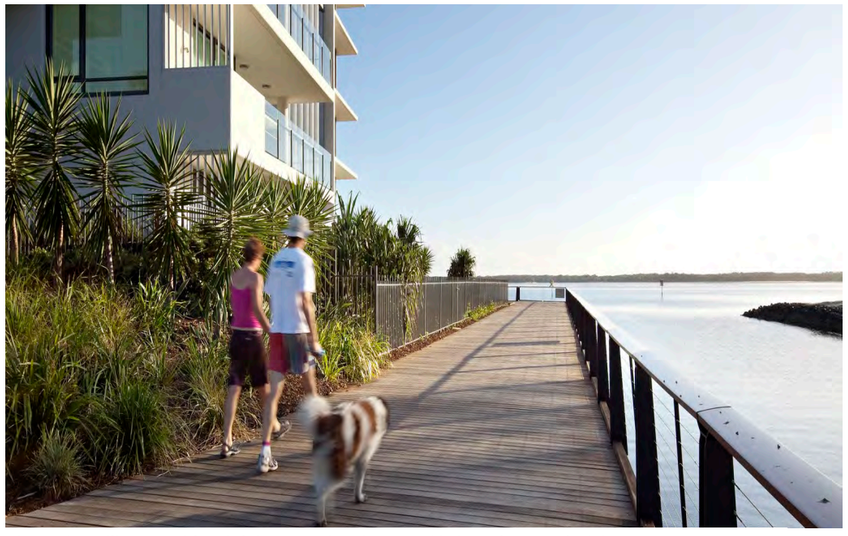


Figure 35: Allisee Residential Community. Source: Christopher Frederick Jones



Figure 37: Clifton House Architecture Studio. (Source: Jaime Diaz,Berrio Photography)



Figure 38: Artist's Impression of Residential Development and Public Foreshore

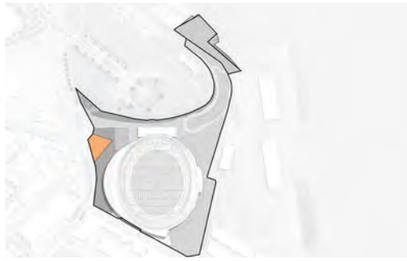




Figure 39: The Royal Engineers Building at Mac Point. (Source: Macquarie Point Development Corporation)



Figure 40: Interactive public art displays showcasing significant historical information and images - The Coal Loader Park, Sydney. (Source: North Sydney Council)

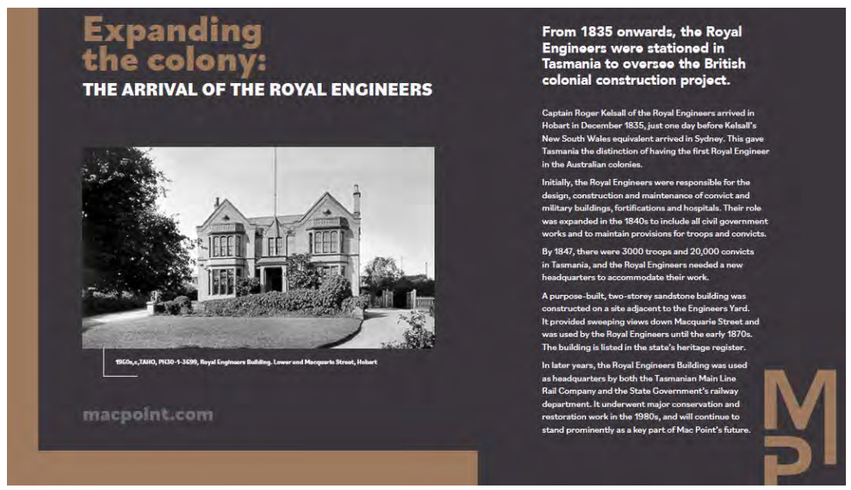


Figure 41: Mac Point Heritage Interpretation Board. (Source: Macquarie Point Development Corporation)

3.1.7 Royal Engineers Building and Grounds

Mac Point has a rich history of supporting a diverse range of influential activities and events that have played a significant role in Hobart's early colonial development and the progression of the state.

The Royal Engineers Building is a reminder of this early history, and remains an important part of the Mac Point site. The Royal Engineers Building is a two storey Tudor revival building that was established in 1847 to serve as the headquarters of the Royal Engineers.

The Royal Engineers Buildings was constructed over 170 years ago. The building commands a dominant position within the Hobart CBD, acting as a reminder of Hobart's early colonial history and carrying esteemed significance amongst the surrounding built form.

The Royal Engineers Building provides an opportunity to share the history of Mac Point through integration of public art displays showcasing sculptures, photos and written information about significant points along Mac Point's historical time-line.

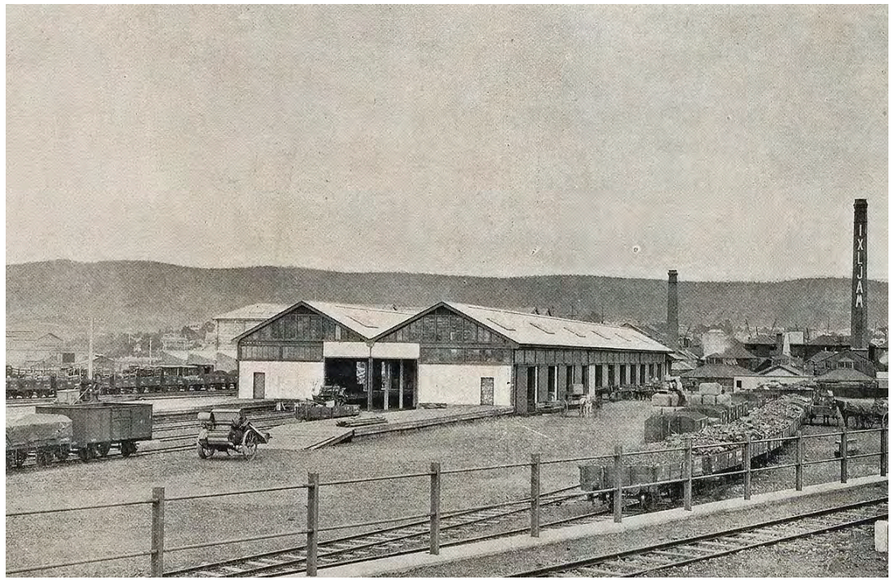


Figure 42: The Weekly Courier, Thursday 23 December 1915, p23 New Goods Shed. (Source: Macquarie Point Development Corporation)



Figure 43: Artists Impression of The Goods Shed relocation and preservation. (Source: Cox Architecture)

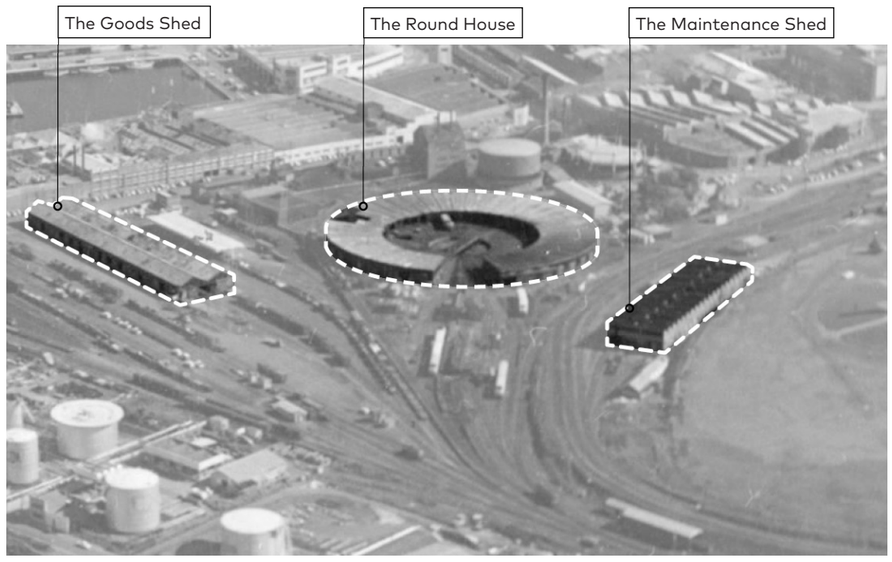


Figure 44: Hobart Yards in the 1960s. Uncredited, Stations of Tasmania. (Source: Macquarie Point Development Corporation)

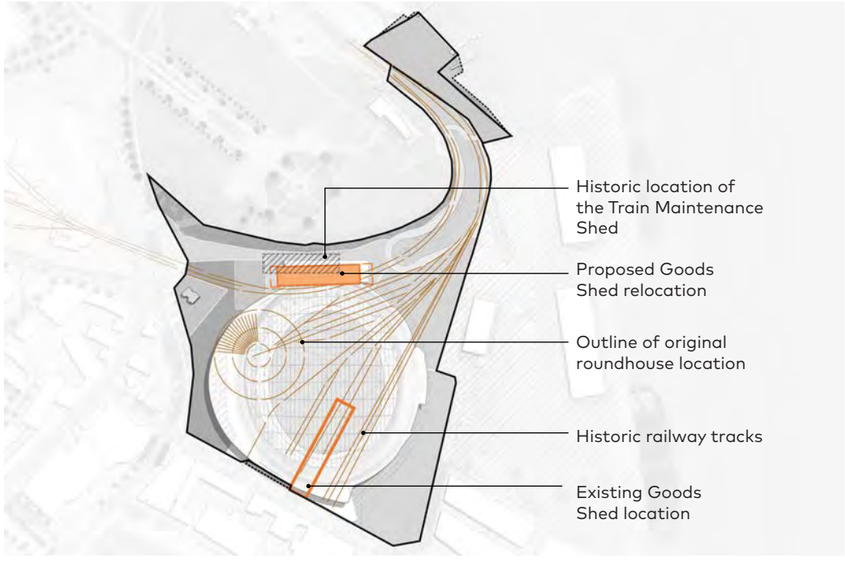


Figure 45: The Good Shed preservation and relocation diagram (Source: Cox Architecture)

3.1.8 The Goods Shed

The Goods Shed was built c.1914-16, during World War One. It was historically used for the storage and loading of goods onto trains, and is a remnant of one of the site's important historic roles, which was as the Hobart Rail Yards. The Goods Shed is listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register, and Schedule 1 of the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme 1997 as a place of local significance.

To support the redevelopment of the site a new location has been identified for the Goods Shed where it's connection to place can remain, heritage can be honoured and community activation can continue.

The identified location will reposition the Goods Shed with the first railway line constructed in 1876 and will place it close to the historic location of the Train Maintenance Shed, which was a structure of similar type and size that was part of the Hobart Rail Yards. This relocation will continue to honour the historical precedent for railway buildings beside the Escarpment, and the Goods Shed will be further enhanced with supportive interpretation to highlight the original platform edge and rail lines.

