



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP

Monday 1 June 2026

MEMBERS

Ms Helen Burnet MP (Chair)
Mr Marcus Vermey MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Dean Winter MP
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr George
Ms Brown
Mr Willie
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Johnston

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. JEREMY ROCKLIFF MP

Premier.

Ministerial Office Representative

Ned Whitehouse

Chief of Staff

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Kathrine Morgan-Wicks

Secretary and Head of the State Service

Lisa Howes

Chief Governance and Risk Officer

Mathew Healey

Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery

(in the room)

Noelene Kelly

Acting Chief Operations Officer

Courtney Hurworth

Chief Reform Officer, Keeping Children Safe

Amanda Russell

Deputy Secretary, State Service Management Office

Melissa Gray

Deputy Secretary, Policy, and Reform

Penny Ratcliffe

Director, Human Resources Transformation Program

Glen Dean

Chief Financial Officer

Simon Hiscock

Executive Director, Resilience and recovery Tasmania

Justin Thurley

Chief Information Officer

Jessica Radford

A/CEO, Brand Tasmania

PUBLIC

The committee met at 8.00 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Burnet) - I welcome the Premier and other witnesses, and also committee and members. I invite the Premier to introduce persons at the table with names and positions for the benefit of Hansard, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Chair, we have in order closest to you to furthest away from you, Mathew Healey, deputy secretary, Strategy and Delivery; Lisa Howes, chief governance and risk officer; Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, secretary and head of the State Service; and Ned Whitehouse to my left, who is the chief of staff.

CHAIR - Thank you. We have four hours scheduled for the Premier and we'll take a break at around 10 am for 10 minutes. Questions should be directed to the Premier. 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 - who is Ben, today - so it can be included in correspondence to the minister for answer.

I remind you that the microphones are sensitive, so I ask you to be mindful of Hansard and be careful when moving your folders, documents and glasses of water around the table. It's difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so please speak one at a time. As Chair, I'll be looking to ensure the fair and appropriate conduct of proceedings today and this week, and ask that all participating members do the same.

Premier, as the committee has agreed that opening statements should be tabled rather than read, you now have an opportunity to table a statement before we proceed with questions.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Chair. I am, to be honest, a bit disappointed in that breaking of convention. This is my 24th budget Estimates, of which 11 of those I was with the good people on the other side scrutinising premiers of the day, ministers of the day, of Labor and Greens. This is the first time in a quarter of a century that we haven't been able to provide an opening statement. I'm disappointed that it's breaking that convention. I won't go on about it, but I will make that point, which I think is a good point.

CHAIR - Point taken, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I think we've had some progressive Standing Order changes, including in the House of Assembly around so-called Dorothy Dixers, which I think has been a very good concession for the parliament. But this is a simple opening statement which sets the scene for further scrutiny, including FTE numbers and positions and all sorts of things which the Budget scrutiny should be about, so it's a bit disappointing.

CHAIR - I appreciate that, Premier, but that was a decision of the committee. We can have further discussion about that after these committees proceed. If you'd like to table your statement, I'd appreciate that. And then I'll ask Mr Willie to start with questions.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's all right. Straight to questions.

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Mr WILLIE - Premier, the last two weeks have been particularly challenging for you and your government. First of all, there was your broken promise on TasInsure, then you announced over half-a-billion dollars in bailouts for TT-Line. In the Budget there were the massive public service cuts. Later, there was a betrayal of a cancer patient and promises you made. There's been the Ruth Forrest leaked email saga, where you refuse to engage or apologise, and you should. Now Madeleine Ogilvie has resigned for misleading parliament. On any assessment, your government is a bin fire. When did you first become aware that Madeleine Ogilvie had initiated legal action in the Supreme Court?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, I don't accept the premise of your question. On all those matters, I can completely and utterly destroy your arguments: TT-Line with over \$1.5 billion of infrastructure investment, brand-new infrastructure, a wharf at Geelong and Devonport, brand-new ships. TasInsure will be delivered; cheaper insurance will be delivered that doesn't impact on the Tasmanian taxpayer in such a way that you were concerned about following the release of the policy. That's what Tasmanians care about; cheaper insurance.

When it comes to the Budget, I have seen quotes of your good self and members of your shadow cabinet last year talking absolutely ad nauseam about the debt and unsustainability of the budget. Here we are with a budget that has surplus: peak debt in the year 2028-2029, significant surplus in the forward Estimates and the following year there will be the Marinus inclusion which will add even more to the bottom line.

With respect to the last part of your question, these are very complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I won't be commenting further.

Mr WILLIE - I'm not asking for you to reveal confidentiality requirements; I'm asking when you first became aware of Madeleine Ogilvie's initiation in the Supreme Court?

Mr ROCKLIFF - These are complex matters and I'm not going to be commenting any further. You can ask the questions all the way you like, but that will be my answer.

Mr WILLIE - I'm not asking you to reveal confidentiality requirements. I'm asking when you were aware.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I say, these are complex matters, particularly given the confidentiality requirements, and I won't be commenting further. What I can say, however, is that Ms Ogilvie has given an undertaking, as other members have, to provide full details when Ms Ogilvie is legally able to do so.

Mr WILLIE - That's reasonable. But there is a public interest test here for you: when did you authorise Supreme Court proceedings? You would have had to have approved it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not commenting on anything further. It's a legal matter.

Mr WILLIE - This is about what you knew. I accept that Madeleine Ogilvie will explain, when she can, the details around the legal fees. But this is about you and what you knew, and at what time.

Mr ROCKLIFF - This is about complying with the law.

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Mr WILLIE - No. When did you approve the legal fees?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm sorry, I've said my answer. You can ask it in 50 different ways, but these are complex matters and I won't comment any further.

Mr WILLIE - This is taxpayers' money, Premier. I'm not asking for you to reveal anything that's confidential. I'm asking when you approved the legal fees.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I recognise taxpayer money, and the legal fees are within the guidelines.

Mr WILLIE - When did you approve the legal fees? That's a reasonable question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - These are complex matters, and I've said I won't be commenting any further given the legal circumstances.

Dr WOODRUFF - Good morning, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Good morning, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - On what date did Cabinet first decide that legal costs incurred by Ms Ogilvie would be paid for with public funds?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I say, a similar answer to Mr Willie: I won't be commenting any further on these matters.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you for your guidance. But there's a lot of public interest in this matter and I think people want to understand some of the background to what's just happened. Again, when did Cabinet first decide that legal costs for the minister would be paid for with public funds? Completely unrelated to the matter in the court.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. Ms Ogilvie has agreed to provide full details when the matter is resolved and she's legally able to do so.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is the matter for which Ms Ogilvie has had her legal costs paid directly related to actions that she took as a minister?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not able to comment any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - I understand that Cabinet approved the legal cost to be paid for. I would expect that Cabinet would understand what the matter was, I think, without revealing any details or getting into the realms of the court. Where the actions of her as a minister the reason legal costs were approved by Cabinet?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are still legal proceedings and full details will be provided, as other members have stated themselves - or member - and Ms Ogilvie will provide full details once the - she's legally able to do so.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Well, The *Mercury* editorial today and numerous legal experts have made it clear that some simple base information around this case, like dates, times and things, would not prejudice the matter at hand. We're talking about public money and your approval processes of Cabinet.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Which full details will be provided.

Mr GEORGE - Good morning, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Morning, Peter - Mr George.

Mr GEORGE - I'm going to ask you about salmon, on the grounds I've completely lost any confidence that any other minister in your government is prepared to talk directly, openly and address salmon issues. Are you aware that the latest testing shows that florfenicol traces are found in abalone 14 kilometres away from the nearest diseased pen? When did you last talk to wild fishers about their fears, particularly the rock lobster and abalone industry, about what happens to them and their trade when the next disease inevitably outbreaks as waters get warmer? Isn't it time that you concede your government has lost control of the waterways and it's now in the control of the salmon farms?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. I know your interest in this matter, Mr George, and passionate interest. Our views differ in certain areas when it comes to the salmon industry, but would be of like mind when it comes to ensuring sustainability and transparency in respect to inputs into the industry. I haven't spoken directly, to the best of my knowledge, with either the abalone industry or the rock lobster industry. I have had a conversation informally with the abalone industry around that they're pleased with the Budget and sense the investment continues in terms of the research, which I was proud to work with the industry in, when I was the Primary Industries minister to set that up, and particularly Darwin Hansen at the time.

But in respect to the matters you're speaking about, it is regulated by the APVMA. It's a federal jurisdiction when it comes to florfenicol, when it comes to - and our own independent Environment Protection Authority (EPA) also has jurisdiction, of course, and very important jurisdiction, of which we have consistently and appropriately, in my view, ensured through various forms, including legislation over the last 10 years, made truly independent. It is a truly independent, in terms of regulation, when I first became Primary Industries minister in 2014, because at that time when I was minister for the Department of Primary Industries, Water and the Environment, that department was the regulator and in charge of the productivity increase as well. That's been separated, and I believe that's provided more confidence in the industry in terms of that transparency and accountability.

Mr GEORGE - I'm asking about the fact that you haven't - well, you've now conceded that you haven't spoken to the abalone industry directly, you haven't spoken to the rock lobsters directly and yet there are traces of florfenicol found 14 kilometres away from the nearest diseased pens. We all know what a threat that is to the rock lobster and abalone industry exports. Are you aware of that - of these latest details? Why haven't you spoken directly to the industry? Have you discussed with them, for instance, the potential for compensation if they can't export?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I haven't. These are good questions for the minister for Primary Industries.

Mr GEORGE - Well, it would be great if I could get a minister to answer any direct questions, but that doesn't happen.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm happy to engage, Mr George, with the industry. I engage with many industry sectors in my role as Premier.

Mr GEORGE - I think you need to.

CHAIR - Mr George, we will move on to Mr O'Byrne now, and we might skip you next time round.

Mr O'BYRNE - Morning, Premier. One of the biggest question marks over the Budget and facing the future structure of government is Building Tasmania. On 10 April you said:

Following weeks of stakeholder engagement, key details of Building Tasmania have been finalised.

There's precious little detail about that in the Budget and therefore the allocation. There's a whole range of concerns coming out of people trying to work with the current State Growth, can't get decisions, actually causing major concern and dislocation.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Mr O'BYRNE - What is happening with Building Tasmania?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I will give some answers to your very good question, and then secretary Kathrine Morgan-Wicks has been intimately involved in the implementation of that commitment. When it comes to the machinery of government changes announced on 3 March, it is about enhancing delivery. Clearly, I accept that when it comes to some projects, not all, because some projects have been delivered very well by this government, the Bridgewater Bridge is one of those, but enhancing delivery of the government's key priorities and consolidating functions to strengthen outcomes for the Tasmanian community, we've said the Department of State Growth would undergo a transformation.

We've engaged with a range of stakeholders from small business, tourism, hospitality, forestry, mining, manufacturing, energy, ICT, events, arts brand, stadia, housing, homelessness, community services. It's been a very important, and I believe, valued step in the process. A high-level timeline and governance arrangements have been agreed by government with a staged implementation right through until December 2026. To the nub of your question: the changes will include, on 2 July, the establishment of Building Tasmania, which is a department that will be focused on an integrated approach to infrastructure delivery and housing, and to lead to procurement services across government for capital projects. State Growth climate change functions on 13 August will be transferred to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

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September, stage two of the Building Tasmania transition will commence with capital projects transferred from other agencies, and 3 December, transfer of economic development and ReCFIT functions within the Department of Premier and Cabinet to deliver on the government's economic agenda; 3 December again, establishment of tourism, events and Creative Tasmania, an entity to focus on the state as a destination economy and a leader in the arts. Ms Morgan-Wicks, would you like to speak in more detail about Building Tasmania and how that entity is evolving, please?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through you, Premier: work is underway at the moment to finalise the organisational structure for Building Tasmania. Building Tasmania will be created through a restructuring within the Department of State Growth. They will actually physically form the entity within the Department of State Growth, noting that then what sits outside of Building Tasmania will then be progressively shifted out of the Department of State Growth, also at the same time that the committed reduction of 250 FTE will occur within State Growth, but also potentially within some agencies that are receiving functions also.