3.2 Macquarie Wharf

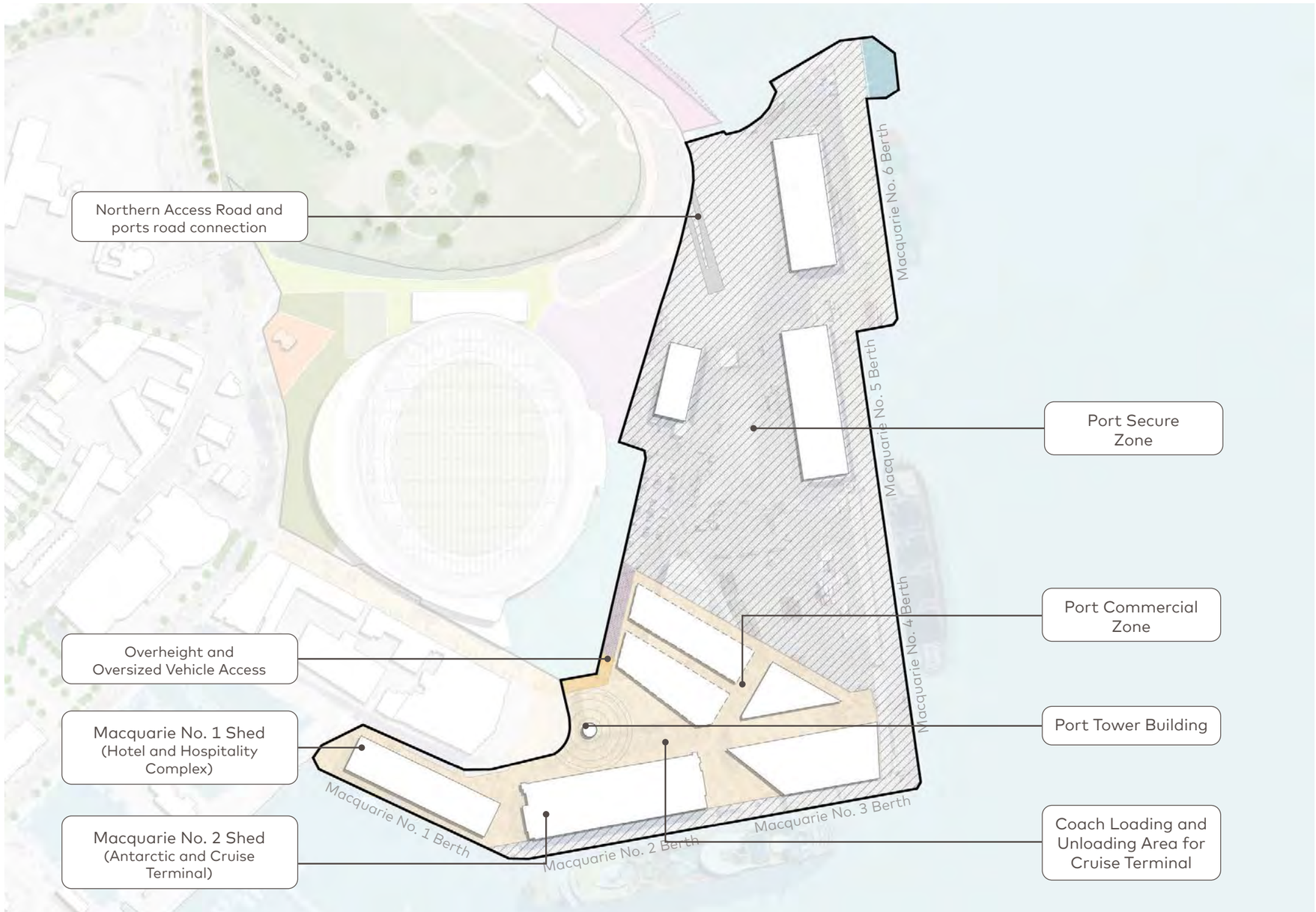
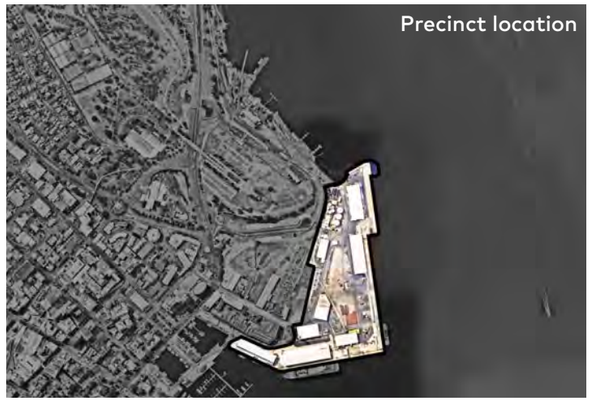


Figure 46: Macquarie Wharf Precinct Plan



Characterised by a working port along the foreshore at Mac Point, this precinct supports a variety of imports and exports, commercial fishing, Antarctic scientific endeavour, and a cruise ship terminal.

Proposed redevelopments for this precinct involve upgrades and the expansion of existing port infrastructure to enable growth in the tourism, trade and Antarctic sectors along with the introduction of commercial opportunities and parking within a civic plaza at the end of Evans Street reintroducing pedestrian access to the foreshore at Mac Point.

Macquarie Wharf will continue to be supported by Evans Street and a new access road from the north.

The northern area of the wharf is the Port Secure Zone, which is a carefully managed and controlled space with limited access.

The southern Port Commercial Zone will have a permeable boundary with the Mac Point site, and support the movement of people between the two spaces.

3.3 Huon Quays

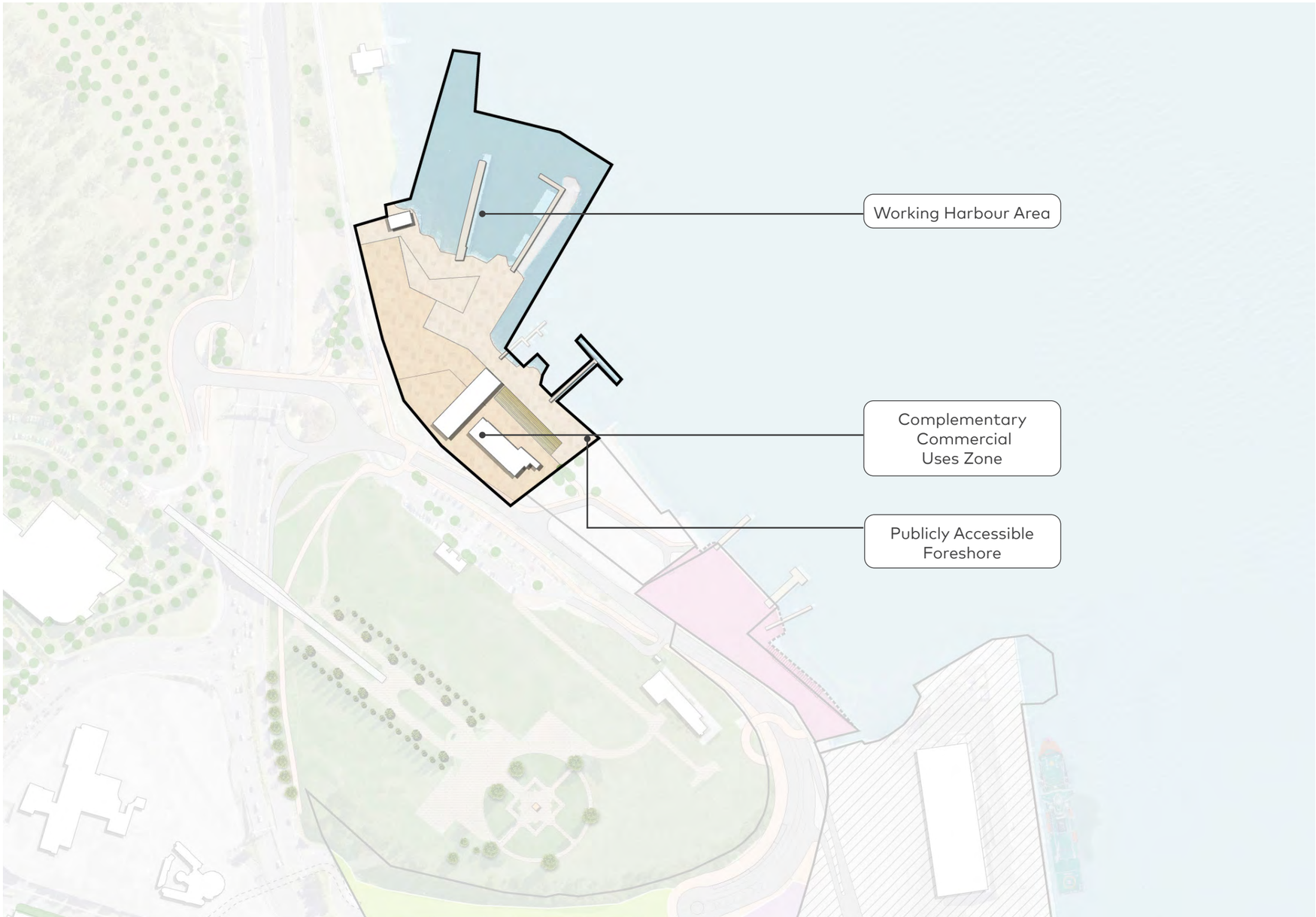


Figure 47: Huon Quays Precinct Plan

Huon Quays Precinct Boundary



The original home port of the HMAS Huon this precinct consist of the Domain Shipyard and a range of heritage structures on the Hobart waterfront that currently serves as a backpacker accommodation and function centre.

Proposed redevelopment of the precinct would capitalise on and celebrate the site's historic and natural assets, providing a comprehensive cultural and commercial venue supporting a marina, galleries and start-ups. Public recreation and wellness spaces would also be encouraged along the Derwent River foreshore.

3.4 Anticipated staged delivery of the Precinct



Figure 48: Phasing Plan

Sequencing the development of the Zones across the Precinct will support:

- coordination and safety
- access for the equipment and machinery that will be required, while minimising disruptions to existing roads, such as Evans Street
- the establishment of clear construction areas and avoid overlapping work areas

The Precinct is anticipated to be delivered in three broad stages. These may overlap.

Stage 1

- Upgrade of Macquarie Wharf, with the immediate priority being the upgrade of Wharf 6 to berth Australia's Antarctic icebreaker, *RSV Nuyina*
- Northern Access Road
- Commencement of work on the multipurpose stadium
- Upgrades of Wharves 4 and 5 to support polar and research programs, defence support and additional commercial opportunities
- Commencement of the underground carpark within the Antarctic Facilities Zone to streamline the construction phase of the stadium

Stage 2

- Residential Development and Public Foreshore
- Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone
- Development of Port Commercial Zone

Stage 3

- Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone
- Antarctic Facilities Zone
- Huon Quays

Temporary activation of the site will continue to support current uses, such as Red Square, and events where possible around the construction zones.

3.5 Moving to, around and through the site

3.5.1 Transport

Initial transport planning investigations to support the Precinct Plan development include:

- developing a concept for a northern access road
- event-day public transport guiding principles, transport infrastructure and concept

Key future transport work

- one concept that has been raised is a pedestrian connection between Collins Street and Mac Point, as shown in the site visual plan.
- the Precinct Plan will inform whole-of-site traffic and transport modelling and planning.

3.5.2 Accessibility

The precinct and public developments will be designed to be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including parking and drop-off facilities.

Consultation with organisations and people with lived experience will inform the built form and design of the precinct, including considerations to inform the multipurpose stadium.

This will provide opportunities to seek input and guidance into designs, and to create sensory-safe spaces that support participation.

The range of proposed activities and developments within the expanded Mac Point site requires the implementation of a cohesive wayfinding plan with consistent imagery and directional language to efficiently manage converging uses and traffic throughout the precincts.

The development of an advanced multipurpose stadium at Mac Point also requires further attention to wayfinding programs to elevate the spectator's event day experience. This will support the effective management of crowd circulation to, from and throughout the stadium and providing clear and efficient directional information to assigned seating, amenities, transport links and associated events. Effective stadium signage systems must also consider the operational requirements of major events with separate strategies for back-of-house areas and drop-off zones.

3.5.3 Wayfinding

Digital Wayfinding Systems

Integration of digital technologies can further improve the efficiency and accessibility of the Mac Point wayfinding plan by providing adaptable and interactive systems to reflect the changing demands of a multi-use stadium and mixed-use precincts.

Video screens and interactive kiosks can offer specific wayfinding directions and real-time information such as current event promotions, walking distances, congestion, public transport timetables or emergency alerts, while further interactive elements such as QR codes, Near-Filed Communication or augmented reality displays can allow uses to access and carry personalised visual directions across the site. Interactive digital systems also offer accessibility benefits through the ability to provide information in multiple languages to assist visitors, or as audible directions for patrons with visual impairments.

Data can also be collected from digital systems to provide insight into crowd flows, mobility, and bottlenecks along with when and what venues receive high visitation, allowing the wayfinding strategy for Mac Point to be continuously improved and tailored to meet changing demands of different events or encourage further engagement with the site.

Analogue Wayfinding Systems

In addition to digital wayfinding opportunities, there is also a requirement to develop an analogue wayfinding system that encourages people to navigate throughout the precinct.