For example: the Department of Premier and Cabinet is receiving the economic development, most of the ReCFIT functions and also the corporate services functions where we're going to create a shared service. We will look right across the teams in both State Growth and the Department of Premier and Cabinet to make sure that we are creating the right team and making that opportunity open to all staff to participate in, for example, a reduction. In terms of Building Tasmania itself, the acting secretary, Shane Gregory, is working together with the steering committee within the Department of State Growth to look at that structure for best delivery of Building Tasmania. He's also working with the agencies that have infrastructure teams, for example, in the Department of Health. Also in education, so DECYP, to look at the people that are more into the asset management and maintenance side of the equation versus the large projects such as building hospital wings, schools, et cetera, because those projects will also be coming through to Building Tasmania. That will be after 2 July.

CHAIR - Mr Vermey.

Mr O'BYRNE - Can I just have a quick follow-up?

Dr WOODRUFF - Oh, that was a very long answer.

CHAIR - It was a long answer. Mr Vermey. I'm trying to be as fair as possible, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, can you explain why, in order to manage the budget responsibly, there's a need to manage the growth in the workforce without impacting the essential frontline service staff that Tasmania relies on?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I appreciate the question, and I'm sure it's one of the points people would like to be explored today. I'm very mindful of the fact that the commitments we've made of workforce reduction, in terms of right size and right structure of the public service, will impact individuals and their families. I'm very mindful of that. For every number we mention, there's a person behind that, and I know that impacts them and their families, but the workforce growth is unsustainable in terms of the State Service. We need to address that, as we've committed to 12 months ago.

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Despite putting in place a hiring freeze on non-essential recruitment, which has helped arrest that growth, in the four years prior to that the State Service grew by almost 6 per cent. At the same time our population has grown by just 0.6 per cent. In order to responsibly manage the budget, we need to responsibly manage the growth of our workforce as well without impacting on frontline public services that Tasmanians rely on and care about. We will do that by reducing the State Service by an estimated 1700 positions by 2029-2030, and 1800 positions by 2031-32.

Today I'm announcing that the department secretaries will shortly call for expressions of interest in a targeted and voluntary redundancy (TMVR) program in their agencies. This program will open in June for a period of four weeks, with the separations to be completed in the period from 1 July 2026 to 31 December 2026. Details of each individual expression of interest program and the scope of the program, recognising the need to protect frontline essential services will be determined by department secretaries. This will assist the government in meeting the operational budget efficiencies outlined in the 2026-27 Budget. We do not intend the TNVR program to be ongoing. This is a one-off opportunity for approximately 500 TNVRs for the 2026 calendar year only and will assist our agencies realign and continue to deliver essential services to the community.

I want to also be clear that we will be delivering sensible and considered reductions in staffing in the main through natural attrition, transfers and voluntary exits. This has already commenced, as you'd be aware, across several agencies, including the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of State Growth. It will be up to each individual department secretary to consider every role in their agencies and the most efficient structures needed to support their essential service delivery, prioritising workload, public services and of course, managing their budget.

I want to thank our secretaries for their commitment to the task ahead and their support for their workforce through this time of transition. This is not about having a hit-list of jobs. I will not be spending the next few hours asking for a list of names, of course. This is about a sensible, measured and sustainable approach to bringing the size of our State Service to a level that we can continue to afford, and which our community can rely on to deliver the services that Tasmanians need. I thank you for the question.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you. The following questions are reasonable. We're talking about Tasmanian taxpayers' money; we're not asking about the suppression order. Cabinet has approved these legal fees, which means that you would have had some details on why, including a Supreme Court action. When did you know?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've provided an answer for you. These are complex matters, and Ms Ogilvie, as I've said, will of course provide details, and is committed an undertaking to do so when she is legally able to do so. The members said the same, and those matters will be disclosed.

Mr WILLIE - I accept Madeleine Ogilvie's explanation that she cannot breach a suppression order. That is not what I'm asking about here. I'm asking about the timeline. When did Cabinet approve the legal fees?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question and I've provided the answer.

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Mr WILLIE - Did you ask Madeleine Ogilvie to correct the record?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not going to comment any further on these matters.

Mr WILLIE - This is Tasmanian taxpayers' money, Premier. We're not asking about the suppression order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I recognise that. That's why the details will be well and truly known once these matters have been resolved.

Mr WILLIE - I'm not asking about the suppression order, I'm asking about a decision of Cabinet to approve Tasmanian taxpayers' funding to initiate an action in the Supreme Court. When did that happen?

Mr ROCKLIFF - These are complex matters. I've provided an answer for you and I won't be commenting any further. Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - Was it before or after 17 November last year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I won't be commenting any further.

Mr WILLIE - I'm not asking about the suppression order. I'm asking about the timeline of events here. It's Tasmanian taxpayers' funding, not yours.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I won't be commenting any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, in relation to Madeleine Ogilvie's legal matter for which public monies were used, can you confirm it does not relate to a matter that predates her position as a minister?

Mr ROCKLIFF - These matters are still in train, as I have said. They are complex, legal requirements. Ms Ogilvie will provide full details once these matters have been resolved.

Dr WOODRUFF - I was curious because you were in Cabinet when it was approved. It's a pretty basic bit of information that people would like to understand. Can you confirm that it had nothing to do with a matter prior to her becoming a minister of the Crown?

CHAIR - Before you go on, Premier, I have been provided some information. Before you respond, I wish to remind members of the sub judice convention. The convention applies to active cases before the courts, which is criminal trials once charges are laid and civil cases once they are set down for a hearing. I note that the question raised by Dr Woodruff is in the public interest and I do not intend to unduly restrict the line of questioning. However, I ask members to be mindful of how they frame their questions to ensure they do not unduly prejudice any legal proceedings. So, do you want to ask your question -

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. I'm very mindful of that, thank you, and I have sought advice about how to have conversations about this matter. It's simply about whether the legal costs that were approved relate to a matter that predated Ms Ogilvie's position as a minister.

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Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not able to comment. I thank the Chair for that instruction. There are clear guidelines for legal assistance in place. Dr Woodruff, you'd be well aware of that. These have been in place for nearly 20 years, put in place by previous governments. They were in place during the minority government situation before we came to power in 2014. The policy and guidelines governing the granting of indemnities and legal assistance are publicly available. The policy and guidelines clearly state that indemnity and legal assistance can be considered against legal processes brought under several circumstances, including civil proceedings, criminal proceedings, inquiries or investigations, including integrity bodies, coronial inquiries, anti-discrimination matters and any other body with inquisitorial powers.

Noting the Chair's comments and my comments previously, I cannot provide any further information.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. My second question is which ministerial portfolio were Ms Ogilvie's legal costs related to?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm unable to comment, Dr Woodruff. Ms Ogilvie will make this very clear. She will provide full details when she's legally able to do so.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are the Premier and you just read out the guidelines. I guess what we're trying to do on this side of the table is to understand whether you and your government have followed the guidelines. We're not asking about the matters of the court. We're asking about details relating to the guidelines and whether or not they were followed.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've just outlined the guidelines for you.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'll ask you again. Which ministerial portfolio are Ms Ogilvie's legal costs related to?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've outlined the guidelines and I'm noting the Chair's comments, and that's all I'm going to say on this matter.

Ms JOHNSTON - Good morning, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Morning, Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - Cabinet documents and the decision-making process around Cabinet is very topical at the moment. You'll recall my motion to parliament earlier this year -

Mr ROCKLIFF - I do.

Ms JOHNSTON - which parliament endorsed on the releasing of Cabinet documents. You have said on the record that you hope to do that around the middle of the year. Can you please give us a deadline when you hope that policy will be in place? Can you also explain your instructions to the department for their approach? For example, what kinds of exemptions may be claimed and will the documents be in a searchable format?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I did give a commitment that the timeline, if my memory serves me correctly, was towards the end of the winter break. Cabinet is the highest decision-making body

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in government and the types of matters considered can have significant implications for government and the broader community. We're committed to transparency and providing the community with information that supports community confidence in the decision making of government.

We are working through the policy position to appropriately release Cabinet information. As per your motion, an active release scheme will demonstrate the government's commitment. It's a very significant policy change for Tasmania. There will need to be a balance between active release of Cabinet information and preserving the importance of Cabinet confidentiality, which is foundational to our system of government.

Government's looking at lessons learned from other jurisdictions as we design, build and implement a policy that balances these considerations in the Tasmanian context. In our response to the Independent Review of Tasmania's Right to Information, we're committed to exploring the mechanisms to align with the Australian Government practice of releasing Cabinet documents after 20 years.

Work has commenced to design, implement and deliver on the work of releasing Cabinet documents. With that balance in mind, we're looking at other jurisdictions. The one I believe I've spoken to you about previously is the Queensland jurisdiction, for example. Looking forward to working through that. I believe we're on track to be able to implement this policy towards the end of the winter break.

Ms JOHNSTON - My question was what instructions you provided to the department about what you would like to see in the policy in terms of openness and transparency, in the spirit of the motion. What have you said to your department about what should be included in the policy and what exemptions, and whether it will be in a searchable format?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can ask Ms Morgan-Wicks to comment further. I've mentioned the areas that should be covered, but also balance. We're looking at other jurisdictions. I've mentioned Queensland as a template to look at in terms of whether it will fit Tasmania's context. Searchable?

Ms JOHNSTON - Format.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Format, sorry, yes.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Regarding a searchable format, that is part of what we are examining at the moment in terms of how the information can be accessed and whether it's a particular system that would be required. We're speaking to our colleagues in other jurisdictions about what they use.

We've actually just launched a brand new Department of Premier and Cabinet website which is trying to make it easier to find information. It was a very old website previously. There's a new way in which to access all of the routine disclosure information, for example, and also making the information accessible. In terms of that, that's what we're currently examining. I don't have a further update on that as yet.

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CHAIR -. As Premier, the appointment of a ministerial portfolio is your call. We know that we will see another reshuffle. Former premier Peter Gutwein took climate change so seriously he appointed himself as the inaugural minister for climate change in 2021. He was replaced as minister for climate change by Roger Jaensch. But after the election in 2024, no one was appointed as minister for climate change. I've heard Ms Morgan-Wicks, with the deconstruction of State Growth, that Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania will be going to Premier and Cabinet. Premier, noting the motion that I took to the House in my first private members time was around having a climate change minister, and given you'll need to reshuffle the cabinet, will you prioritise climate change and take on the role of minister for climate change yourself?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the informative advice, I appreciate that. I will give it consideration. You have spoken about this before, and we've spoken about it personally. Climate change will be going to NRET (Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania), incidentally, not Premier and Cabinet. My understanding of your desire for the portfolio is to have it named up, albeit we could argue, or not argue; we could demonstrate how we do care about climate change by the work that we're doing within the environment portfolio, including our investments in renewable energy and policy commitments in those areas, including Marinus and all sorts of matters. But I will take your views into consideration and be very mindful of those when changes are made. Thank you.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, you were the Minister for Education, and learning literacy is a big thing for you and for the for the state. The plan that has been designed not only changes how literacy is taught in schools, but it also gives kids the best chance throughout their lives. Can you provide an update on this project, how it's going, any outcomes to date, and how will it be progressed under the machinery of government changes you announced earlier this year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much for the question. Yes, I was education minister for seven years. Part of that included the pandemic years, and there was quite considerable disruption in learning, which impacted on learning, but also impacted on school attendance as well, as much as departments and schools made every effort around that. But we're working through that now. The commitment throughout all of that was lifting literacy and it is well researched evidence-based plan that was released in 2023. It's designed to set up students to engage in learning throughout their school and for the rest of their lives. The plan involves not just government schools but also the Catholic Education Tasmania and the independent sectors, as well as earlier learning early education providers, adult education providers and the University of Tasmania. We are now in our third year of implementing the 23 recommendations in the Lifting Literacy final report and implementation is guided and overseen by an expert panel.