A good wayfinding system will allow people to reach their destination easily and quickly by providing the cues and information to know where you are, where you are headed, and how best to get there; and recognise when you have reached your destination.

A digital wayfinding system could be supported by a coordinated approach to analogue wayfinding systems including usable and up to date maps and signage throughout the precinct. Considering the entire journey, wayfinding and signage locations should be found at key destinations throughout the precinct including public transport stops and entrances to the stadium. Signs should be placed primarily at decision points and along key routes throughout Mac Point as reassurance.

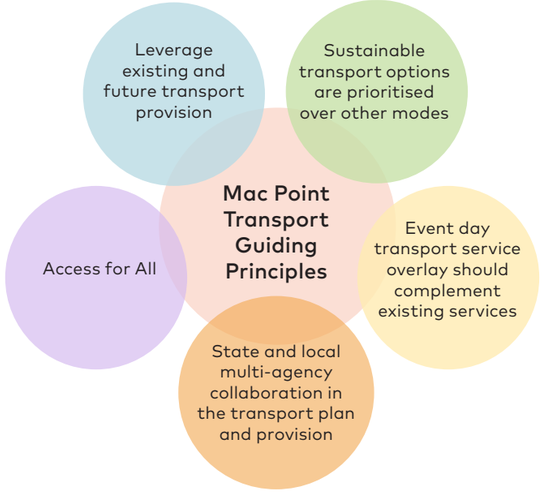
To make signage easy to understand, wayfinding systems must be inclusive as possible by providing information that is accessible for mobility impaired, blind, and low vision users. Signage should be designed with key principles of universal design such as ergonomic signage design, standard typefaces, a range of languages, and the use of logos and international symbols.

3.6 Event day public transport

The location of Mac Point on the edge of Hobart's CBD presents a unique opportunity for the Precinct and associated transport access plan to support economic development, leverage existing transport networks and act as a catalyst for uplifting existing infrastructure and services, providing more sustainable transport choices and opportunity for people across Greater Hobart both on event and non-event days.

3.6.1 Guiding principles

Guiding principles for the development of the Mac Point Transport Plan were established in conjunction with key stakeholders. The principles focus on utilising and enhancing sustainable (non-car) transport modes for site access – including walking, cycling, other forms of micromobility, public transport. Public transport includes existing bus and ferry services, rapid and event buses. Existing on and off-street parking capacity around the Hobart CBD will be utilised by spectators. Parking, drop-off / pick-up and ride share are all considered car-based mode shares, as is the walking component of the spectator's journey using these modes.



3.6.2 Demand Identification

Based upon the mode share planning process and discussions with key government stakeholders, it was agreed for the purposes of stadium planning to establish the following transport mode shares:

- Base Target - non-car mode share of 60%
- Stretch Target - non-car mode share of 70%.

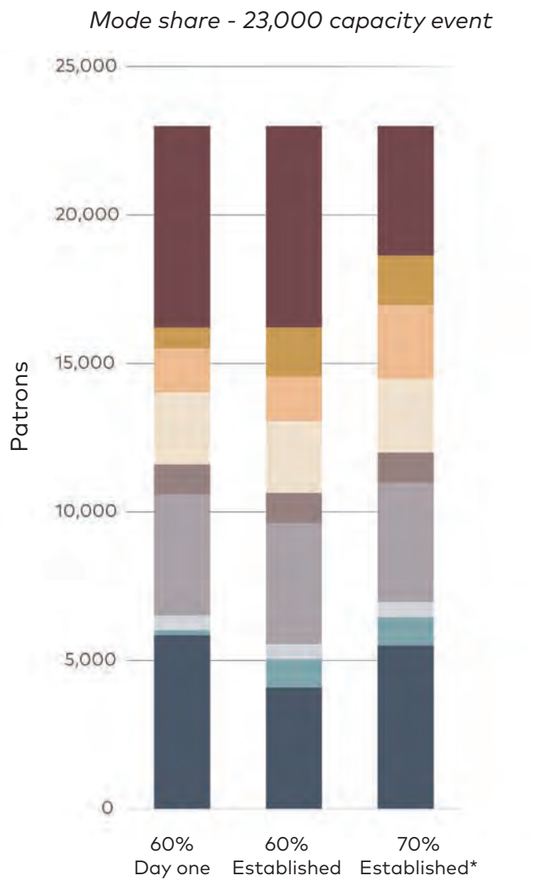


Figure 49: Mode Shares for a 23,000 capacity event under the 'Day One,' 'Established,' and 'Ultimate' scenarios. Source: WSP Consulting Event Transport Access Study for Macquarie Point Precinct

3.6.3 Transport Infrastructure and Staged Implementation

Various state and local government transport infrastructure and service projects are planned to be implemented alongside the development of the Mac Point Precinct. These projects include a Rapid Bus network, expansion of the ferry network and improvements to active transport infrastructure.

Delivery of the planned transport infrastructure and service improvements (Rapid Bus, ferry, walking and cycling) is forecast to be comparatively effective for regular events. Once delivered, event buses could be reduced by 40%. In scenario testing, synergies were identified between the delivery of the Ferry Network Expansion, and implementation of the Rapid Bus initiative.

Initial analysis has demonstrated merit in bringing some aspects of the future transport infrastructure and service spending forward, ahead of Day One stadium operation. To support and enable meeting the transport mode share targets outlined, an assessment on the essential "need to haves" on Day One of stadium operation in 2029 was undertaken, some key items summarised below:

* Established - Event with all proposed transport network upgrades implemented

Walking and cycling

Upgrades including delivery of safe and separated walking and cycling infrastructure to the stadium precinct via the waterfront, within the Hobart CBD, and a shared pedestrian and cycle connection to access proposed Rapid Bus stops on the Tasman Highway, and the Collins Street active transport corridor.

Bus

Delivery of the proposed Rapid Bus Network and associated bus priority measures (full or at minimum partial implementation), general access bus route timetable uplifts, and an event bus network and associated infrastructure including and event bus hub within the precinct, bus staging areas, park and ride facilities (scale of this linked with Rapid Bus network delivery).

Coach

Coaches will connect regional Tasmania to the stadium and offer private charters for groups, sporting clubs, and communities to attend events. To accommodate coaches, Queens Domain is the preferred drop-off, parking, and pickup area, with a walking route via the Bridge of Remembrance.

Ferry

Brooke Street Ferry Wharf improvements, event timetable uplift and delivery of ferry network expansion (full or partial implementation).

Road network

Establishment of traffic management area including parking and shared mobility exclusion zones around stadium, local road and property access operations and cruise terminal operations overlap plan.

3.6.4 Transport Concept

The overall stadium transport concept for site operation is outlined below and adjacent diagram. Initial analysis has highlighted merit in progressing the development and staged implementation of the Rapid Bus network and ferry network expansion, as well as walking and cycling upgrades, in advance of the stadium opening.

Transport Modes

- **walking and cycling** – Dispersed pedestrian movement to various modes.
- **bus** – rapid bus stops on Brooker Highway / Tasman Highway, connected into pedestrian and cycle access bridge, an event bus hub located to the northeast of the stadium including associated passenger amenity and driver facilities and bus staging area on the approach road to the stadium.
- **ferry** - wharf established at Regatta Point and additional capacity at Brooke Street.
- **coach** – Queens Domain is the preferred area for drop-off, parking, and pickup, with a walking route available via the Bridge of Remembrance.
- **taxi/ride share** – taxis/ride share to utilise existing facilities located throughout the Hobart CBD.
- **car parking, drop-off / pick-up** - establishment of traffic management area in stadium vicinity including no public car access and drop-off within immediate precinct.



Figure 50: Overall high-level transport concept developed

Ferry Stop
Potential ferry location
Public parking
Ride share/drop-off zone
Taxi rank zone
Major pedestrian corridors
Secondary pedestrian corridors
Major cycling corridor
Major shared zone corridor
Shared bridge link *(Concept Only)*
Manage local access
Bicycle and scooter parking
Temporary bicycle and scooter parking
Shared Mobility Hub
CBD bus priority
Hobart City Interchange
Bus turning circle
Event Bus Plaza
High Sensitivity Area

3.7 Road Infrastructure

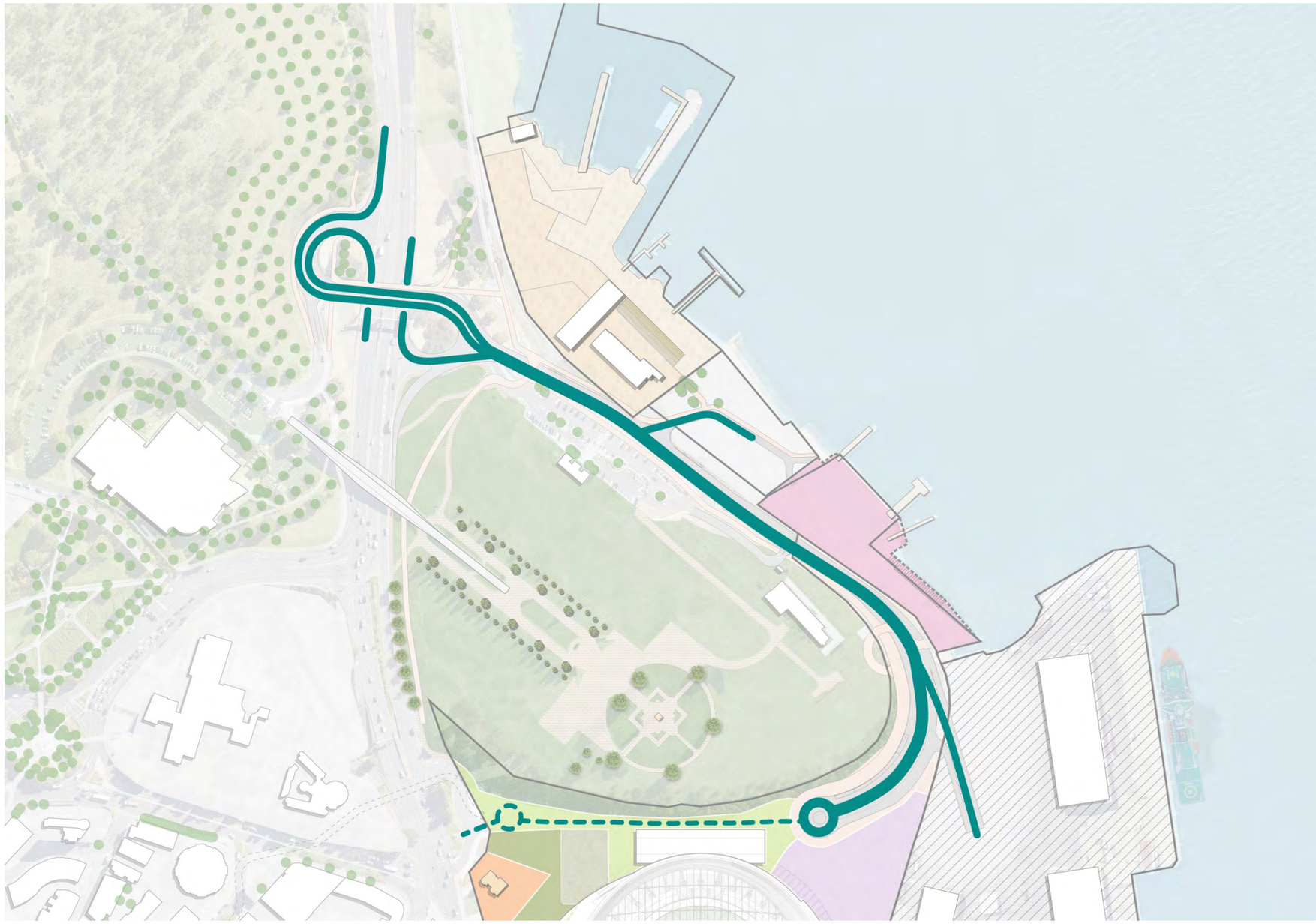


Figure 51: Proposed layout and connections for the Northern Access Road

3.7.1 Northern Access Road

A northern entry point to provide access to the Port of Hobart and Mac Point is a project listed in the Hobart City Deal. The connection is important to support ongoing port operations, in particular Antarctic logistics as part of Tasmania's role as a Gateway to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean.