The Budget provides an additional \$16.7 million to identify our literacy and numeracy outcomes. It builds on the \$3 million dollars in the 2024-25 budget to extend structured literacy towards children in years 3 to 6 at all government primary schools by 2026. That has been delivered and decodable readers are available in those schools.

Early results from this investment show the approach is working and that's why we're now doing the same for numeracy. All school sectors have introduced professional learning to ensure our teachers, principles and early education providers have the knowledge and skills to

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adopt teaching practices in line with contemporary evidence; that includes online training models and face to face learning.

We've also introduced diagnostic screens and assessments, including a new 18-month assessment by the Child Health and Parenting Service that supports parents and carers to support their child's literacy development. We've introduced the Year 1 Phonics Check in all government schools and in all Tasmanian schools. We now have three years of data showing an increase in the proportion of students meeting expected - achievement levels. The independent review into education also noted that teachers were seeing better behaviour from students as a result.

The priority recommendations of lifting literacy are now well advanced and with the machinery of government changes, we're embedding the lifting literacy reforms from DPAC to DECYP and the term of the independent schools-based group to monitor the reforms has been extended.

However, even with this change, lifting literacy remains a priority for our government and for me as Premier. I'll continue to receive reports and have every confidence that the positive improvements we've already seen will continue.

I do want to thank the independent schools-based group for their work and diligence, but of course most notably on the ground for our teachers, support teachers, teacher assistants and support staff in our schools, as well.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, Cabinet approved legal fees - so you were aware that Madeleine Ogilvie had initiated action in the Supreme Court when she misled a committee. Did you ask her to correct the record?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I said, I provided answers. You can ask these in any way you want to, mindful of the Chair's comments. Ms Ogilvie has undertaken to provide full details when she is legally able to do so. That's my answer.

Mr WILLIE - I'm not asking about the suppression order. You knew that Madeleine Ogilvie had initiated action in the Supreme Court when she misled a committee. Did you ask her to correct the record? If not, why not?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I won't be commenting any further.

Mr WILLIE - You've let this go on for six months. Why didn't you act?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I won't be commenting.

Mr WILLIE - The Cabinet has approved the legal fees. You were all aware. This is a cover-up from Cabinet. You were all aware because you approved the legal fees - that she had misled a committee - and you've let it go on for six months. What does that say about your government?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not commenting any further.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, between 11 November last year and today, has any public funding been provided to pay for minister Ogilvie's legal costs? If so, how much?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I don't have that information.

Dr WOODRUFF - Could you take it on notice, please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Let me just seek advice - yes, I'll take it on notice.

Mr O'BYRNE - Your budget is reliant on a reduction of 1700 public servants. You've committed to 250 public servants to lose their jobs in state growth alone. They're very exact numbers. Could you talk us through how those numbers were arrived at? Why 1700 and why 250? Was there a skills matrix that you went through prior to achieving, or landing on, those numbers?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've made some comments regarding 1714 to 2029/30, and 1800 to 2031/32, if my memory serves me correctly - that 1714 figure. You're right in terms of the 250 figure. We're going through this in a very measured way, mindful of the people, of course, who it impacts on. As part of our strategic workforce priorities, we're focused on ensuring the state service can better respond to the increasing and evolving demands of the Tasmanian community.

Now, this includes ensuring we have a workforce that is sustainable in size and shape, located to where it is needed and supported with the right tools and resources to deliver essential services. The managing positions in the State Service framework is a key mechanism that allows agencies to effectively shape their workforce in line with these priorities. It provides a suite of tools to manage workforce size and capability including establishment, management processes, leveraging natural attrition, redeployment, targeted and negotiated voluntary redundancies and workforce renewal incentive payments.

The framework forms an essential part of the broader State Service workforce strategy that supports agencies with tools and options to manage their resources effectively, adapt to changing service delivery requirements and to ensure the workforce remains aligned with service delivery requirements and the needs of the Tasmanian community.

Now, to provide further detail on your question, I can go through the workforce -

Mr O'BYRNE - I just want to find out from you, Premier, how did you land on those numbers? I understand the theory about what you're trying to achieve, whether I agree is something different, but I just want to understand: why those numbers? Is it purely just the bottom line, or you're actually trying to work to the strategy that you've outlined?

Mr ROCKLIFF - So, thank you for the question. If I might refer to Mr Healey, who I know has been talking about this for some time, through you, Kath. In terms of the 1800 at the very least?

Mr HEALEY - Thank you very much, through you. So, clearly there's been a number of numbers announced in terms of FTE reductions. The original numbers were based on the previous fiscal strategy and getting back to the proportion of the State Service as it related to

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the total population in Tasmania, and that's where the original 2500 FTE figure came from. Further work was done to understand what that reduction would be over time having regard to population growth, and that's where the 1800 to 2032 came from because it factored in population growth, and the 1714 FTE figure is based on the operational efficiencies that agencies have identified in this budget, with those efficiencies that relate to employee expenditure being considered in terms of FTE, so the average cost of salaries in each of the agencies, that's built into those operational efficiencies. So, the 1800 is the longer-term target, 1714 is what's been factored into this 2026-27 Budget.

Mr O'BYRNE - It seems like you just contradicted the Premier. You've outlined essentially that it's a fiscal strategy, where the Premier has outlined that it's a strategy designed to deliver services efficiently. So they're two different things, aren't they?

Mr HEALEY - No, well, no, not really.

Mr O'BYRNE - You said fiscal strategy, so it's about the dollars. The Premier's talked about delivering services.

Mr HEALEY - No, can I, sorry through you, Premier, I'm just explaining how the original figure was determined, and that was based on the fiscal strategy in the 2025-26 budget. The numbers now in terms of FTE reductions reflecting the operational efficiencies that agencies have built into the 2026-27 budget, which relates to how they are looking to make savings, minimising the impact on their frontline, so ensuring that they can deliver on the budget targets in the best way that they can.

Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, can I go to, calling upon Mr O'Byrne's question, around the 2021 Watt Review of the State Service? It recommend that your government committed to delivering by June 2026, so this month; that the TSS (Tasmanian State Service) develop a whole of government framework for recording, reporting and analysing workforce data to inform workforce planning; that all state government agencies ensure they have workforce plans in place for the start of 2023, which will be refreshed every 12 months thereafter and reviewed every three years, so this year; develop a centrally essentially a whole of TSS workforce plan by the end of 2023 that targets identified workforce challenges; and supports whole-of-government priorities. Has this been done, and if not, why not? How has that informed your decision to arrive at 1700 jobs and 250 jobs specifically in DSG?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. Do we have a Watt Review update?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through you, Premier, and noting that the Watt Review obviously was reported in terms of 2021 and 2022, we have been applying a staged process in terms of the recommendations. First off, we did prioritise the recommendations that aligned with the commission of inquiry. In terms of those recommendations, but certainly in terms of the efficiency and productivity in the State Service, we have established the Efficiency and Productivity Unit (EPU) as part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. That unit is led by our Deputy Secretary, Mathew Healey, who also coincidentally worked very closely with Mr Ian Watt in the delivery of the TSS review, so has those recommendations from the Watt Review squarely in mind in terms of the work that's currently being undertaken by the EPU.

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Ms JOHNSTON - That review for three years: the targets, the plans, they're all in place and that's what's informing, and how you arrived at the specific numbers that you're targeting at the moment?

Mr MORGAN-WICKS - Mr Healey spoke of the way in which we first looked at the sustainability of the State Service. First off, looking at the fiscal strategy in terms of identifying a percentage which is matched to population, which is the old fiscal strategy. In this year's Budget, there is actually a new fiscal strategy. Treasury has updated that through Budget Committee and in Cabinet. We have taken another look at that number and also looked at population growth. These numbers are quite difficult. They can change at a point in time depending on population growth. They can also change according to the operational efficiencies that are identified by secretaries in managing their budget.

As a secretary, when we receive our annual budget, the first thing that we will do is look to see if we can actually identify non-salary savings across our agencies because it's not affecting people. But where it's impossible to achieve that only through non-salary savings, we will look at salary savings.

We have done that, for example, in my own department where we were set a budget. I had an employee expense line and we had to achieve reductions, which we did through natural attrition, through managing very closely resignations in our agency; looking at the position, seeing if it was essential to recruit or not. If it was essential, could I transfer another employee into that position and not backfill the other? And we have achieved a reduction of 82.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, Service Tasmania remains an important front door for Tasmanians but more are using the new app, turning to that as a way of dealing with things, including me. Can you explain a bit more going forward with that, please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I visited Service Tasmania in recent months to speak with a number of people working there, which was very good. While many people use Service Tasmania's digital services, including the app, there are also 27 face-to-face service centres as well as the phone service and government contact centre. We have all bases covered. Service Tasmania has also moved to deliver a wide range of community programs through its Community Grants and Programs Unit.

Regarding the app, since myServiceTas was launched in April 2024, there have been over 204,000 transactions, 251,905 vehicle renewals and over 30,000 customers have downloaded the app to date. You're safe. It includes face and fingerprint ID, push notifications via text or email when renewals are due, a digital wallet and a personalised task list. We've also added the ability to apply for a temporary upgrade permit for heavy vehicles, and you can use live face check when renewing your Working with Vulnerable People registration.

Most recently, we've added a link to the Marine and Safety Tasmania portal, allowing customers to view and renew their boat licences, registration and moorings.

Service Tasmania will undoubtedly continue to evolve, but it is as successful and relevant today as it was when it was established back in 1998. Again, can I thank the team at Service Tasmania right across the 27 locations I've mentioned for its continued evolution and the work

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it provides for Tasmanians in all regions of the state. I have the pleasure in tabling the Service Tasmania highlights of the year, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you, Premier.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, the Cabinet approved legal fee expenses for Madeleine Ogilvie to initiate action in the Supreme Court. Your entire Cabinet knew that she had misled a parliamentary committee. Why did you let that occur for six months before there was a correction?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are clear guidelines for legal assistance in place. These have been in place for nearly 20 years. Put in place, in fact, by the Labor government. They were in place when the Greens were last in government with Labor. The policy and guidelines governing the granting of indemnities and legal assistance are publicly available. The policy and guidelines clearly state that indemnity and legal assistance can be considered against legal processes brought under civil circumstances. These are complex matters, particularly given the confidentiality requirements. Noting the Chair's comments as well, I won't be commenting any further.

Mr WILLIE - Did you ask Madeleine Ogilvie to correct the record earlier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I won't be commenting any further

Mr WILLIE - Is this the standard you accept from your ministers?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not commenting any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, yesterday Ms Ogilvie responded to a social media comment and confirmed that her taxpayer-funded legal fees related specifically to the Supreme Court proceedings that she had initiated. Can you confirm that you're aware of the connection between the legal fees approved by Cabinet and those proceedings?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not going to comment any further. As I've said, these are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements. I won't be commenting any further for the reasons that have been stated by the Chair and others.

Dr WOODRUFF - Before 17 November last year, were you aware that Ms Ogilvie was involved in a Supreme Court proceeding?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I cannot comment on these matters.