The northern access will also be key enabling infrastructure for future passenger transport planning, will improve access to the Regatta Point foreshore area, pedestrian and cycling links, and support access to and from Mac Point. The proposed road will also maintain access to parking in the Cenotaph area.

To support the development of this Precinct Plan, MPDC and Infrastructure Tasmania have collaborated to progress a concept for the northern access road as illustrated in the site plan. Engagement with stakeholders has commenced.

Importantly, Evans Street, to the south of the site, will remain in use. The new road will provide a second access point to the port from the north. It will also support event-day passenger transport services.

3.8 Implementation

As outlined in the introduction, this Precinct Plan has been informed by feedback from the community, meetings with local businesses and organisations, expert advice, and collaboration with delivery partners.

The Precinct will be delivered in three high level stages as set out in Section 3.4 of the Plan. The first stage will include seeking planning approval for the multipurpose stadium through the Project of State Significance process, after it was declared as such by the Tasmanian Parliament in November 2023. The Tasmanian Planning Commission will undertake an integrated assessment of the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium project in accordance with the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993*.

The implementation of the Precinct Plan will be supported by:

- a Site Development Plan, which will guide the historical interpretation of the spatial and built form and character of Sullivans Cove through new developments.
- Master Planning, which will develop more detailed requirements to guide the development of the Mac Point site Zones set out in this Plan, support accessibility and permeability across the site, and will inform a request to seek updates to the current planning requirements.
- a Transport Study that will further the transport mode analysis that informed the Precinct Plan.
- Urban Design Guidelines to support development on site.
- further engagement with the Aboriginal community to guide the development of the Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone.
- planning, engagement, and development in keeping with the Green Star Communities accredited system to target a 5 to 6 star rating.
- progressing an integrated approach to the design and development of a multipurpose stadium on site.
- delivering an updated Site Infrastructure Strategy.
- delivering independently audited reviews of remediation on site in keeping with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act 2012.
- delivering our sustainability principles and continuing to work collaboratively with our delivery partners to progress the Residential Development and Public Foreshore Zone, Antarctic Facilities Zones, Complementary Integrated Mixed Use Zone
- continuing to manage and maintain European heritage on site, including the Royal Engineers Building and yard and the Goods Shed's connection to the site.



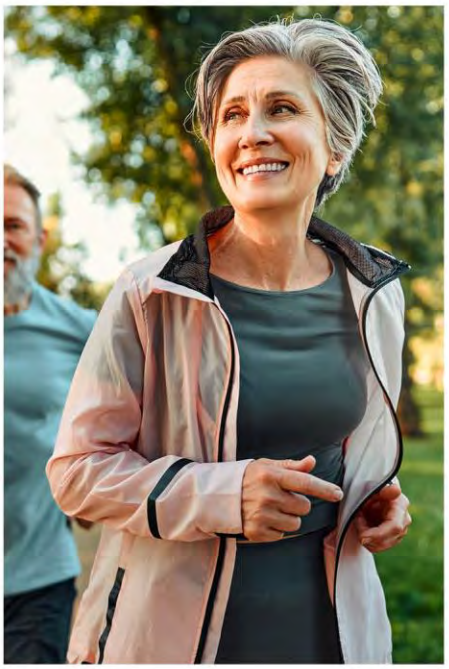


MACQUARIE POINT
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Ticket to Wellbeing

Program Guidelines









Active Tasmania

Department of State Growth

Tasmanian Government

Contents

Ticket to Wellbeing Program 1

About the program 1

Definitions 1

Who is eligible for a voucher? 1

What can a voucher be used for? 2

How to apply for a voucher 2

How can a voucher be used? 2

Organisations eligible to be an Approved Activity Provider 2

Voucher redemption 4

Ticket to Wellbeing Program

About the program

Ticket to Wellbeing is a Tasmanian Government initiative designed to reduce the cost of sport and active recreation membership and/or registration for eligible older people.

Ticket to Wellbeing provides two $100 vouchers towards the cost of sport and active recreation membership and/or registration for older people aged 65 and older who are listed on a Services Australia Health Care or Pensioner Concession Card.

The key objective of Ticket to Wellbeing is to increase the number of older Tasmanians participating in sport and active recreation and enhance their opportunity for social connection.

The program runs on a financial year. Vouchers must be given to an Approved Activity Provider to redeem by 1 June 2025.

Definitions

For the purpose of these guidelines, the following definitions apply:

Sport is a human activity involving physical exertion and skill as the primary focus of the activity, with elements of competition where rules and patterns of behaviour governing the activity exist formally through organisations and is generally accepted as a sport (Australian Sports Commission).

Active recreation is activities engaged in for the purpose of relaxation, health and wellbeing or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion, and the primary focus on human activity.

An Approved Activity Provider is a Sport or Active Recreation provider that has been approved by Active Tasmania to accept and redeem Ticket to Wellbeing vouchers from participants.

Who is eligible for a voucher?

Applicants must be:

- living in Tasmania
- aged 65 years and over at the time of application
- be listed on a valid Services Australia Health Care or Pensioner Concession Card.

What can a voucher be used for?

A voucher can be used toward the cost of club membership or registration fees at Tasmanian sport or active recreation organisations that are listed as an Approved Activity Provider.

A searchable list of Approved Activity Providers is regularly updated and made available on the Ticket to Wellbeing website.

Vouchers cannot be used for:

- individual equipment items or uniforms
- court fees or match day fees
- travel to and from activities
- programs that run for less than six weeks.

Ticket to Wellbeing vouchers can only be used or redeemed by Approved Activity Providers.

How to apply for a voucher

Applicants can apply online with a valid email address.

Where the applicant has difficulties applying online (due to no internet or email address), seeking assistance from a friend, family member or local activity provider is encouraged.

Once the applicant has submitted their email address, they will receive an email with a link to the application form. After completing the form, two voucher codes will be sent to the nominated email.

Assistance with online applications is available at 1800 252 476.

How can a voucher be used?

Voucher codes can be provided to an Approved Activity Provider when a participant registers with a provider. The Approved Activity Provider will reduce membership or registration fees by up to $100 per voucher.

If the full membership fee is less than $100, vouchers can only be used for the actual cost of the membership or registration. For example, if membership costs $80, the voucher will cover the whole amount. The remaining $20 cannot be used at another provider.

If the membership fee is more than $100, you can choose to pay the rest out of pocket or use your second voucher. For example, if full memberships costs $150, the first voucher will cover $100 and you will pay $50 out of pocket or you can use the second voucher to cover the remaining $50.

If you are using two vouchers at one activity provider, the vouchers will cover membership fees up to $200. For example, if full membership costs $150, the vouchers will cover $150. If full membership costs $250, the vouchers will cover $200 and you will be required to pay the additional $50.

Organisations eligible to be an Approved Activity Provider

To be an Approved Activity Provider, all organisations must:

- have appropriate processes in place to ensure compliance with the *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013* **AND** meet the following criteria.

Sporting clubs must be:

- incorporated, not-for-profit entities
- a provider of a sport recognised by the Australian Sports Commission
- affiliated to the relevant state or national sporting organisation.

A sporting club must also demonstrate that it provides a program with a minimum six weeks of activity.

All Approved Activity Providers must:

- ensure that all coaches, referees, first aid officers, and other relevant staff and volunteers hold the relevant skills, experience or qualifications for low-risk activities they provide, and/or appropriate accreditation for high-risk activities (specifically swimming and fitness activities)
- hold current Certificates of Currency for professional indemnity and public liability insurance policies appropriate to the type and level of activities being delivered.

If there is no recognised state sporting organisation/association for a recognised sport in Tasmania, a not-for-profit or for-profit provider can apply to be an Approved Activity Provider when it meets certain requirements. These include:

- holding an ABN or be incorporated, if it is a business
- having appropriate member safety policies and processes
- providing a program with a minimum six weeks of activity.

Private sports providers (for-profit businesses) must be:

- a registered business
- be affiliated or have an agreement with a recognised State or National Sporting Organisation or association for a sport or active recreation activity that the business provides.

Other activity providers (such as dance, yoga studios) must:

- provide a copy of their current Public Liability Insurance
- provide a list of instructors with their qualifications and their status regarding their registration to work with vulnerable people.

All gymnasiums/fitness centres (including those with aquatic facilities) must:

- be a registered business with an ABN
- provide a copy of their current Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance certificate
- ensure that instructing staff have the appropriate qualifications.

Sport types not recognised by the Australian Sports Commission

If an organisation is providing a sport that is not recognised by the Australian Sports Commission, advice should be sought from Active Tasmania by contacting Ticket to Wellbeing prior to applying at tickettowellbeing@active.tas.gov.au or 1800 252 476.

Voucher redemption

For a voucher presented, the Approved Activity Provider will reduce the participant's membership or registration fee by up to $100.

Each Approved Activity Provider will nominate a person responsible for redeeming Ticket to Wellbeing vouchers. The person responsible for voucher redemption will receive an email with a link to their club's redemption website, login details and redemption instructions.

Redeemed fees should be paid into the bank account provided within 10 business days of redeeming a voucher.

Terms and conditions setting out the agreed terms for an Approved Activity Provider are available.

Active Tasmania

Department of State Growth
TAS 7000 Australia

Phone: 1800 252 476

Email: tickettowellbeing@active.tas.gov.au

Web: www.tickettowellbeing.tas.gov.au

TASMANIA

PREMIER OF TASMANIA

11 October 2024

Simon Wood MP
Chair
House of Assembly
Estimates Committee A
Email: ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Chair

APPROPRIATION BILLS 2024-25

Thank you for your letter of 24 September 2024 requesting additional information following examination of my portfolio by House of Assembly Estimates Committee A.

Premier

Q1. Question 1: Can you table DPAC's savings strategies? Answer:

- The Budget Efficiency Dividend to be achieved by DPAC is $969,000 in 2024-25, $1.937 million in 2025-26 increasing to a structural reduction of$2.905 million in 2026-27.
- The Department is undertaking an Establishment Management Project to improve how it sets its salary budgets and to optimise its allocation of staffing resources to meet Government priorities, including all new commitments funded in the 2024-25 Budget.
- Initial work from this project has identified that budget efficiencies can be achieved through funding staffing establishments based on workload variation ie on how the staffing establishment is actually being paid. Changing the basis of the staffing budgets to this methodology will deliver savings on the Departments 2024-25 Budget in excess of the $969,000 target.
- This is not a vacancy control process and will not result in any job losses nor will this process impact on the delivery of any key Government priorities.
- Further work is continuing through this project to optimise the Department's management of staffing resources and associated budget allocations.
- The Department will achieve its full budget efficiency dividend targets across the forward estimates.

Q2. Question 2: Can you table the staffing allocation for political parties and independents by employee expenses and FTEs?

- The attachment titled Ministerial & Electorate Office staff and salary details, provides the staffing allocation for Ministerial and Electorate Office staff as at 30 June 2024.
- Ministerial and Electorate Office staff and salary details are routinely disclosed on the Department of Premier and Cabinet's website (Department of Premier and Cabinet (dpac.tas.gov.au)) in April (for data up to 31 March) and October (for data up to 30 September) each year.

Q3. Will the Government commit to the Commonwealth Workplace Gender Equality Reporting (WEGA) program?

- In 2023, a number of Tasmanian Government agencies signed up to participate in a WGEA public sector reporting trial.
- For many jurisdictions, including Tasmania, there were several issues identified with the trial, including the amount of reporting required and inconsistencies in definitions and data collection methods across jurisdictions.
- Tasmania continues to participate in the Reporting Gender Data Group led by WGEA.
- This Group will be developing a workplan, data governance and privacy framework, and timeline for nationally consistent reporting.
- Tasmania looks forward to continuing to improve its data collection and reporting methods, with a view to expanding its reporting on workplace gender equality.

Q4. What are the cost estimates to date for all options considered for the moving of the Goods Shed?

- Planning for the relocation of the Goods Shed is at preliminary stage and will involve market testing and working through the options available.
- As noted in the Hearing, these include working through dismantling and reassembling the shed, or potentially moving the complete structure.
- Market analysis will be required to resolve the most appropriate and cost-efficient option.

Q5. What are the cost estimates to date for all considered options for the construction of the underground carpark?

- As noted in the Hearing, the construction of the car park which will service the whole of precinct and is not specific to the Multipurpose Stadium, is intended to be taken to market for delivery.
- Pricing and bids will be assessed through the market-testing process.

Q6. **Was DPAC engaged at any point in relation to the advice provided to TT-Line that it did not need approval to pay an additional $80 million to RMC? If so, what was DPACs advice or input?**

- DPAC was not engaged in relation to advice provided to the State-owned Company TT-Line about an additional payment made to Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC).

Q7. How much public money was spent in the 2023-24 financial year on Facebook or Instagram advertising?

The total public money spent in 2023-24 financial year on Facebook or Instagram advertising was $108,360, with $73,414 expended from the Ministerial and Parliamentary Support appropriation and $34,946 from the Department of Premier and Cabinet appropriation.

2023-24 financial year	Ministerial and Parliamentary Support $	Department of Premier and Cabinet $	Total $
Totals	73,414	34,946	108,360

Q8. Is content such as "felt bad pouring the red out" being promoted using taxpayer funds?

- The content in question was promoted, as a cost-effective measure that promoted five key Government policy initiatives, namely:
  - Half price public transport;
  - Additional medical services;
  - Cheaper energy bills;
  - Upgraded health infrastructure; and
  - Greater access to housing.
- Ads are non-political and allow the Government to inform Tasmanians about opportunities that stem from Government policy, including cost of living supports.
- In regards to one particular ad raised by Ms Dow; on the 28th of this year, during routine planning, there was a technical issue in which no content was included in a promoted campaign before it was submitted with Meta for approval. In these instances, a page's bio and standard picture are used fill that content void- as Ms Dow noted.
- $1.96 was spent on this ad, before the error was recognised and addressed within a few hours. As with all ads on Facebook and Instagram, it has then been logged into the publicly available Meta Ad Library.

Department of State Growth - Output Group 5.4 – Tourism and Hospitality

Q1. When was the Cabinet Subcommittee for the Spirits project set up?

The Department of State Growth has advised that Cabinet established the TT-Line Ship Replacement Committee on 24 November 2015.

Q2. When did you become aware that the new Spirits would not be operating this summer?

a. When did you inform the tourism and hospitality sector of that?

The Secretary of the Department of State Growth emailed me on 22 April 2024 regarding the Integrator Report which has been tabled in the Parliamentary Accounts committee already. This was the first time I became aware.

Q3. Please provide passenger numbers for the TT Line when there are extra routes provided. What is the occupancy? Are the ships always full?

- Please find following the numbers provided by TT-Line in response to the enquiry regarding day sailings utilisation.
- The first is a table of percentage capacity of vehicle deck. (DPOGEX means Devonport to Geelong and vice versa).

% PS Vehicle Deck Occupancy		DPOGEX	GEXDPO
2023/24	July		99
	August		98
	September	44	97
	October	29	96
	November	41	99
	December	42	99
	January	83	91
	February	68	92
	March	94	52
	April	98	35

In relation to occupancy rate, I am advised for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, the occupancy rate was 75% for AM departures. This percentage is highly variable depending on the month (or even the week) and route.

Q4. What is the latest estimated cost of the cableway at Cradle Mountain?

- The current estimated cost for the Cradle Valley Cableway is $190 million dollars.
- This cost estimate was derived from the detailed work done in developing the comprehensive draft business case (2023) for the preferred transport solution.

Q5. What's the uptake been like for the regional loan scheme?

a. In what ways are tourism operators informed about the scheme?
b. How much has been allocated so far?
c. Please answer all the above questions in reference to the previous tourism loan scheme.

Current Regional Tourism Development Loan Scheme

- The scheme opened on 10 July 2024.
- The scheme, to date, has been promoted via the Business Tasmania newsletter, Business Tasmania website and State Growth website. Industry bodies are aware of the program having been involved in its development.
  The Premier opened the scheme in early July at The Cove Tasmania, with TICT CEO Amy Hills.
- One application has been approved for $400,000 for an offering on King Island.
- Two further applications are currently under assessment – both in regional locations, one in the West and one in the South – both in the accommodation sector.
- While 1 successful application, and two applications currently being assessed, appears low, there has been considerable interest in the scheme and the Department of State Growth is working with numerous prospective applicants who are expected to submit applications.
- Being a loan scheme, applicants must also collate information which can take time, and as such there can be a lag.

- State Growth will continue to monitor interest and subsequent marketing of the scheme.
- For details on the scheme refer to: https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/thsu/grants_and_funding/regional_tourism_development_loan_scheme

Former Regional Tourism Development Loan Scheme

- The scheme opened on 23 August 2021 and closed on 23 February 2023.
- This program was available to assist the improvement and development of Tasmanian tourism products and experiences that supported Tasmania's position as a sought-after and leading Australian destination.
- The scheme was promoted via channels including the Business Tasmania newsletter, Business Tasmania website and State Growth website.
- 27 loans were approved for a total of $27.1 million.

Q6. When was Tourism Tasmania advised that the new Spirits of Tasmania would not be operating this summer:

- Tourism Tasmania has regular meetings and engagement with the Minister's Office in which a topic of this matter would be discussed.
- At the time discussions concerning this matter would have been occurring the Acting CEO was out of the state overseas.

Output Group 2.1 – Infrastructure

Q1. Can you please breakdown the number of pot holes across state roads by road, and the number have been filled?

State Road name	Total potholes identified since 26 August 2024	Total potholes filled as at 23 September 2024
Huon Hwy	36	31
Tasman Hwy	108	103
Channel Hwy	84	64
Southern Outlet	17	16
Midland Hwy	439	434
Bass Hwy	844	752
Illawarra Rd	149	149
Murchison Hwy	279	179

Q2. RTI documents reveal the price offered by a joint venture led by Hazel Bros. was $374m before the agreement was torn up. Can you confirm the Hazel Bros. cancelled project ended up being $1 million cheaper that the one you eventually entered into with a mainland contractor? And further, can you confirm that the Hazell Bros. job was scheduled to be completed in August 2023, five months earlier than the best case scenario you have with the new contractor?

TT-Line have provided the following advice:

- The first statement is incorrect. The HBJV (and BMD) tender for the Terminal 3 construction project in response to the RFT was not anywhere near approaching $374 million. The figure is representative of the total project costs incorporating back of office accommodation, ancillary buildings etc;
- No "agreement was torn up" with HBJV. HBJV had their preferred tender status removed to enable TT-Line to go back out to tender under a more appropriate contracting model given the increasingly complex nature of the project which ultimately resulted in a better commercial outcome for the company and reduced risk;
- The agreement with BMD arising from the second tender was on better commercial terms to the price being negotiated with HBJV. The decision was not based solely on cost however and considered many other relevant criteria; and
- At no time was the project scheduled to be completed by August 2023 as the closing date for the first tender was 7 July 2023. HBJV indicated August 2025 as a program ending date, but for various reasons there was no confidence from our specialist independent programmer that they would be able to achieve that date based on their simple program.

Q3. Regarding the Southern Outlet, of current works, road widening, couplet upgrade and Macquarie Street lane changes, what safety upgrades are occurring and is this a black spot with high crash history?

- Safety upgrades occurring as part of the current works on Southern Outlet Transit Lane maintain the safety of this intersection. The upgrades provide an additional lane through the intersection which improves efficiency for buses, which is the objective of this project and supports upgrades on Macquarie and Davey Street.
- The crash history at the intersection where the current works are occurring is not out of context for this type of intersection, and the volume of traffic that uses it.

a. How much has been spent on the southern outlet transit lane, including on reports and compulsory land acquisitions?

The below table sets out the costs for this project as at 30 June 2024

	City Deal Southern Project Planning ($M)	Macquarie/ Davey Street ($M)	Southern Outlet Transit Lane ($M)	Total ($M)
State Growth – Project Management	-	1.21	0.87	2.08
Consultant – Design	2.9	1.83	4.06	8.79
Acquisitions – purchase, valuations and legal fees	-	-	4.44	4.44
Consultant – contract administration	-	0.41	-	0.41
Contractor primary	-	13.01	0.29	13.3
Other fees e.g. planning fees, insurance		0.28	0.35	0.63
TOTAL ($ million)	2.9	16.74	10.01	29.65

Q4. Has the State Government made any payments to the Tasmanian Golf Club or related entities from the period commencing the day of the project announcement? If so, what for and how much?

- The Department of State Growth had not made any payments to the Tasmania Golf Club for inconvenience.
- State Growth has made payments of $12,675.68 to Golf Business Advisory Services acting on behalf of the Tasmania Golf Club for professional advice in relation to the business disruption due to road construction and golf course redesign.
- State Growth has made payments of $62,469.70 to Simmons Wolfhagen acting on behalf of the Tasmania Golf Club for legal advice.

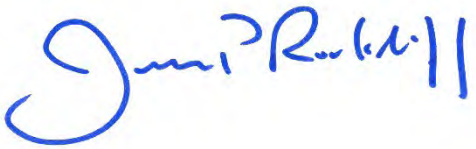
Q5. Has a report been made to Work Safe regarding the current condition of berth 4 at the Burnie Port?

- WorkSafe inspectors attended the port to investigate control measures relating to lead-based paint in the demolition at berth 4.
- WorkSafe has been working with the EPA, with the EPA taking primary responsibility.
- From WorkSafe's perspective, no further action is required.

Q6. Inside the cavernous concrete viewing shelter (at Dove Lake) an interpretation sign implores visitors to "Please walk lightly on palawa land as we have done from creation" – can you tell us how many truck movements moved "lightly" across that country for this construction and how many thousands of kilograms of concrete were needed to build it?

Approximately 1,060 cubic metres of concrete was used in the construction of the Dove Lake Shelter. It is estimated that there were approximately 170-190 truck movements for carting concrete to site.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier

GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001 | Telephone: 61 3 6165 7650 | Email: premier@dpac.tas.gov.au

Right to Information – Routine Disclosure
(30 June 2024)

Ministerial & Electorate Office staff and salary details

To support Ministers to carry out their portfolio responsibilities, each Ministerial and Electorate Office is staffed with a range of employees. The size of each office depends on the size and complexity of the Minister's individual portfolio(s). The table below includes Ministerial and Electorate Office staff and salary details, based on establishment FTEs as at 30 June 2024, which relates to the Government.