Dr WOODRUFF - Cabinet has to approve the request to use taxpayer funds to pay for the minister's legal costs. We've confirmed this and you know it. Surely you must have known what it was about. Or did you and Cabinet approve the expenditure without even knowing what it was for?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are clear guidelines for legal assistance in place.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Either you approved the legal cost without knowing it or you knew about the Supreme Court proceedings.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, we'll move on. I've given you three questions.

Mr GEORGE - Premier, at the start of this term, your Liberal government committed to a 100-day plan in which you committed to developing key performance indicators for all ministers. Have you implemented key performance indicators? And are there any ministers who have, for any period of time, either not met or are not meeting, or are at risk of not meeting their key performance indicators?

Mr O'BYRNE - Be careful in answering this one.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the advice from the table. Yes, I've written to all ministers when they're commissioned and I meet with ministers following their commission as minister, detail the letter to each individual minister around my expectations for delivery. I meet on a regular basis with each minister. I believe the letters I've written are publicly available, in terms of my expectations and their delivery areas of focus. I continue to meet with ministers and I expect delivery.

Mr GEORGE - For any period of time, have any of your ministers either not met or are not meeting, or are at risk of not meeting the KPIs?

Mr ROCKLIFF - All my ministers understand their requirements -

Mr GEORGE - Yeah. Have they met them?

Mr ROCKLIFF - expectations from me in terms of what I expect to be delivered. I've detailed those in the letters in an open and transparent way with the Tasmanian community, which is also a mechanism of accountability.

Mr GEORGE - So you're satisfied that every minister -

CHAIR - Mr George, in the interest of fairness, we'll keep going. I was being so fair I left myself out in asking questions, so back to me.

Premier, as the minister in charge of the public service, you are the person responsible for the employment of departmental secretaries. My question is about the conditions in a standard employment contract for those departmental secretaries, specifically the termination without cause clause or provision. There are three parts to my question but they are very straightforward. What's the standard length of severance or termination benefits included in the employment contract? So, if the departmental secretaries are terminated before the end of their contract, how many months or years of their salary are they eligible to be paid out? Are there any secretaries currently employed, including Craig Limkin, who have a longer payout period than the standard of so many months and years? If so, who are they and what is the justification for this?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I may have to take some of that on notice, but head of agency remuneration and entitlements are published each financial year as part of departmental annual

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reports. These are available on agency websites. I'm not sure, Ms Morgan-Wicks, if you heard all parts of the question?

CHAIR - The question's around the - any sort of special arrangements for some of these secretaries.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through the Premier: in terms of head-of-agency contractual requirements in relation to termination, there is a standard termination clause in head-of-agency contracts, and all secretaries or heads of department have the same termination clause except for myself. As the head of Premier and Cabinet and head of the State Service, I have a different termination clause, which was negotiated on my contract.

CHAIR - Mr Limkin didn't have a variation to the clause?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through the Premier: no, he did not. He has the standard termination clause. I can say that in relation to media reporting in relation to that clause, it was incorrect.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, artificial intelligence, I know has been used all around the world, but I understand that there is a little bit of scepticism about AI and its benefits. Can you explain the use of AI in government, and what benefits it can give to Tasmanians and the benefits also that can come in with the Budget. I know there's \$4 million being put forward to assisting with an AI accelerator. What will be the benefits for Tasmanians and what will it save?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Vermev. AI is already embedded across many of the systems that we rely on every day, and so the question is not necessarily whether to use AI, but how we use it liberally, responsibly, in a way that delivers real value for Tasmanians. Going to the last part of the question first: the AI acceleration is about giving government a coordinated way to scale AI where it delivers practical outcomes, rather than simply using it as an isolated or in an ad hoc way. Our funded AI accelerator initiative is a partnership between the government, the University of Tasmania and the private sector to embed the use of AI across the State Service. This partnership will help agencies identify, test and scale high-value use of AI, and whether that's in real productivity savings, helping agencies address delivery risks earlier or using data for workforce matters, it's also about applying clear governance, discipline, guardrails and human oversight so AI is used responsibly, consistently and public trust is maintained.

You asked about some examples. AI is already in use improving efficiency across government and local government. I'm advised the Huon Valley Council is rolling out AI to support the assessment of planning applications and by doing so can demonstrate a significant reduction in the time and cost of planning services. We will work with them and LGAT, indeed, to help other councils adopt this. Tasmania Police are using AI to improve the quality and reduce the time it takes to write up police reports, getting police back on the streets more quickly. Importantly, we are not replacing humans with AI because humans will always need to retain decision-making authority, of course, and accountability and in implementation of the AI accelerator initiative, human oversight is non-negotiable. Will it save money? Well, like any technology, AI can increase efficiency, so you can do the same job more quickly, as I said, like managing community grants and a bushfire for example, in terms of reducing the need to

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hire additional staff or fund overtime. The savings also, in time, as mentioned, with the police and getting frontline workers out the door and not on the desks and doing the work on the ground.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, what advice do you give to your ministers when they mislead Parliament?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have expectations of all our ministers.

Mr WILLIE - Expectations? That's not advice. What is your advice to your ministers when they mislead parliament?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, they correct the record.

Mr WILLIE - They correct the record; did you give that advice to Madeleine Ogilvie?

Mr ROCKLIFF - This is a matter concerning Ms Ogilvie and I'm not commenting further.

Mr WILLIE - How can Tasmanians have any confidence in what you or your ministers say, when this is the standard you accept?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I expect a high standard. Ms Ogilvie has relinquished her ministerial responsibilities and is now on the backbench.

Mr WILLIE - Six months later. Did you give her advice to correct the record earlier?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ms Ogilvie is on the backbench, and the details of her circumstances Ms Ogilvie has said she would detail when she is legally able to do so.

Mr WILLIE - You knew that she had initiated action in the Supreme Court. You knew that she'd misled a parliamentary committee and you did nothing.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not commenting on the matters concerning Ms Ogilvie.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, when did you first become aware of the fact that Ms Ogilvie had made a false statement in budget Estimates last November about her involvement in Supreme Court matters?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've covered these matters today and I won't be commenting any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - You probably remember last year, last November, we asked you and every other minister the question about Supreme Court matters. You knew we were asking that question of every minister, and you knew that Ms Ogilvie had been in court. Were you curious to know what answer she'd given?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not - I've advised quite clearly that I won't be commenting on these matters any further.

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Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, hypothetically, would Cabinet approve the payment of legal expenses for any member of parliament taking civil action, and what information would Cabinet require in order to make that decision?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Answer hypothetical questions - and these matters have been well-canvassed today.

Ms JOHNSTON - What does the policy say?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have the policy guidelines for the grant of indemnities and legal assistance to public officers of the state of Tasmania, and we follow the guidelines, as of July 2021, if my memory serves me correctly.

Ms JOHNSTON - So, what information would Cabinet require to be able to follow those policy guidelines if any member of parliament, hypothetically, requested coverage of their legal expenses when taking civil action? What information would be required to be provided to Cabinet to meet the policy?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The policy and guidelines, as I've said, are online.

CHAIR - Premier, just back to Mr Limkin: I just want to know what the length of the standard termination clause is for the secretaries, because it's not published in the annual reports, and can you provide that for deputy secretaries as well, please. These are important questions because these are the highest-paid employees in the public service.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Look, would you mind if I take that on notice, Ms Burnet?

CHAIR - Certainly. And the other questions from last time?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm advised that the SES template is online as well.

CHAIR - Well, I request that you do take that on notice. Thank you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Done.

Mr O'BYRNE - Premier, the reduction in the public sector workforce is essentially driven by the fiscal strategy to reduce costs. You've announced voluntary redundancies for State Growth, and this morning you've announced a public-sector-wide - correct me if I'm wrong, public-sector-wide voluntary redundancy program. The cost of that falls in the year that it's provided, so I'm assuming by the end of the year there will be significant separation packages paid to many public sector employees. There's nothing in the Budget that I can see which allocates money for that. How is it going to be funded?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. We have discussed these matters internally and I will hand to Kath to provide some answers.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through you, Premier, each secretary is required to manage the employee expenses line that is in their budget. For example, in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, we have achieved a reduction of 82 paid FTE in comparison to March 2025. That

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has been achieved through natural attrition, through not filling position that we have deemed not to be essential. We have had some 16 WRIPS (Workforce Renewal Incentive Programs) and we've also had two TNVRs (Targeted and Negotiated Voluntary Redundancies). We have managed those costs within our total employee expenditure budget and also through transfers, where needed and as approved in consultation with Treasury, between our outputs if required.

Each secretary is required to manage their employee expenditure line. They will juggle and ensure that they are able to then meet the payment of TNVR packages in accordance with their own budgets.

Mr O'BYRNE - Natural attrition is very different to a broad-based open voluntary redundancy scheme. Is there a cap to the number of separations that you can fund? The point I'm making is there's no transparency around how much this is going to cost. I understand the long-term structural savings, but they all fall in the one year. And natural attrition is very different to providing what could be some very substantial packages. Are there budget guidelines? How are you going to manage this financially? It's going to be very difficult.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There are guidelines issued in relation to the calls for an expression of interest in a TNVR. An example set of guidelines are currently available in the Department of State Growth. They've had a TNVR program. State Growth have worked with, for example, the Department of Treasury, to note and attempt to roll over any savings from the current financial year into the next financial year, noting that they do have the requirement to pay packages into 2026-27. Each secretary is required to manage their employee expenditure budget and will look at the number of packages they can afford within that.

Noting that natural attrition will still occur, we don't manage agencies with zero attrition at any point in time in history. In fact, you can run attrition between 10 and 20 per cent in an agency. It's actually about how hard we manage each of those resignations or transfers out to other agencies, and whether we are recruiting to backfill. If we do not recruit to backfill that position, secretaries have to look at their own processes and workload allocation across the agency and make sure that you're not just leaving holes.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, I'm seeing some quite confronting advertising on TV that is aimed at keeping children safe from sexual abuse. Can you provide an update on this campaign and what further measures are being introduced to help protect children and young people?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Keeping children and young people safe is one of the most, if not the most important responsibilities that we share as a government and a community. The Tell Someone initiative and the advertisements you refer to, I have some information on the campaign which I'm happy to table. It is reaching right across Tasmania through a wide range of channels: television, radio, social media, bus advertising posters, et cetera. Yes, the ads are uncomfortable and confronting, but they are necessary and designed to help Tasmanians recognise the signs of child sexual abuse and feel confident to act if something does not seem right.

We've also refreshed the Tell Someone website to make it more accessible, practical and child-centred, and we are already seeing a strong response. Over the past four months, the website has recorded close to 20,000 visits, with engagements increasing by more than 650 per cent.

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We are now building on that momentum with the next phase of the initiative. I am proud to announce that we have now launched the Tell Someone network. This network brings together organisations across Tasmania, including schools, sporting clubs, businesses and community groups to strengthen child safety practices and promote the campaign's messages in their communities.

Alongside the network, we've also launched a free safeguarding training model. The training provides clear and practical guidance on recognising the signs of abuse and grooming, responding appropriately, and connecting with the right supports and reporting pathways. This training is available to anyone in the community, whether they work or volunteer with children and young people or simply want to better understand how they can play a role in keeping children safe.

As you'd appreciate, real and lasting change requires all of us working together across government, organisations, families and communities to ensure that every child and young person in Tasmania feels safe, heard and believed. The message we continue to share is a simple one: if something does not feel right, tell someone. I'll table some information about the campaign.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, why won't you answer basic questions today that have nothing to do with the suppression order?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have answered questions. These matters are complex. Ms Ogilvie, as all these questions lead to, will provide - has given an undertaking to provide details when she is legally able to do so.

Mr WILLIE - If the Integrity Commission completed an investigation and a person named in the report commenced Supreme Court proceedings challenging the process or findings, would that prevent the commission from publishing the report?

CHAIR - Again, I might just interrupt. I'm not sure whether this does constitute sub judice, but just be very aware of the questions you're asking, please, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Well, I'm frustrated because the Premier's being secretive over basic questions.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not able to comment on that matter. It's a question potentially for the Integrity Commission. I'm not able to comment.

Mr WILLIE - What do you say to Tasmanians about your secrecy around this issue with basic questions?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are clear guidelines when it comes to legal fees and indemnities, and we're following those guidelines.

Dr WOODRUFF - Did you or anyone in your office encourage the former minister, Ms Ogilvie, to make a further clarifying statement in the week of the 2025 budget Estimates?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not going to comment further on these matters concerning Ms Ogilvie.

Dr WOODRUFF - Were you or anyone in your office advised that the former minister was going to table the so-called clarification statement she made?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not able to comment on Ms Ogilvie's matters.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you know that Madeleine Ogilvie has made more comments on her socials posts in the last day than you have today at the table about what has been happening?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not aware of Ms Ogilvie's social media.

Mr GEORGE - It follows up the Chair's questions and the question I asked before, Premier. The 100-day plan, which the Liberal government committed to, you committed to refreshing performance agreements for the heads of all agencies. Are there any heads of agencies that for any period of time have not met or are not meeting, or at risk of not meeting their performance agreements?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I work with all heads of agencies. Of course, predominantly, the ministers themselves work directly with their respective heads of agencies, as I do with Ms Morgan-Wicks. We expect hard work on behalf of the Tasmanian taxpayer.

Mr GEORGE - What are these performance agreements and how do you judge whether they've been met or not met?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not that I have done this in this term but previously, as minister, I've looked at performance agreements with respective agencies. That was a few years ago now but -

Mr GEORGE - I guess what I'm wondering is, is there any paperwork or is there any formal process?

CHAIR - Mr George, we'll give the Premier a chance to answer this and we'll move on to Ms Johnston.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ms Morgan-Wicks would like to comment.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There are written performance agreements for each head of agency. It's actually formed through a process of a head of agency sitting down with their minister - and some of them will have several ministers - and those ministers will sign off on those performance agreements. They are required to reflect, for example, the government's strategic plan, each of the 100-day plan commitments, every key deliverable that's in the Budget, it has workplace health and safety requirements because heads of agency are PCPUs under the legislation, it includes obligations around meeting budget and managing their budget and their workforce to deliver for the government. That head of agency performance agreement is provided to me as head of the State Service to review and ensure that there is consistency across each of the agreements where appropriate, and that is provided with a recommendation through to the Premier for noting each head of agency performance agreement.

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Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, it's been noted over a number of weeks now that when you're seeking to reduce the workforce via voluntary redundancies, natural attrition and the like, people may leave from very key strategic positions and they may need to be backfilled or replaced, so providing that target can be challenging in those circumstances. Do all agencies have a workforce plan and is there a whole-of-government workforce plan that ensures there are particular jobs that are required to be filled, even if they've been voluntary redundancies in those areas or there's been natural attrition in those areas?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, there are some key dependencies within diverse areas. Kath, would you like to talk about that?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Apologies if I was a bit unclear in my last answer because I didn't get to workforce plans. As chair of the Public Sector Industrial Relations Committee officials that reports through to Cabinet, we receive workforce strategies for each of the departments as they relate to wage negotiations and the future industrial environment for each agency. Those workforce strategies will look at, for example, a workforce strategy around nursing personnel in the Department of Health, what the department is hoping to achieve, all of the development requirements, whether it's in relation to nursing hours per patient day requirements or whether they might be contemplating ratios which other jurisdictions employ, it'll look right across that workforce. These exist in agencies, particularly for specific cohorts and also where we are in a very competitive environment.

Ms JOHNSTON - Is there a whole-of-agency one for each agency and a whole-of-government one which are publicly available?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There is not a whole-of-government workforce strategy. These are sector-dependent within departments that are managing their own workforces. Health, for example, has a whole-of-health 2040 workforce strategy, which I recall as being secretary of Health back then, and they are managing their workforce in accordance with that strategy which had to be amended throughout COVID given the difficulties in attracting -

Ms JOHNSTON - Are they all publicly available?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Yes, that is published.

CHAIR - Did you want to take that on notice, if it's not for -

Ms JOHNSTON - Is it for everyone else or is it just the Health department?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I actually don't know in relation to every department. I used the Health workforce 2040 strategy, which is published -

Mr WILLIE - Point of clarification, Chair. There are Independents asking multiple questions, there's only supposed to be two Independents on the rotation and there's been three at times.

CHAIR - I don't think so, but anyway, I take your point.

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Mr WILLIE - Three questions were asked just then and the rotation has also been out of whack.

CHAIR - I think we've all had more than our fair share of questions, to be fair, so we'll move on to Mr Vermeij, who's the only one who has a single question. Over to you, Mr Vermeij.

Mr VERMEIJ - Premier, I understand the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) is responsible for natural disasters and recovery. Can you tell me more about what they've been involved in during the past year and how they help when there are storms, floods, droughts and fires?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, thank you for the question. Some years ago now, government established Resilience and Recovery Tasmania as a business unit in my department to deliver a whole-of-government strategic direction before, during and after natural disasters. It focuses on emergency management communications, coordinating disaster recovery but also, importantly, disaster risk reduction and resilience.

We also partnered with the Australian Government to build community resilience to natural disasters. Our role is to work to identify opportunities in Tasmania, assist with the process and secure those projects under the Disaster Ready Fund. We secured over \$9.5 million in the new Australian Government funding under round 3, supporting projects worth over \$17 million.

We work in all regions on drought resilience, planning and deliver the Risk Information Portal Tasmania, which helps all our agencies and local governments identify risk. Importantly, this unit also coordinates recovery operations, including the Dolphin Sands clean-up program following the December 2025 bushfires. There were 414 emergency assistance grants out the door between 5 December and 19 January this year across the fire region, totalling \$162,000, as well as recovery and restoration grants in the clean-up program.

I've got some highlights from Resilience and Recovery Tasmania for the 2025-26 year today. I also have pleasure in releasing the Tasmanian Disaster Resilience Strategy, a roadmap for building resilience against disasters and strengthening our coordinated approach to resilience. It's all about preparing for, living through and recovering from difficult events and hazards and, most importantly, ensuring Tasmanians, places and businesses have the tools they need to manage and recover from disasters.

Before I table what I have spoken of, I thank very much all our SES personnel, our frontline responders, our police, our fireies, our volunteers. I met a number of them at Dolphin Sands in December last year and in the recovery phase later on. That is just one example of the enormous work they do. In the year preceding there was the west coast bushfires as well, so they're always on a high alert and responding in a volunteer capacity as well as a paid capacity. I very much appreciate the work that they do.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, Treasurer Abetz has just told a committee that, as far as he can recall, he wasn't in Cabinet when the decision was made to approve legal fees for Madeleine Ogilvie to initiate action in the Supreme Court. That means the decision was made by Cabinet prior to 17 November last year, when minister Ogilvie misled a committee. Why did you not ask her to correct the record straight away?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Willie, these are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements. I will not be commenting any further.

Mr WILLIE - Treasurer Abetz has just given us a timeline - more information than you have all morning. Why did you not ask your minister to correct the record straight away?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will not be commenting any further on Ms Ogilvie's circumstances.

Mr WILLIE - How can Tasmanians have any confidence in what you or your government says when this is the standard you accept? It's gone on for six months.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ms Ogilvie has given an undertaking to provide full details when she's legally able to do so.

Mr WILLIE - This isn't about the suppression order, this is about the standards you accept as leader of the government. One of your ministers has deliberately misled a committee and you did nothing to get her to correct the record.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I said I'm not commenting any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, when did you first become aware that former minister Madeleine Ogilvie had made a so-called 'clarification statement' to Estimates last year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - These matters are under Ms Ogilvie's legal circumstances. Ms Ogilvie has given an undertaking to provide full details when she's legally able to do so.

Dr WOODRUFF - It has nothing to do with the legal matter, it has to do with a matter of administration. When did you become aware that Ms Ogilvie had made a clarification statement? Was it before the Greens raised the matter in parliament on 21 May this year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not going to comment any further on Ms Ogilvie's circumstances.

Dr WOODRUFF - Was it after the Greens raised the matter on 21 May and before 28 May when Ms Ogilvie said it was in relation to matters she'd initiated? Were you aware of the clarifying statement in any of those periods?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm mindful of the Chair's comments, and I'm not commenting any further.

CHAIR - My question is still around Mr Limkin. I wonder if Mr Limkin is still employed as the Secretary of State Growth? According to previous responses to questions both in the House of Assembly and the upper House, Mr Limkin went on leave on 7 March 2026 and was on annual leave still on 19 May. Is Mr Limkin still on leave? If so, what type of leave is he on? Has the entire period from 7 May been one type of leave or different types?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As part of my state of the state address on 3 March 2026, I announced the transformation of the Department of State Growth, including the restructure to create a new department called Building Tasmania. Building Tasmania will deliver the roads, housing,

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infrastructure our state needs to be fit for the future, and this will include the transition of Homes Tasmania into Building Tasmania.

The Secretary of the Department of State Growth, Mr Limkin, is taking a period of leave which commenced on 7 March 2026. Shane Gregory is acting as Secretary of Department of State Growth in Mr Limkin's absence.

CHAIR - He's still on leave. What sort of leave is it that he's on?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am advised that Mr Limkin is on annual leave until early July.

CHAIR - Will you take the rest of the question on notice please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Could you refresh my memory on the rest of the questions?

CHAIR - Is he still employed as the secretary?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

CHAIR - He's still employed. What are the types of different leaves he is on?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Annual leave, I am advised.

Mr GEORGE - Premier, just going back to both questions about the 100-day plan. You haven't given me yes or no about whether you are satisfied that ministers have met your key performance indicators as you promised you would implement. Nor have you answered whether heads of department have met their performance agreements. Can you give a yes or a no that every member of your ministry has met its KPI and that every head of department has satisfied the requirements which are outlined by your secretary?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The reason why we have 100-day plans is to ensure we keep ourselves accountable to what we committed to do. That's our objective of the 100-day plans, it keeps accountability within departments, it keeps accountability within ministers and their officers as well. My expectation is that the 100-day plans are delivered, and largely they're delivered and, in some circumstances, even more is delivered and exceed expectations in the number of areas.

Some aren't for whatever particular reason. My expectation, I expect our ministers to follow those 100-day plans of actions and in conjunction with the departments to ensure delivery. We at times speak about this one-on-one in terms of ministers and implementation of those actions.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, Chair. My question is around and following from the Chair's question line on the contracts for senior public servants. In answer to a question, you said that there was a standard termination contract. Has that standard termination clause materially improved under the current agreements previous to the ones before? Has there been a change in the benefits paid to senior public servants on termination for this new contract?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. I'll need to take that on notice. Happy to provide that information. We need to check.

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Mr VERMEY - Premier, Agfest this year had over 55,000 visitors, a huge increase from the 1983 event that attracted 9000. How important are agricultural shows to Tasmania in the regional areas? I noted there's \$600,000 that has been announced in this budget to secure these regional events. How does that come into play?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, I thank Rural Youth Tasmania for the work that they do more broadly, but also particularly their members support for the AgFest committee when it comes to organising what is a tremendous agricultural event and more. In fact, as you say, for northern Tasmania, 55,703 visitors attended this year, which is a big uplift since 1983, which 9000 attended, but it was a different location; I believe it was near Symmons Plains at that particular time.

Agfest, as I understand it, conservatively contributes around \$26 million into the Tasmanian economy each year with hundreds of businesses relying on Agfest trade and leads to underpin additional business profitability. It cannot occur without that partnership with government, and we delivered on our election commitment of \$500,000 to secure this event with critical fire system upgrades at Quercus Park. This has ensured two of Tasmania's most popular events - Agfest and Party in the Paddock - can continue to run safely.