Ministerial Offices

Office	Locations	Position	FTE	Salary
Premier Rockliff	Hobart, Devonport and Launceston	Chief of Staff	1.0	M
		Deputy Chief of Staff	1.0	M
		Principal Adviser	1.0	L
		Principal Adviser	1.0	K
		Principal Adviser	1.0	K
		Principal Adviser	1.0	K
		Principal Adviser	1.0	K
		Principal Adviser	1.0	K
		Manager, Premier and Ministerial Services	1.0	J
		Executive Officer	1.0	H
		Executive Officer	1.0	G
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Executive Officer	1.0	E
		Total	**13**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Deputy Premier Ferguson	Hobart and Launceston	Chief of Staff	1.0	L
		Senior Adviser	1.0	K
		Senior Adviser	1.0	K
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Adviser	0.6	H
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**6.6**	

Tasmanian Government

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Abetz	Hobart	Chief of Staff	1.0	K
		Senior Adviser[1]	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	0.8	J
		Senior Adviser[2]	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	0.5	I
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**6.3**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Barnett	Hobart and Launceston	Chief of Staff	1.0	L
		Senior Adviser[3]	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Adviser[4]	1.0	I
		Adviser	1.0	I
		Adviser	0.6	H
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**11.6**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Duigan	Hobart	Chief of Staff	1.0	L
		Senior Adviser	1.0	K
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Adviser	1.0	I
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**6.0**	

[1] Fully funded by the Department of State Growth
[2] Partially funded by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
[3] Partially funded by the Department of Justice
[4] Partially funded by the Department of Health

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Ellis	Hobart	Chief of Staff	1.0	L
		Senior Adviser	1.0	K
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser[1]	1.0	I
		Adviser	1.0	G
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**7.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Howlett	Hobart and Launceston	Chief of Staff	1.0	M
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Adviser	0.8	H
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**7.8**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Jaensch	Hobart and Burnie	Chief of Staff	1.0	L
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Adviser	1.0	F
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**7.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Ogilvie	Hobart	Chief of Staff	1.0	K
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Adviser	1.0	H
		Senior Adviser	1.0	H
		Adviser	1.0	F
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**7.0**	

[1] Partially funded by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Palmer	Hobart and Launceston	Chief of Staff	1.0	L
		Senior Adviser[1]	0.9	J
		Senior Adviser	0.9	I
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Adviser	1.0	I
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**6.8**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Minister Street	Hobart	Chief of Staff	1.0	L
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Adviser	1.0	I
		Adviser	1.0	H
		Executive Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**6.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Parliamentary Secretary Petrusma	Hobart	Adviser	1.0	F
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Parliamentary Secretary Wood	Launceston	Adviser	1.0	F
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council	Hobart	Senior Adviser	0.5	J
		Executive Officer	0.6	F
		Total	**1.1**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Speaker of the House of Assembly	Invermay	Administration Officer	0.3	D
	Hobart	Adviser	1.0	H
		Total	**1.3**	

[1] Partially funded by the Department for Education, Children, and Young People

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Tasmanian Government Communications Office	Hobart, Burnie and Launceston	Director, Communications, Media & Public Relations	1.0	L
		Senior Media Adviser	0.5	K
		Senior Media Adviser	1.0	J
		Senior Media Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Media Adviser	1.0	I
		Senior Media Adviser	0.8	I
		Media Adviser	1.0	H
		Media Adviser	1.0	H
		Media Adviser	1.0	H
		Media Adviser	1.0	G
		Media Adviser	1.0	G
		Media Adviser	1.0	F
		Media Assistant	1.0	E
		Executive Officer	0.6	E
		Total	**12.9**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Ministerial Drivers	Hobart	Executive Driver	1.0	H
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Casual Driver	0.1	C
	Launceston	Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Driver[1]	1.0	C
		Casual Driver	0.1	C
		Casual Driver	0.1	C
	Ulverstone	Casual Driver	0.1	C
		Total	**13.4**	

Liberal Ministerial Offices Total 115.8

[1] Ministerial Drivers also receive an Industry Allowance in addition to their Base Salary as per the *Ministerial Drivers Industrial Agreement 2022.*

Electorate Offices

Staffing by Liberal Electorate Office – Details as at 30 June 2024

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Abetz	Bellerive	Electorate Officer	1.0	D
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Barnett	Deloraine	Electorate Officer	1.0	E
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Ellis	Ulverstone	Electorate Officer	1.0	E
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Fairs	Invermay	Electorate Officer	0.8	F
		Electorate Officer	0.8	D
		Total	**1.6**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Ferguson	Launceston	Electorate Officer	1.0	D
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Howlett	Sorell	Electorate Officer	0.5	E
		Electorate Officer	1.0	E
		Total	**1.5**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Jaensch	Burnie	Electorate Officer	1.0	E
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Ogilvie	Glenorchy	Electorate Officer	0.8	E
		Total	**0.8**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Petrusma	Bellerive	Electorate Officer	0.9	F
		Electorate Officer	0.6	E
		Total	**1.5**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Shelton	Longford	Electorate Officer	1.0	E
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Street	Kingston	Electorate Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Wood	Launceston	Electorate Officer	1.0	D
		Total	**1.0**	

Liberal Electorate Offices Total 13.4

Staffing by Office of the Opposition – Details as at 30 June 2024

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Office of the Opposition	Hobart	Chief of Staff	1.0	J
		Deputy Chief of Staff	0.9	I
		Director - Media	1.0	H
		Director - Digital	0.8	H
		Director -	1.0	H
		Communications	1.0	F
		Office Manager	1.0	F
		Adviser	1.0	F
		Adviser	1.0	F
		Adviser	1.0	F
		Adviser	0.6	F
		Media Adviser	0.3	F
		Media Adviser		
		Total	**10.6**	

Office of the Opposition Total 10.6

Staffing by Labor Electorate Office – Details as at 30 June 2024

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Broad	Devonport	Electorate Officer	1.0	D
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Brown	Rosny	Electorate Officer	1.0	D
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Butler	Longford	Electorate Officer	0.6	E
		Electorate Officer	0.4	E
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Dow	Burnie	Electorate Officer	1.0	D
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Finlay	Kings Meadows	Electorate Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Haddad	Hobart	Electorate Officer Electorate Officer	0.6 0.5	D D
		Total	**1.1**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office M O'Byrne	Invermay	Electorate Officer Electorate Officer	0.8 0.2	D D
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office White	Sorell	Electorate Officer Electorate Officer	0.3 0.8	D D
		Total	**1.1**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Willie	Hobart	Electorate Officer	1.0	D
		Total	**1.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Winter	Kingston	Electorate Officer	1.0	E
		Total	**1.0**	

Labor Electorate Offices Total 10.2

Staffing by Tasmanian Greens Office – Details as at 30 June 2024

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Leader of the Tasmanian Greens	Hobart	Chief of Staff	1.0	H
		Senior Policy & Parliamentary Adviser	1.0	F
		Senior Communications Adviser	1.0	F
		Office Management Adviser	0.6	F
		Campaigns Coordinator	0.6	F
		Office Manager	1.0	E
		Total	**5.2**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Office Bayley	Hobart	Electorate Officer	0.9	D
		Total	**0.9**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Office Rosol	Hobart	Electorate Officer	0.7	D
		Total	**0.7**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Office Woodruff	Hobart	Electorate Officer	0.9	D
		Total	**0.9**	

Tasmanian Greens Electorate Offices Total 7.7

Staffing by Jacqui Lambie Network Electorate Office – Details as at 30 June 2024

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Beswick	Devonport	Electorate Officer	1.0	F
		Electorate Officer	0.7	E
		Total	**1.7**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Jenner	Midway Point	Adviser	1.0	F
		Electorate Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**2.0**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Pentland	Hobart	Electorate Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**1.0**	

Jacqui Lambie Network Electorate Offices Total 4.7

Staffing by Independent Electorate Office – Details as at 30 June 2024

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office D O'Byrne	Rosny	Adviser	1.0	F
		Electorate Officer	0.9	E
		Total	**1.9**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Garland	Launceston	Adviser	0.4	H
	Wynyard	Electorate Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**1.4**	

Office	Location	Position	FTE	Salary
Electorate Office Johnston	Glenorchy	Adviser	1.0	H
		Electorate Officer	1.0	F
		Total	**2.0**	

Independent Electorate Offices Total 5.3

Salary Scale

The following salary categories apply to all MPS staff as at 30 June 2024.

Salary Category	Minimum	Maximum
A	$40,263	$51,043
B	$51,044	$57,507
C	$57,508	$64,549
D	$64,550	$77,389
E	$77,390	$84,338
F	$84,339	$100,195
G	$100,196	$109,813
H	$109,814	$129,373
I	$129,374	$152,693
J	$152,367	$183,912
K	$183,913	$221,459
L	$221,460	$243,606
M	$243,607	$281,463

Deputy Premier
Treasurer
Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs

Level 10, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart
Public Buildings, 53 St John Street, Launceston
GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001
Phone: (03) 6165 7701; Email: Michael.Ferguson@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Mr Simon Wood MP
Chair
House of Assembly Select Committee
Estimates A
By email: ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

9 OCT 2024

Dear Chair

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 224 requesting that additional information be provided to the Budget Estimates Committee A following the examination of the Estimates of the Treasurer and Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs on 24 September 2024.

Please find below information in response to the Committee's further questions.

TREASURER

1. While some entities do collect data on the revenue of businesses, including the Australian Taxation Office, these data are generally not available for regional areas due to confidentiality issues. Additionally, where estimates are produced for indicators at these levels, data quality is often a concern.

   The Australian Bureau of Statistics produces measures of gross value added by industry in its annual State Accounts release. The ABS also produces various data on specific industries, including agriculture, building and construction, mining, and retail and wholesale trade.

   However, the ABS does not produce data on industry output broken down to the level of detail required to determine revenue for Braddon-based businesses.

   Data from the ABS Census can be filtered to look at electoral divisions. While there are some data from the ABS Census that are available by industry, these relate to individuals and therefore only provide data on employment.

   According to the 2021 Census, there were 109 556 people living in Braddon, which equated to 19.6 per cent of the State's population. In terms of employment, at the time of the Census, there were 47 303 persons employed in Braddon. This equated to 18.6 per cent of the total Tasmanians employed.

   While there are some private consultants that produce industry output data at a regional level, estimates produced at this level are not likely to be robust or reliable, making it difficult to make meaningful comparisons. Regional estimates will generally be highly volatile and subject to the vagaries of the economic modelling used to produce the estimates, and any movements may be due to data quality and modelling issues rather than statistically sound economic trends.

2.

a. Payroll and other tax receipts from the salmon industry totalled $14.6 million in 2023-24.

b. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania received $1.2 million in revenue from finfish marine farming lease fees in 2023-24.

c. In 2023-24, revenue as a result of regulatory charges for services in scope of the Salmon Cost Recovery Program consisted of:

- Living Marine Resources Management Act levy (cost recovery) ($9.6 million);
- marine farming licence fees ($0.15 million);
- payments under the Tasmanian Salmonid Health Surveillance Program ($0.23 million); and
- Animal Health Laboratories ($0.19 million).

SMALL BUSINESS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

1. The Crown is a PCBU for the purposes of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* (the Act). The Act places a positive duty on PCBU's to ensure the safety of workers and others at the workplace are not placed at risk. The Crown has the same WHS duties as all other Tasmanian businesses.

   Inspectors interact with many PCBUs whilst undertaking their compliance and enforcement activities, including a number of Government agencies. These inspections have taken place in response to complaints or incident notifications, which form the majority of WorkSafe's inspections. WorkSafe Tasmania applies the *National Compliance and Enforcement Policy* in determining its compliance and enforcement priorities.

   WorkSafe has identified that those Government departments inspected have processes in place to ensure compliance with the Act. Despite these processes being in place, there are occasions where contraventions are identified. When this occurs, inspectors issue notices to the PCBU to take remediation action to remedy contraventions.

   In the 2023-24 financial year, Tasmania Police was issued with two improvement notices. The first required the PCBU to review and as necessary revise control measures associated with exposure to substances (diseases). The second notice required the PCBU to ensure that information, training and instruction provided to workers is suitable and adequate for controlling exposure to substances.

   The State Emergency Service was issued with one notice during the financial year which required the PCBU to review and, as necessary, revise control measures associated with workers conducting storm damage operations, including exposure to the risk of electric shock.

2. The Tasmanian Government has committed to implementing Single Form Tendering for goods and services procurements valued at less than $250 000 and for building and construction and roads and bridges procurements valued at less than $500 000.

The requirements applicable to Tasmanian Government entities in relation to procurement activity are reflected in the Treasurer's Instructions (TIs). The TIs include specific requirements regarding the procurement documentation which must be used in procurement processes.

It is expected that the implementation Single Form Tendering will result in changes to some of the procurement documentation mandated by the TIs. Entities required to comply with the TIs will therefore be required to utilise the Single Form Tendering solution if it is an obligation of the TIs.

The Accountable Authority of each entity required to comply with the TIs is responsible for ensuring procurement activity is undertaken in accordance with the TI requirements. These requirements include ensuring that all procurement activity is undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the key principles of:

- value for money;
- open, impartial and effective competition;
- providing local suppliers that wish to do business with Government the opportunity to do so through the adoption of Buy Local Policy requirements; and
- the observation of ethical procurement standards.

Value for money is therefore an expectation in all Government procurement activity, regardless of quantum.

Consistent with section 13 of the *Homes Tasmania Act 2022*, Homes Tasmania is required to comply with the Treasurer's Instructions.

Yours sincerely

Michael Ferguson MP
Deputy Premier
Treasurer
Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources
Minister for Transport
Leader of the House

Level 10, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart TAS 7000
GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001
Phone: 03 6165 9405 | Email: Minister.Abetz@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

7 OCT 2024

Mr Simon Wood MP
Chair
House of Assembly
Budget Estimates Committee A
Email: ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Chair Simon,

APPROPRIATION BILLS 2024-25

Thank you for your letter of 24 September 2024 requesting additional information following examination of my portfolio by House of Assembly Estimates Committee A.

Department of State Growth

Output Group – Transport

Q1. Where is the real-time information for passengers on Metro bus services?

Real-time bus tracking information will be made available to passengers on general access services in the south of the state from December 2024 as per the election commitment. It will then be progressively rolled out across general access services in the remainder of the state between December 2024 and March 2025.

Q2. Did the Government or the TT line Board seek DFAT advice prior to making the additional payment for the new Spirits vessels during caretaker?

No.

TT-Line did not seek DFAT advice regarding the payment as section 7 of the Australian Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020, which states that "A State/Territory entity ... does not include ... (g) a corporation that operates on a commercial basis".

I am advised that TT-Line is of the view that the Act does not apply to commercial contractual arrangements entered into by TT-Line Company Pty Ltd (being a commercial company established under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)) with another commercial corporation notwithstanding that commercial corporation is situated in a foreign country.

Relevantly, section 8 of the Act also states that "A foreign entity ... does not include ... (k) a corporation that operates on a commercial basis".

Q3. What is the total value of consultancies in the Transport output group?

For the period of 1 July 2023 to 8 August 2024, the total value of consultancy contracts awarded within the Transport and Infrastructure portfolio was $5,598,389.00 (exclusive of GST) and following its creation in April 2024, the total value of consultancy contracts awarded within the Transport portfolio was $425,340.00 (exclusive of GST).

Q4. Please table savings strategy for the transport portfolio.

- The 2023-24 Budget indicated the Government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services.
- The Efficiency Dividend to be achieved by DSG is:
    - $2.6 million in 2024-25;
    - $5.1 million in 2025-26;
    - increasing to a structural reduction of $7.7 million in 2026-27.
- The Department will achieve these efficiencies through a combination of efficiency measures and ceasing or scaling back on non-core and non-priority activities that are either not the highest strategic priorities or have been replaced with new commitments.
- Efficiency measures must be achievable in both the short and long term.
- This means that the Department must identify efficiency measures that are structural and achievable on an ongoing basis.
- The Department has recently undertaken an internal organisational realignment. This is a separate process to consideration of the efficiency dividend, however by its very nature, it is finding ways to operate more efficiently.
- The Department's approach is to deliver a simpler/more efficient operating model which delivers the Government's priorities and its core services for the Tasmanian community.

State Growth Strategies

- The Department has identified several strategies that it will use to meet the Budget Efficiency Dividend:
    - Combining functions and service delivery areas to implement leaner operating models.
    - Reviewing how it administers programs (for example grants or our capital program) to ensure they deliver value for the Tasmanian community and considering process improvements and systematising processes to ensure they are efficient.
    - Reducing operational expenditure on supplies and consumables including:
        - marketing and consultancies
        - accommodation
        - ICT costs (including telecommunications)
        - travel
        - postage (which is significant for registration and licencing renewals)

- Managing its workforce to ensure that resources are targeted to the areas of highest priority.

- The Department does not have a formal vacancy control process currently in place.

Dover school bus service

As an update to my answer provided to the Committee in the hearing on the matter of the Dover school bus service, I wish to advise that, following a service review in 2023, the Geeveston to Dover school bus servicing the Dover District School now runs via the Huon Highway instead of Esperance Coast Road.

Following consultation with the bus operator and school community, the route was further adjusted to accommodate families along Kent Beach Road, previously served by the Esperance Coast Road bus.

I am advised that, due to a lack of a safe turnaround point further along Kent Beach Road, a small number of families at the end of Kent Beach Road need to travel around 650 meters to the nearest bus stop.

The original service which operated via Esperance Coast Road was discontinued end of term four, 2023. There are three households with students along Esperence Coast Road which is no longer serviced. The School Bus Service Eligibility Guidelines do not support reinstating the Esperance Coast Road service, as it would not cater to the required minimum number of students.

Families along Esperence Coast Road were provided information about the Conveyance Allowance program which assists eligible families with the cost of transporting students to and from the nearest bus stop for school travel.

Yours sincerely

Eric Abetz MP
Minister for Transport

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources
Minister for Transport
Leader of the House

Level 10, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart TAS 7000
GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001
Phone: 03 6165 9405 | Email: Minister.Abetz@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

11 OCT 2024

Mr Simon Wood MP
Chair - Estimates Committee A
House of Assembly
Parliament House
Email: Ben.Foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Wood Simon,

Appropriation Bill 2024-25

I refer to your letter of 25 September 2024 seeking additional information following my appearance before Budget Estimates Committee A on 24 September 2024.

Please find below the additional information requested:

Q1. Regarding the 158,000 m3 of saw log volumes promised to existing Forestry Tasmania customers from FPPF land, during the state election, how was this calculated if land parcels have not yet been identified?

The Government's election commitment under its 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future was to "make available an additional wood basket of up to 158,000 cubic metres of high quality sawlog to Tasmanian industry" by releasing up to 40,000 hectares of Future Potential Production Forest.

This estimate was based on consultation with industry at the time and provides an indication of the maximum additional volume expected to be made available.

Q2. The budget refers to 90% of timber undergoing "some form of processing" in Tasmania.

a. What are the forms of processing that are referred to?

This information is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics data. In that context, processing includes units (activities) mainly engaged in the physical or chemical transformation of materials, substances or components into new products (except agriculture and construction). The materials, substances or components transformed by units in this division are raw materials that are products of agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining, or products of other manufacturing units.

For forestry, processing means to pulp, chip, cut or saw timber.

b. Is the trimming of logs before they are placed on a truck considered to be "processing"?

No.

Q3. Where did the figure of 5,000 people employed in the salmon industry in Tasmania (as reported in the Government's 2030 Strong Plan) come from?

The Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) report, *Tasmanian Fisheries and Aquaculture Industry 2018/19: Economic Contributions – Key sectors (August 2021).*

a. What proportion of this number is directly employed in the industry?

According to the latest quarterly reporting from the companies, in quarter two of 2024, the industry directly employed 2,239 permanent and casual staff statewide. This information is published on the Tasmania Salmon Farming Data (Salmon Portal).

Q4. Please table the Marine Resources Division efficiency dividend and savings plan.

The 2023-24 Budget indicated the Government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services.

The Efficiency Dividend to be achieved by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania is:

- $1.7 million in 2024-25 is,
- $3.4 million in 2025-26,
- Increasing to $5.1 million in 2026-27.

The Department has commenced implementing initial savings strategies which includes optimising staff resources to meet Government priorities and new commitments in 2024-25.

The Department will achieve these efficiencies through a combination of efficiency measures and ceasing or scaling back on non-core and non-priority activities that are either not the highest strategic priorities or have been replaced with new commitments.

These saving strategies are achievable and will not compromise the Department's capability.

The Department has established a Budget Sustainability Project to deliver a more efficient operating model that includes short and long term achievable saving initiatives.

These initiatives will not impact Government's priorities and core services for the Tasmanian community.

The saving initiatives will also not impact the safety and wellbeing of staff, nor will they compromise organisational capability.

The Department will review how programs are administered to ensure they deliver value for the Tasmania community.

Q5. What are the statistics for recreation breaches of recreational fishing rules?

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Marine Infringement Notices Recreational Fishing	**848**	**830**	**694**	**740**	**838**
Marine and Safety Offenders	342	354	329	321	347
Fisheries Offenders	517	491	385	430	515
- Abalone Offenders	20	9	19	19	25
- Fisheries Rules Offenders	48	15	18	20	16
- Inland Fishing Offenders	4	4	3	5	3
- Rock Lobster Offenders	211	183	168	215	247
- Scalefish Offenders	207	236	142	138	205
- Scallop Offenders	27	39	33	36	25
- Other Fisheries Offenders	9	10	10	4	15

Source: Tasmania Police Prosecution, FIND and Information Bureau Systems, 1/08/2024

* Please note that some offenders may be charged as both Marine and Safety Offenders and Fisheries Offenders simultaneously. As a result, they will appear on both lists, but they will only be counted once in the overall total. This is why the category sums do not add up to the overall total.

Yours sincerely

Eric Abetz MP
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources

Minister for Energy and Renewables
Minister for Parks and Environment
Level 10 15 Murray Street HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Ph: +61 3 6165 7739
Email: minister.duigan@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

9 October 2024

Mr Simon Wood MP
Chair – Estimates Committee A
House of Assembly
Email: Ben.Foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Wood

Appropriation Bills 2024-25

I refer to your letter of 26 September 2024, seeking additional information following my appearance before Budget Estimates Committee A on 25 September 2024.

I would note that in relation to questions taken on notice pertaining to expenses for the Three Capes Track; risk assessments in association with the previous Divo Platform and the lease arrangements for the Derwent Valley Men's Shed and Derwent Valley Pony Club, that all answers in relation to these matters were subsequently provided during the session dated 25 September 2024.

In relation to the other matters raised in your letter, please find below the additional information requested:

Parks and Environment

Can the Minister table the savings strategy for his Agency for the 24-25 financial year?

The Department's Budget Efficiency Plan 2024-25 is provided at Attachment 1.

Provide the data available for fish farm mortalities for the past year.

The EPA received 66 elevated mortality notifications from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 as follows:

Marine Farm Development Planning Area	Huon Aquaculture	Petuna	Tassal	Grand Total
D'Entrecasteaux Channel/Huon River	6		34	40
Great Oyster Bay and Mercury Passage			1	1
Macquarie Harbour	5	-	2	7

Storm Bay	10		2	12
Tamar Estuary		-		Nil
Tasman Peninsula and Norfolk Bay			6	6
Grand Total	**21**	**Nil**	**45**	**66**

Further information about mortality notifications from 26/10/23 to 21/3/24 is available on the EPA's Environmental Monitoring Disclosure Log at: https://epa.tas.gov.au/Documents/Finfish%20Mortality%20Notifications%20to%20the%20EPA%2020232610-20240321.pdf

The EPA Director, Wes Ford stated during Estimates that the EPA does not have data on weight or numbers of fish mortalities or on the destinations of mortality waste.

Is waste water on Flinders Island managed according to environmental laws?

TasWater is responsible for operating the Water Treatment Plant on Flinders Island to supply potable water to residents connected to the reticulated water system.

Flinders Council is responsible for regulating Level 1 activities. This includes individual domestic and commercial sewage systems. Council can also issue Environmental Protection Notices to prohibit, enable or place restrictions on environmentally relevant activities.

Further questions relating to wastewater management and solutions should be directed to the Flinders Council and TasWater.

What other further uses for the land where the Derwent Valley Riding Club operate from is the government considering?

The Government is not considering any other uses for the land in question at this stage. Should a request be made in the future, it will be considered in line with the appropriate process.

Yours sincerely

Hon Nick Duigan MLC
Minister for Parks and Environment

Attachment:
1. NRE Tas Budget Efficiency Plan 2024-25

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Budget Sustainability

- **The 2023-24 Budget indicated the Government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services.**
- **The Efficiency Dividend to be achieved by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania is:**
    - **$1.7 million in 2024-25 is,**
    - **$3.4 million in 2025-26,**
    - **Increasing to $5.1 million in 2026-27.**
- **The Department has commenced implementing initial savings strategies which includes optimising staff resources to meet Government priorities and new commitments in 2024-25.**

- The Department will achieve these efficiencies through a combination of efficiency measures and ceasing or scaling back on non-core and non-priority activities that are either not the highest strategic priorities or have been replaced with new commitments.
- These saving strategies are achievable and will not compromise the Department's capability.
- The Department has established a Budget Sustainability Project to deliver a more efficient operating model that includes short and long term achievable saving initiatives.
- These initiatives will not impact Government's priorities and core services for the Tasmanian community.
- The saving initiatives will also not impact the safety and wellbeing of staff, nor will they compromise organisational capability.
- The saving initiatives include identification of duplicative workflows, functions and/or structures to achieve streamlined processes and leaner operating models.
- The Department will review how programs are administered to ensure they deliver value for the Tasmania community.
- The Department's initial focus is on savings from discretionary expenditure on supplies and consumables, including consultants, travel, advertising, accommodation, and fleet usage.
- In addition, the Department will capture savings achieved from salary expenditure through the monitoring of vacancies without negatively impacting on service outcomes. This is <u>not</u> a vacancy control process

and will not result in staff job loss, nor will it impact on the delivery of Government priorities.
- Over the forward estimates, options for new, low impact, revenue sources are also being explored where cost recovery is warranted.