We're also proud to continue supporting these efforts with the Tasmanian government exhibit continuing for 2027 and 2028, so another two years the very least. This includes Tasmania Police showcasing community policing, police recruitment and firearms services; the Tasmanian Fire Service highlighting the Bushfire-Ready communities, the fuel reduction Unit, volunteer strategy and showing Tasmanian fire equipment; our State Emergency Service educating the community on its flood-risk unit and volunteer strategy; and many other agencies highlighting population screening, TasALERT, climate and future industries in Tasmania and biosecurity. Each year, the Tasmanian government exhibit attracts thousands of visitors and all agencies have the option of attending other agricultural shows around the state. This is a very important connection, I believe, between rural and regional Tasmania and important government agencies as well. I look forward to supporting it again in 2027 and 2028.

Mr WILLIE - Chair. Premier, during the election you promised Tasmanians that you would start a new government business that would sell home and contents insurance, small business insurance, community insurance and regional insurance to farmers. You promised that it would save Tasmanians \$250 off their premiums, and you promised it would reduce grocery prices. It was your signature election promise, so much so that you wore a TasInsure jacket almost every day of the campaign. Since then, you've broken your 'core promise,' to borrow a phrase from John Howard. How can Tasmanians ever trust another promise from your government when you're willing to break signature election promises like this?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Our commitment is for fair and cheaper insurance and we will deliver that.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, during the election you also promised Tasmanians that TasInsure wouldn't cost a cent. Is that still true?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, you said it would cost \$150 million.

Mr WILLIE - Lateral Economics said that.

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Mr ROCKLIFF - Sorry?

Mr WILLIE - Your friends at Lateral Economics said that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, it's not going to cost \$150 million, and our objectives are to deliver fairer and cheaper insurance for Tasmanians through TasInsure. We have engaged an expert in terms of helping us deliver that. We're open to good partnerships, including Australia's only mutual insurance agency, that being the RACT. The primary focus of TasInsure is to deliver fairer, cheaper insurance for Tasmanian households, businesses, community groups and other consumers. Insurance prices, as I'm sure you'd appreciate - which I did say consistently throughout the campaign - are about Tasmanians paying higher premiums when the risk of other areas around Australia were taken into account. What TasInsure will do is isolate the risk to Tasmania and Tasmania alone. This is one of the key findings from John Trowbridge and as part of the implementation plan we will deliver TasInsure. Our commitment has always been to deliver cheaper and fairer, more accessible insurance for Tasmanians. What has changed is how we go about that. I accept that, but we can deliver on the commitment without risk to the Tasmanian taxpayer or indeed cost to the Tasmanian taxpayer.

We listened to industry, community groups and stakeholders and the advice was that there was no silver bullet. The advice was that to replicate a full-scale insurance company would be a higher cost and a higher risk and unlikely to deliver the best outcome. We use that advice to redefine our delivery model with those same goals in mind.

The TasInsure implementation pathway makes it clear that the new model is a Tasmanian government-owned, not-for-profit statutory authority that will step in where the market fails, focus on long-term affordability by addressing risk-prevention and resilience and increased competition.

This means TasInsure will have the ability to support, structure or participate in insurance solutions designed specifically for Tasmanian needs. It will focus on long term affordability, [inaudible] risk, again for you know, prevention, resilience and competition. Stepping in with the market fails, which I also mentioned a number of times throughout the campaign, rather than relying on short-term or artificial price interventions.

Over time, Tasmanians may see insurance products and initiatives that are supported, facilitated or endorsed through TasInsure arrangements. So, our commitment remains, Mr Willie, and we will deliver.

Mr WILLIE - You claimed on Facebook that it will cost zero dollars and the Treasury costing you submitted said zero dollars. Why did you say that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - TasInsure will be less costly and less risk than first proposed through the advice that we received.

Mr WILLIE - You said it was zero dollars.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, when Ms Ogilvie responded to our question in parliament on 28 May, she read a written statement. Did you or anyone in your office see that statement before it was delivered? If so, when did that occur?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, again, this is a question around Ms Ogilvie, and Ms Ogilvie has been given an undertaking to provide full details when she's legally able to do so.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, they're uncomfortable questions for you and you haven't answered a single one so far. On 28 May, the former minister told parliament she'd initiated a Supreme Court proceeding. The Greens subsequently called for her to resign, given the clear evidence that she had intentionally misled parliament. What conversations did you have with the former minister between that time and when she offered you her resignation?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Again, these matters is - I'm very mindful of one of the Chair's comments. Matters that are complex and I won't be commenting any further.

Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, there have been changes in reporting for community peaks that sat under DPAC in that they are now reporting to their line agencies. How are you going to ensure that family and sexual violence, older Tasmanians and young people continue to receive a whole-of-government focus that they need to get better outcomes when they're reporting directly to line agencies? What oversight will you personally have?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Are you talking about, like, TasCOSS (Tasmanian Council of Social Service)?

Ms JOHNSTON - Community peaks, so that would include the Family and Sexual Assault Support Alliance, that would include Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), Council on the Ageing (COTA), they're all now reporting to line agencies rather than directly to DPAC. How are you going to ensure that those particular issues will have a whole-of-government oversight like they've previously had?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In many respects they're whole-of-government issues, of course.

Ms JOHNSTON - Exactly, but now they're reporting just to line agencies.

Mr ROCKLIFF - If I can go through some further timelines with you around these matters. I recognise that some of the changes are significant. I've said that we'll take the time to ensure that it is planned and coordinated, ensuring our workforce is involved, supported and respected. There are obviously some complexities, including some around legislation needed to enact some of the changes, as I understand it, employment arrangements and operational considerations -

Ms JOHNSTON - These are in relation to the community peaks and their contractual arrangements, so their funding arrangements. They're now reporting to line agencies, not to DPAC. How are you going to ensure that the issues that they are trying to work with in the community have a whole-of-government focus? Older Tasmanians, younger people, family and sexual support services - how are you going to ensure that there's a whole-of-government approach when they're just reporting directly to line agencies?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Through strong engagement and communication. Lines on organisational charts or one thing, but strong relationships and communication is another and an important one. I look forward to engaging with the new TasCOSS CEO, Ms Paula Wriedt, as an example. I have attended functions with them and spoken at functions more recently on

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the day before Good Friday, if my memory serves me correctly. That was the last time where I was able to engage with a number of people that were at that event, including Lifeline Tasmania as an example, including Carers Tas, and - sorry, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania, which I met with just the other day. It's about those strong relationships and communication engagement with ministers, but also oversight from myself as Premier as well.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, last year Labor said that they would save \$8 million by abolishing associated secretaries. Can you tell me whether that assessment is accurate and how many associated secretaries are there and what do they do?

Mr WILLIE - Good question. What do they do?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much for the question, Mr Vermev. To take the last part of the question first, there is one associate secretary position currently occupied, that's the Department of Health.

As I have said, the position of associate secretary is temporary in nature and no further positions will be allocated. I would also point out - because I believe there is some confusion by the honourable member who sits opposite me in this committee hearing and indeed the party that he represents on this - associate secretaries are not new positions. They are a transfer of an existing SES officer. Therefore, the claim being made to be able to save \$8 million over four years ago abolishing associate secretaries is not only wrong, but out by around \$7.6 million over four years.

The position of associate secretary was created to be stood up when necessary. This means when filled, these roles assist the secretary with whole-of-department issues as distinct from deputy secretary roles that have specific portfolio responsibilities.

As Premier, only I can approve an associate secretary based on demonstrated need, and where a secretary wants to have an associate secretary, they are required to provide myself with clear reasons for the need and their rationale for the selection of an existing senior officer. The associate secretary will report directly to relevant ministers on policy development, operational issues and are accountable to myself as Premier and their ministers while in that role while continuing to engage with the secretary in advising them of any emergent critical issues.

Importantly, the filling of an associate secretary role does not increase the overall SES numbers. Of course, my focus remains with the job of for Tasmanians and getting the right structure in place to support heads of agencies to deliver on a wide range of important reforms for Tasmanians. I thank you for the question.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, you said that TasInsure would cost nothing. It's now costing over \$4 million and counting. How is this not a massive broken promise?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, Mr Willie, with respect, you were running around saying it's going to cost \$150 million and that the state will go broke and all sorts of things, if my memory serves me correctly. The allocation the 2026 Budget will be sufficient to get TasInsure operating as anticipated in the implementation pathway. As implementation progresses, funding requirements will continue to be assessed, but it will remain commensurate with the benefits it provides to Tasmanians.

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At this stage, we've assessed the \$4 million as being required, as reflected by the \$2 million amounts for each of the 2026-27 and 2027-28 years, as per the 2026-27 Budget. We also included an amount of up to \$200,000 for Mr Trowbridge's costs, with approximately \$150,000 already having been expended.

Mr WILLIE - You said it would cost zero dollars at the election. That was your costing. It's now costing \$4 million, but it's going to cost a lot more over the journey?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We'll deliver cheaper and fair insurance for Tasmanians. Because of Mr Trowbridge's work, we've come up with a model that will ensure Tasmania's risk pool remains at Tasmania. That means that Tasmanians won't be paying higher insurance premiums as a result of floods and fire across other states of Australia. And that is good.

We want to reach in and support in a staged way. I'm very interested in community events and rolling that out in terms of shows and the like, but also particularly those involved with the tourism and hospitality sector, which has been hardest hit, as I understand it, from insurance premiums. I raised this issue nationally on a number of occasions when I was tourism minister. There were vague commitments made that it would take a national approach. In the absence of that, we decided to reach in and go our own way. I'm very confident that TasInsure will deliver.

Mr WILLIE - You also made claims that Tasmanians would save \$250 off their insurance premiums with no evidence whatsoever to back up your claims. You're now claiming that the new version, 2.0, will save Tasmanians even more than \$250 off their insurance premiums. Can you table any evidence or provide any evidence to the committee today to prove that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am confident that we'll deliver cheaper insurance because of the - have you read the report yet, the implementation -

Mr WILLIE - I have. I read the report when you asked me the other day.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, it didn't look like it. A bit of a blank face. Anyway, I'm sure you've read it now.

Mr WILLIE - There are lots of things you say where I have a blank face.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm sure you've read it now, and the implementation strategy as well. I'm very confident that Mr Trowbridge's work will deliver cheaper and fair insurance.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, your conversation with a minister can't be the subject of a suppression order. You can't suppress Ms Ogilvie out of existence. In relation to the conversations with Ms Ogilvie before she resigned, did you encourage her to resign?

Mr ROCKLIFF - These matters are matters for Ms Ogilvie, and these matters are subject - I'm mindful of Ms Ogilvie's circumstances and I won't be commenting any further. And I won't be commenting on any personal conversations.

Dr WOODRUFF - One of your ministers has just resigned from parliament, left you a hole in your Cabinet. You've made no public statement about that, you've made no defence

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of Ms Ogilvie. Do you accept that the former minister misled parliament and failed to correct the record?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ms Ogilvie has detailed in her statement, and I've made a statement as well. It's all that I intend to say on the matter.

Dr WOODRUFF - My question was whether you accept that she misled parliament?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I accept Ms Ogilvie's statement.

Dr WOODRUFF - What does that mean?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I accept Ms Ogilvie's statement. I've issued a statement as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, you don't think she misled parliament? Because she didn't accept that she did.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ms Ogilvie has -

Dr WOODRUFF - Just resigned because she felt like it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - relinquished her ministerial responsibilities. I acknowledge Ms Ogilvie's apology to the House and the reasons that she has given us.