Key Statistics:

The budget efficiency dividend target for the Department is as follows:

	2024-25 Budget $'000	**2025-26 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2026-27 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2027-28 Forward Estimate $'000**
Budget Efficiency Dividend Allocation[1]	1 723	3 446	5 168	5 168[2]

1. This target is prior to an adjustment made for the Forestry restructure. See background information below for the revised target.
2. This target will be increased as part of the further Budget Efficiency Dividend of $150 million announced in the 2024-25 Budget.

Background:

- The budget efficiency dividend target was advised by Treasury in September 2023 as per the above table.
- As a result of the transfer of the Forestry Policy function to the Department of State Growth on 1 July 2024, the budget efficiency dividend allocation was revised:

	2024-25 Budget $'000	**2025-26 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2026-27 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2027-28 Forward Estimate $'000**
ORIGINAL Budget Efficiency Dividend Allocation	1 723	3 446	5 168	5 168
Revision for Forestry Restructure	(22)	(45)	(67)	(67)
REVISED Allocation	**1 701**	**3 401**	**5 101**	**5 101**

- The Department submitted Ministerially approved budget savings plan in November 2023, with an updated plan that incorporates feedback from the Department of Treasury and Finance at the end of January 2024. Subsequent to the 2024 State Government election, a revised plan was discussed with new Ministers and submitted in May 2024.

- The 2027-28 target will increase as part of the further Budget Efficiency Dividend of $150 million in the 2024-25 Budget.

- Further detail as per the May 2024 savings plan is as follows:

	2024-25 Budget $'000	**2025-26 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2026-27 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2027-28[2] Forward Estimate $'000**
Discretionary expenditure	421	439	709	709
Salary expenditure[1]	840	1 050	1 260	1 260
Other savings measures	440	1 912	3 132	3 132
REVISED Allocation	**1 701**	**3 401**	**5 101**	**5 101**

Note:

1. This savings target represents less than 1 per cent of the Department's overall salary budget from all funding sources.
2. The 2027-28 targets will increase as part of the further Budget Efficiency Dividend of $150 million in the 2024-25 Budget.

- The savings to be achieved by portfolio are as follows:

	2024-25 Budget $'000	**2025-26 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2026-27 Forward Estimate $'000**	**2027-28[2] Forward Estimate $'000**
Arts (Heritage)	22	32	107	411
Business, Industry & Resources	50	81	356	301
Parks & Environment	1 244	2 401	3 306	3 238
Primary Industries & Water	336	790	1 186	1 005
Racing	49	97	146	146
REVISED Allocation	**1 701**	**3 401**	**5 101**	**5 101**

Minister for Energy and Renewables
Minister for Parks and Environment

Level 10, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Phone: +61 3 6165 7739
Email: Minister.Duigan@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Simon Wood MP
Chair
House of Assembly
Budget Estimates Committee A
Email: ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

11 October 2024

Dear Mr Wood

APPROPRIATION BILLS 2024 – 25

Thank you for your letter of 26 September 2024 requesting additional information following examination of my portfolio by House of Assembly Budget Estimates Committee A.

Department of State Growth
Output Group 7 – Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania

Q1. Has the Minster for Primary Industries declared by way of an order that industrial water can/will be delivered to the Bell Bay Hydrogen Hub?

Response:

- Legislation was passed in 2023 which may allow Tasmanian Irrigation to supply water for industrial uses, under certain circumstances, within declared irrigation districts.
- To date no declaration has been made with respect to an irrigation district servicing industrial water users, and potential hydrogen proponents, in the Bell Bay area. The absence of a declaration has not impacted on the ability to conduct market studies or design work on potential scheme options.

Q2. From data collected as part of the LULCF accounting, Annual emissions caused by all forestry activities, including clear-felling and post-logging burning, for each of the last 5 years.

Response:

- Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions, including those for the land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector are published annually by the Australian Government as part of Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts (ANGA).
- The emissions sources and removals from forestry activities are reported in Tasmania's LULUCF sector for either harvested native forests on private land (as the harvested private native forest sub-category 4.A.1.i.d in ANGA) and harvested native forests on public land (as the multiple use forest sub-category 4.A.1.i.e in ANGA).
- ANGA does not report disaggregated emissions and removals (for example for specific forestry activities) at a finer level of detail than the harvested private native forest and multiple use forest sub-categories.

- The emissions from the harvesting of hardwood and softwood plantations in Tasmania are reported in other sub-categories of the LULUCF sector.
- The emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels associated with forestry activities (such as diesel to operate harvesting machinery) are reported in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sub-category (1.A.4.c in ANGA) of the energy sector.
- Tasmania's most recent emissions data reported by the Australian Government in ANGA are for 2022. The reported emissions for the last five years for the harvested private native forest and multiple use forest sub-categories are provided in the table below.

	Greenhouse gas emissions (Mt CO_2-e)				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Harvested private native forests	-6.50	-6.57	-5.65	-5.74	-6.06
Multiple use forests	-5.21	-4.06	-4.92	-5.57	-5.54

Yours sincerely



Hon Nick Duigan MLC
Minister for Energy and Renewables

Minister for Finance
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Sport and Events

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place, HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Ph: +61 3 6165 7794
Email: Minister.Street@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

03 OCT 2024

Mr Simon Wood MP
Chair – Estimates Committee A
Parliament House, Hobart

By email to ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Simon Wood

With regard to question 5 taken on notice during my Sport and Events Budget Estimates hearing on 26 September 2024, I provide the following response.

The Queens Domain is identified in the Mac Point Precinct Plan as a preferred coach drop-off and pick-up location in acknowledgement of its close walking proximity to the Macquarie Point site.

The specific location at the Queens Domain has not been explored and will be determined in consideration of and consultation with other users in the area.

Yours sincerely

Hon Nic Street MP
Minister for Sport and Events

Minister for Finance
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Sport and Events

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place, HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Ph: +61 3 6165 7794
Email: Minister.Street@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

04 OCT 2024

Mr Simon Wood MP
Chair – Estimates Committee A
Parliament House, Hobart

By email to ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Simon

With regard to question 1 taken on notice during my Local Government Budget Estimates hearing on 26 September 2024, I provide the following response.

Over the last ten years, $4.84 million has been spent on five local government reform projects, namely:

- A targeted review of the *Local Government Act 1993* (2016 - $365,470);
- A broad review of the local government legislative framework (2018 - $750,845);
- Support for five voluntary amalgamation and shared services feasibility studies covering 25 councils (2016 to 2020 - $526,250);
- A Local Government Board review and elector poll on a potential Sorell/Tasman amalgamation (2018 - $198,098); and
- The Future of Local Government Review (ongoing - $3,002,780).

Yours sincerely

Hon Nic Street MP
Minister for Local Government

Minister for Finance
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Sport and Events

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place, HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Ph: +61 3 6165 7794
Email: Minister.Street@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Mr Simon Wood MP
Chair – Estimates Committee A
Parliament House, Hobart

By email to ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

2 OCT 2024

Dear Mr Simon

With regard to questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 taken on notice during my Sport and Events Budget Estimates hearing on 26 September 2024, I provide the following response.

I was made aware a staff member had asked if the reservation could be altered following the media item. I did not instruct this to happen.

The reservation was reinstated the following morning.

The Premier's office was made aware of the situation and expressed concern for the cancellation of the reservation and supported the decision to reinstate it.

I am advised at no time did my staff say words to the effect that "the Government won't be spending a cent at that venue this weekend".

I do not believe there has been a breach of the Anti-Discrimination Act and/or the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

Yours sincerely

Hon Nic Street MP
Minister for Sport and Events

Minister for Children and Youth
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Level 5 4 Salamanca Place HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Ph: +61 3 6165 7670
Email: minister.jaensch@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

10 OCT 2024

Mr Ben Foxe
Committee Secretary
Ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Foxe

Please find responses to questions on notice from the House of Assembly Budget Estimates Committee A following the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Community Services below.

Question 1 – Can the minister provide a list of funding agreements under his portfolio broken down by how long their core funding agreement component is eg 1, 2, 3 etc years. It need not list the names of the organisations if that is not possible, a number and duration is sufficient.

Answer:
The grants provided by DPAC for core funding under output 7.2 and 7.3 is as follows:

2 year Agreements	1
3 year Agreements	65
4 year Agreements	3
5 year Agreements	1
Total Agreements	70

Please find responses to questions on notice from the House of Assembly Budget Estimates Committee A following the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Children and Youth below.

Question 1 – In 2023 -24, how much money was paid to Essential Services for providing transport to and from Ashey Youth Detention Centre.

Answer:
$256,646.26 (excluding GST) for the year ended 30 June 2024.

Question 2 – What is the Department's projection for the average daily number of children and young people in Ashley Youth Detention Centre in 2024-25?

Answer:
During the preparation of the 2024-25 Budget Papers the average daily number of children and young people in custody in Ashley Youth Detention Centre was projected to increase slightly from 16.3 for 2023-24 to 16.5 for 2024-25. This projection was based on historical

data and does not account for changes to the average daily number that may result from the implementation of reforms to Youth Justice in Tasmania.

Note: In Tasmania, Custodial Youth Justice involves low numbers of young people, which limits the ability to conduct statistically meaningful data modelling or projections.

Question 3 – What is the annual cost of special care package?

Answer:
As at end June 2024, the average annualised package cost of SCP was $713 579

Question 4 – What is the annual cost of a package for intensive foster care?

Answer:
As at the end of June 2024, the annual cost of a package for intensive foster care - annualised cost of a Care to Thrive package is $291,326 per child.

Question 5 – Can the Minister please indicate when staff withing child safety services south will need to move out of their current accommodation at St Johns Park as per the St Johns master plan?

Answer:
There is currently no set date for when Child Safety Services south will need to move out of their current accommodation at St John Park.

The following is an extract from the Department of Health website (link: St Johns Park Health and Wellbeing Precinct Masterplan FAQs | Tasmanian Department of Health):

> ***Timing and next steps***
> ***When will the Final Masterplan be released?***
> *The Final Masterplan is expected to be released in Mid-2025 once feedback from the community and stakeholders is considered and incorporated into the process.*
> ***What are the timeframes for delivery?***
> *The Final Masterplan will present a long-term vision, over the next 20 years, to guide future capital development for the heritage-sensitive revitalisation of this historic precinct into a contemporary healthcare campus to meet the public health needs of Tasmanians.*

Yours sincerely



Hon Roger Jaensch MP
Minister for Children and Youth

Minister for Children and Youth
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Level 5 4 Salamanca Place HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Ph: +61 3 6165 7670
Email: minister.jaensch@dpac.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Mr Ben Foxe
Committee Secretary
Ben.foxe@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Foxe

Please find attached additional responses to questions on notice from the House of Assembly Budget Estimates Committee A following the examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Children and Youth.

Question 6. In child safety services how many staff are on workers Comp?

Answer:
There are 22 open claims within Services for Children and Families as at 7/10/2024 (which includes 8 claims still open from the former Department of Communities pre DECYP).

A. what is the average length of time?

Answer:

The average length of time for the above open claims is 26.54 months or 2.2 years.
The average hours in time lost for the above claims is 3506 hours (or 416 days)
Note: the length of time of a claim is open does not mean the employee has been absent from work that entire time.

B. What is the longest length of time?

Answer:

The oldest open claim is one that was made and accepted on or around January 2018 in the Department of Health which transitioned to the Department of Communities. The claim has therefore been open for almost seven years.

Yours sincerely

Hon Roger Jaensch MP
Minister for Children and Youth