Mr GEORGE - Premier, am I to take it from your previous answers that every single member of your ministry, every head of department, every head of agency has met or exceeded your expectations and guidelines, or KPIs. If I can't get a direct answer of yes or no, can I take it that your expectations aren't being uniformly met? And if not, where do the problems lie?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much for your question -

Mr GEORGE - Seems like a yes or no, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you very much for your assessment of my ministers. You have the opportunity to engage with them in sensible dialogue and scrutiny over the course of this week. My ministers are all working very diligently under very difficult circumstances. We said this would be a tough and challenging budget, and in some areas it is. But it is one that will deliver surplus throughout the four years, peak debt and years 2028-2029, and considerable surplus in the last year. There's a lot of work to do with departments and ministers in terms of implementing the Tasmanian Budget this year. I've every confidence that they will.

Mr O'BYRNE - Premier, you've articulated a goal of 250 head staff reduction in State Growth/Building Tasmania. Correct me if I'm wrong. In answer to an earlier question, the secretary of DPAC referred to staff potentially in the Department of State Growth (DSG) coming across to the new Building Tasmania depending on the structure, which we're not clear on. Is that a saving for DSG, so they've already achieved some of their staff cuts? Does that mean that there's more than 250 head-count reduction in State Growth/Building Tasmania? If you're moving people from one department to another, how do you account for those? Does that mean that Building Tas or State Growth has to reduce more staff?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - The 250 FTEs is a result of the abolition, effectively, of State Growth that will be achieved. In terms of the operational nature of that question, Kath, would like to comment on that?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - The 250 is a cap in relation to the reductions in State Growth. It is calculated from March 2025. State Growth have already reduced, in terms of their paid head count or FTE, I think in the range of some 35 or 36 FTEs. This is just from memory.

Mr O'BYRNE - Is that natural attrition?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I won't be able to answer that because I think it is natural attrition or resignations. But I would need to know exactly what had occurred within State Growth in relation to that 36. That's probably a question for that secretary. They have opened up a TNVR process in which, my understanding is, some 148 people have expressed an expression of interest in relation to that process.

The 250 is not going to increase through staff moving from another agency into Building Tasmania. It is calculated on the FTE of the Department of State Growth prior to those moves.

What I did try to indicate in my prior answer is that in the creation of a shared service where we are going to combine a payroll team, for example, from the Department of State Growth and the payroll team of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, we will look at all of those positions as a whole. If there are, for example, people within a DPAC payroll team that would like to put up their hand in an expression of interest, that would then save some numbers within the DSG team. We will examine that as a whole, so -.

Mr O'BYRNE - Based on that answer, the number was set in 2025. You're adding people from DSG. Doesn't that make the cut harder to find because you're actually increasing staff?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - The government's commitment is to 250 as a cap for the Department of State Growth.

Mr O'BYRNE - So the cuts will be deeper?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - No. In terms of people being added at a future point in time, they're not there now. The cap has been set at 250 in terms of the FTE for the Department of State Growth that currently exists. It is not counting other teams that are moving from Infrastructure.

Mr O'BYRNE - It's 250 on a level, isn't it?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Yes, that's correct.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, you've mentioned digitalisation as one of the areas in which State Growth can create efficiencies. Can you give me some of examples, please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question, Mr Vermey. It has been a significant year of progress with new platforms and improved services delivering real benefits for Tasmanians. I've just mentioned the MyService app, making it easy to pay your bill safely and securely at

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any time of the day or night. There's also the new TasALERT app which recorded 90,606 additional downloads in the 12 months to March and 15,429,150 emergency notifications sent in that period. The HR information system deployed the first functionality of People Central in November last year and the delivery of the position of management functionality also within DPAC. This whole project will standardise HR businesses and processes across agencies, creating a single, accurate whole-of-government workforce management approach.

In Corrections, Astria went live in April last year, supporting around 1000 users across the Tasmanian Prison Service and Community Corrections. Since its release there have been no instances of prisoners being released early or late due to sentence calculation errors.

Our Cyber Hubs Initiative is now well underway, with standardised incident management processes to manage detection and response for cybersecurity breaches. Importantly, in response to the commission of inquiry, we have developed guidelines to improve information-sharing practices for the protection of children.

There are other significant digitisation projects underway across government that ministers will no doubt report on, including the 10-year Digital Health Transformation project; Justice Connect; a program to replace and modernise the existing Registration to Work with Vulnerable People; Fisheries digital transition; and our statewide parks online booking system. In digitisation, cybersecurity is core to our work, and I have pleasure in tabling the data and digital government highlight report for 2025-26 for members to engage with and digest at their leisure.

CHAIR - Thank you. We'll take a break and be back at 10:13 a.m.

The committee suspended from 10.03 a.m. until 10.13 a.m.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, you told the House that Mr Trowbridge was paid \$150,000 for his work on TasInsure, but the tender listed on the State Growth website is for \$99,999.99. Was Mr Trowbridge given additional funds through another contract? If so, why isn't that contract listed on the tender website?

Mr ROCKLIFF - First, he's done a very good job. Our policy is sound and I'm very excited about cheaper insurance for Tasmanians. He's provided a very good and comprehensive report, where he's been very methodical but also delivered a very good pathway to delivering this policy. In terms of the procurement, I might throw to Mr Healey.

Mr HEALEY - The first contract with the Department of Treasury and Finance was to deliver his expert report. In the development of the implementation pathway, we engaged Mr Trowbridge separately to help us make sure that we were translating his views out of his report faithfully into the implementation pathway, so there is a second contract for under \$50,000 that was entered into directly with Mr Trowbridge for that service.

Mr WILLIE - Why is that not listed on the tender website?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My advice is because it's under \$50,000.

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Mr WILLIE - Isn't it all the same work for TasInsure? You engaged Mr Trowbridge to do this work and then you've added another \$50,000 for an implementation part of it. It looks like you've advertised a contract one cent under the threshold where you have to get three quotes and then you've added \$50,000 to it. What would have been the harm in going to market?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We want expertise and Mr Trowbridge is an expert in his field, which is evidenced by his report.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, you've been asked dozens of questions by us and Labor about what you knew and when about how Madeleine Ogilvie misled parliament, and your approach all along has been to plead the fifth. Are you refusing to answer those questions because you'd incriminate yourself if you did?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have said a number of times today that these are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I won't be commenting further.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, you've refused to answer the most basic questions. The excuse you've used is a court suppression order, and you've done that in an inappropriate, shameless and completely dishonest way. By our count, you've refused to answer 44 questions so far. Do you understand that your approach is making this entire thing a lot worse for you?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ms Ogilvie has given an undertaking to provide full details when she's legally able to do so.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you recognise it leaves us no other option but to use other means to get those answers?

Mr ROCKLIFF - These are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I won't be commenting any further.

Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, in relation to my question I asked previously about community peaks and their oversight, your response was to rattle off a series of informal events as examples of how whole-of-government oversight was provided. With all due respect, community peaks - on behalf of young people, older people and family and sexual violence survivors - don't want informal processes for whole-of-government oversight. They deserve much better. What formal structures are you going to put in place to ensure that there is whole-of-government oversight of these particularly important matters which don't just lie in one portfolio area?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I mentioned some examples of engagement informally, I take that, but ministers have portfolio responsibilities when engaging with the various peaks. If a peak wishes to meet with me - as the Mental Health Council of Tasmania requested when we met informally at a TasCOSS event - we had a meeting just the other day. So, I'm able to engage directly with peaks. Ministers have their responsibilities and peaks will raise with them areas of concern or opportunity. I expect that strong engagement. But ministers have portfolios. Ministers will report to Cabinet. There are Cabinet committees that would align with the responsibilities of some of the peaks that you speak of.

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Ms JOHNSTON - Can you appreciate that there is some conflict, for instance, for young people? The minister for young people, obviously, is Ms Palmer. Very different approach to what Felix Ellis as minister for Police might have when it comes to dealing with young people. Can you appreciate the difficulty they have? There's not a whole-of-government approach to these issues.

Mr ROCKLIFF - There is a whole-of-government approach. There's a whole of government approach to child safety, for example, the implementation of the commission of inquiry recommendations. There is a whole-of-government approach. It needs to start with engagement with responsible ministers, which is, as you'd appreciate, important.

CHAIR - Premier, I note in the budget paper 1, in General Government Sector Expense by Purpose, Environmental Protection is coming in at \$262.1 million, which is only 2 per cent of the Budget. Today you spoke about the Disaster Resilience and Recovery Strategy and the fact that this is housed in DPAC. Do you recognise that action on climate change adaptation is largely trying to achieve the same thing as what your disaster resilience strategy is trying to achieve? This is also consistent with the approach recommended by Mr Trowbridge - who's come up a number of times in today's committee hearing. In his report on TasInsure to address risks from climate change to reduce insurance premiums. Premier, wouldn't it make sense for DPAC, which is also taking on energy, to also take on climate change, so it's all kept together - and for you to take on this most pressing of issues?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The Budget continues investment in practical environmental work that supports climate resilience, adaptation and long-term preparedness. This includes continued work across environmental monitoring, natural values protection, scientific capability and risk-based environmental oversight that supports Tasmania's resilience to changing climate conditions. Protecting biodiversity, improving environmental data, supporting preparedness for smoke, fire, drought and changing environmental conditions and strengthening long-term ecosystem resilience remain important, practical, climate-related priorities within the Environment portfolio. That reflects a practical focus on resilience, science and preparedness - which you went to in your question. I'm confident the areas around climate change, in Environment, are appropriately supported by the new arrangements.

CHAIR - But it's only 2 per cent of the Budget, or the expenses from the general government sector on climate change.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm sure you could look at areas right across the whole of government when it comes to climate change. Investment in planning, investment in Marinus Link, in renewable energy, in policy development. You've mentioned insurance as well. These areas, right across government, if you add all those up, you could successfully argue there's significant investment across the whole of government when it comes to the matters that you speak of.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, can you update us on the key projects being delivered by Brand Tasmania and the benefits these projects are providing to Tasmanians, businesses and the broader community.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Brand Tasmania's projects are focused on strengthening our shared identity and telling the story of what it means to be Tasmanian. These initiatives are building pride and confidence while supporting businesses and communities to share their stories.

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Key work includes the Tasmanian Mark, which continues to grow as a trusted symbol of origin and quality, with 302 approved users as at 30 April. The Little Tasmanian program continues to support identity and belonging from birth, with around 450 bags distributed each month and approximately 17,000 delivered since the program began. Digital storytelling remains a core focus, with 18 stories published this year to 30 April showcasing Tasmanian achievement and creativity. Our digital toolkit and workshops are also supporting partners with almost 9400 asset downloads and over 2000 new assets and 17 workshops delivered to 264 participants.

All of this has been delivered on a modest annual budget while engaging thousands of partners, supporting thousands of licensed products and reaching strong digital audiences across Tasmania and beyond.

These projects continue to strengthen Tasmania's identity and ensure our story is told with pride and consistency. I acknowledge the work of Jess Radford and others within Brand Tasmania for the work that they do. It's a fantastic and tremendous organisation that does partner with many aspects of our community. It also, might I say, partners with the Department of Health on very good, strong Tasmanian-centred recruitment activity for health professionals overseas as well, which is a particular strength of their work. Thank you for the question.

Mr WILLIE - Mr Trowbridge's contract was 1 cent under the threshold where you didn't have to go and test the market. He was then paid an additional \$50,000 which didn't have to be advertised on the tenders website. How is that transparent?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, Mr Trowbridge is an expert in the field. He's delivered a report and he has done a very good job on behalf of the Tasmanian Government with respect to the work that he's done in implementing our TasInsure policy.

Mr WILLIE - Well, it looks like you've tried to subvert the tender process to get the person that you wanted.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, can I say that it's my understanding it's on the tenders web page, and we have been upfront about the investment, as I've demonstrated today even before your question.

Mr WILLIE - Even after you got to handpick a consultant, it only took him moments to say that your policy was a sham. Why didn't you do the work before you went to the election?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I don't believe he said that word, did he?

Mr WILLIE - Well, he said it took him moments to realise how risky it was -

Mr ROCKLIFF - He didn't. We've got to be careful with language, Mr Willie, and he did not say and use that word. He provided a very comprehensive and sensible report addressing our policy intent and commitment.

Mr WILLIE - So, why - if you go to an election promising a signature policy like this with no evidence, no work behind it, why did you do that?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - Tasmanians were telling me that they care about the fact that insurance premiums are out of control.

Mr WILLIE - So you just made something up?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Businesses that I've spoken to either under-insure or cannot insure, or are paying very costly insurance.

Mr WILLIE - Nobody's underestimating the problem. There is a problem. You made up a policy that was unachievable. You made claims that you couldn't deliver.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's our role to have a policy alternative in response to the concerns of the Tasmanian community. Indeed, that is your role as well, Mr Willie, so if you've got other bright ideas, then bring them to the table.

Mr WILLIE - It's also my role to hold you to account for making up falsehoods in an election.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Your job as opposition leader is also to develop good policy in response to the Tasmanian community's concerns as well, so I look forward to your engagement on this particular matter. We said, and clearly outlined, a way that we could have cheaper and fairer insurance. Yes, it's not exactly as we proposed, but it's still a state-owned statutory authority, which will be delivered.

Mr WILLIE - You made outrageous claims that people would save \$250 on their insurance premiums and their grocery prices would go down, with no evidence whatsoever.

CHAIR - Mr Willie, we'll move on.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. Premier, between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, was any public funding provided to pay for minister Jane Howlett's legal costs, and if so, how much?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will take that on notice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay. Thank you. Between 5 March this year and today, has any public funding been provided to pay for minister Howlett's legal costs, and if so, how much?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Again, honourable member, I will just have to take that on notice.

Mr GEORGE - Premier, the salmon inquiry. The government has set aside \$1 million for the salmon inquiry and has assured me and others that the inquiry will be run entirely independently of your government. I noticed from the stakeholder engagement plan, page 13, that the study will be supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which will provide secretarial support for the joint leads. It will be responsible for coordination, facilitation of stakeholder engagement, communications, administrative support and so on; so how does that make the inquiry an independent one?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. Look, obviously, in my view, the salmon industry is a significant contributor to Tasmania's economy. It provides jobs, it provides prosperity for Tasmanians and particularly rural and regional communities. It's critical that we have a regulatory environment that is effective and they've been sustainable development while protecting the state's marine and freshwater environments. The terms of reference for the study was developed in consultation with members, including yourself, of the crossbench, and indeed the Greens, and developed - and within industry as well - and the study commenced on 17 February 2026 with the official appointment of Dr Russell Reichelt AO and Dr Wendy Craik AM to co-lead the study.

Mr GEORGE - I'm asking about the independence of the study. How can it be an independent study if, all of a sudden, we discover that the entire secretarial service is - and the support system is coming out of your department? That's not independent.

Mr ROCKLIFF - With respect, Dr Reichelt and Dr Craik together represent extensive cross-disciplinary expertise in marine science, natural resource management and agriculture, economics, and public policy. The study leads will identify other experts in the relevant fields to be engaged for specific components of the study. The study leads will be empowered to consult widely and all evidence, data and findings will be made publicly available to ensure transparency and accountability. The study will enable all stakeholders to focus on transparency, science and best practice for protecting our environment, strengthening public confidence and providing investment certainty for the future. The draft stakeholder engagement plan and study plan were published on the salmon study website on 25 May this year for public consultation and feedback.

Comment on the draft study plan is sought from all interested parties until Sunday 5 July. The salmon study website is accessible from the main Tasmanian government website. The study plan sets out a clear, two-phase program, covering environmental, social, economic, scientific and regulatory issues across the salmon industry. Phase one focuses on building a trusted evidence base through targeted research on six core topics, with phase two examining future opportunities, climate adaptation and global best-practice regulation. For each topic, the plan identifies key questions, expert sources and proposed engagement methods so the work is transparent, methodical and evidence based. The engagement plan is designed to support transparent, impartial and inclusive engagement across government, industry, communities, Aboriginal groups, researchers, NGOs and the broader public.

Mr GEORGE - Thank you. That didn't address independence at all.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, it is independent.

Mr GEORGE - Not if its secretariat is being run by DPAC.

CHAIR - I think the question has been answered.

Mr O'BYRNE - Premier, my question is off the back of the insightful question from Mr Vermey around IT and digital transformation. Your budget relies on, and banks a number of savings for these projects, yet your track record is pretty ordinary. You've wasted close to \$50 million for the health HR IT upgrade which is nowhere near getting close to even progressing; Justice Connect is years overdue and over budget; The DECYP student

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management IT is four years overdue and over budget. I won't talk about the common ticketing issue; that's still a live issue. Premier, how can you bank savings on something that you've shown a demonstrable inability to deliver?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I wouldn't characterise those areas that you've raised from your characterisation -

Mr O'BYRNE - Am I wrong?

Mr ROCKLIFF - particularly when it comes to the use of the word 'waste'.

Mr O'BYRNE - What would you call \$47 million for no result in the public sector HR IT upgrade? What would you call that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will tell you what I call it.

Mr O'BYRNE - Okay.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The HR transformation program will deliver critical public sector infrastructure to replace more than 40 ageing HR, payroll and rostering platforms for our 36,000-strong Tasmanian state service. Many of these systems are at or beyond end of life and no longer capable of providing reliable, accurate, or timely workforce data. Health alone runs over 1200 different rosters and enters its payroll information manually twice for over 16,000 employees, including a system which often requires restarting during the pay run to allow it to complete.

Mr O'BYRNE - You've been in government since 2014.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The need for system-wide reform is both evident and pressing. This program will deliver People Central, a single, modern HR platform, making it easier to pay people, roster people, reduce paperwork and free up time so staff can focus on delivering services - improved workforce visibility, including volunteers, supports, delivery of commission of inquiry recommendations and strengthens a more consistent, capable public service for the Tasmanian community. Now I may just refer to Ms Morgan-Wicks, when it comes to HRIS, and speak of that matter.

Mr O'BYRNE - Maybe she can comment on the fact that the Auditor-General said the \$47 million that Health has already wasted is essentially dead money for no result.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Through the Premier, I'm very happy to comment on that statement by the Auditor-General, and in fact, have been involved in the HRIS project since its inception, when I was the secretary of the Department of Health, and I'm now responsible for it as the head of the state service. \$47 million is not wasted. \$47 million has actually gone to the building of the foundations for People Central. In 2024 when we actually conducted what is typically known as a stage gate review, and by an ICT expert we received the advice about pausing the program, not to deploy it in the Department of Health as a big-bang deployment, but to actually do the first deployment in a smaller agency as a pilot. That has actually occurred.

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We couldn't deploy something into DPAC without actually having built something, and that is what the \$47 million went to. This is information that was provided very clearly to the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General sent team members into our HRIS and H RTP team. They actually sat, and they've seen and they've witnessed, they've seen the build, they've seen the modules that have actually been rolled out in DPAC. We're actually actively preparing now to roll that out, having learnt those lessons in the smaller agency, into Health as our next deployment and will then move through each of the agencies.

We've actually just entered enterprise design in terms of the payroll function in itself, and I should note that part of that \$47 million has actually gone to a massive clean-up effort across a lot of paper and a lot of manual process. All of that stuff is actually not free. It actually costs us time and resources to go through. One of the examples in Health, which I'm very familiar with, was the 945 people that were attached to one FTE position, so that we could quickly stand up vaccination services in the global pandemic. Those 945 then had to be unwound from that one FTE position. We've done it lawfully, but not in a way that then makes it easy to translate from really old and ageing HR systems into a brand-new People Central system. All of that clean-up has to occur. It has taken a long time in Health to do that and also come up with the industrial, consistent rules that we're going to apply across all of the agencies.

I absolutely do not characterise that as waste. We've had an excellent team of people working on this. Yes, it does take time. We're doing it for a lower price than any other state or territory doing the same thing in Australia. It is very, very complex and we absolutely have to do this. I say to my secretaries often that we will not be able to pay people, we will not be able to actually put our finger on the establishment for any agency to try to achieve operational efficiencies or savings, because we won't have the systems that can do it. I really do implore -

CHAIR - We'll move on, I think.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Ms Morgan-Wicks.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, can you outline for the committee the government's plan for phasing out the greyhound industry?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for the question and his interest in this matter. The government's position has been clear and consistent that greyhound racing will be phased out by 2029. We wanted this transition achieved in an ordinary fashion, with strong animal welfare protections and certainty and compensation for participants. The best way to do that is through the legislation that passed the lower House.

It is disappointing that we do not have certainty that the legislation will pass the Legislative Council. We will not progress the bill until we know it will pass. We will continue to work with upper House members to address their concerns. We know this does not provide certainty for those involved in the industry and this certainty could be provided if Labor backed the ban. It's very disappointing that Labor continues to block the ban, but we are committed to assisting participants and maximising animal welfare.

To this end, we are looking to support industry participants so they can come to government and secure financial compensation and support. This scheme will be designed to

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provide certainty and will ensure that those who wish to exit the industry can do so in a way that assists their transition and protects animal welfare.

Over coming weeks, we'll engage with industry about the parameters and ways to explore pathways for certainty and financial support. This scheme can operate in parallel with the work of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition. This is an interim step as we work through the passage of the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing-Out Reform) Bill.

Without this bill, there will be no legislative transition framework, no certainty for trainers or owners, and no mechanism for compensation. While Labor steers Tasmania towards unmitigated animal welfare concerns in defunding greyhound racing but not supporting the passage of the bill, which is concerning, we are committed to continuing to work with the parliament and industry. What is clear is that funding will not flow to the code after 30 June 2029. We want a scheme that will provide certainty and ensure that those who wish to exit the industry can do so in a way that assists their transition and protects animal welfare.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, during the election, you stood next to Grant Howe, a cancer patient, and promised that you would lock in \$117 million worth of funding for the North West Hospitals Masterplan. Is that \$117 million in the Budget? Yes or no?

Mr ROCKLIFF - First, can I say that we will be delivering exactly what we promised at the election.

Mr WILLIE - The question is if it's in the Budget.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The government recognises the critical role that the Mersey Community Hospital and North West Regional Hospital play in delivering healthcare services for the north-west. The North West Hospitals Masterplan has been informed by clinical services and facility planning with key stakeholders. We know about future demand, service growth and infrastructure condition alongside community consultation. Under the masterplan, the North West Regional Hospital will continue to be the main provider of acute general hospital services across the region. The Mersey will continue to provide inpatient and outreach subacute services, emergency care and day surgery services, with a focus on optimising service provision to the local population of north-west Tasmania.

We remain absolutely committed to funding \$174.8 million to deliver the first stage of the North West Hospitals Masterplan as per our election commitment. The Mersey Community Hospital stage 1 includes a new subacute services building, including a geriatric evaluation and management ward, north-west Cancer Centre works, a mortuary and workshop. The North West Regional Hospital stage 1 includes a link bridge to join the southern portion of the site to the clinical core of the hospital, a medical inpatient unit building to house the existing medical ward, expanded ambulance drop-off at the emergency department entry, clinical diagnostics, dialysis and lung function laboratory. Importantly, stage 1 will deliver an additional 373 car parks at the North West Regional Hospital on top of the 43 already delivered, making a total of 416.

Upgrades to the ambulance drop-off area and the emergency department entry are expected to commence in the second half of 2026, subject to obtaining the necessary approvals and the appointment of a construction contractor. A development application has been

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submitted to the Burnie City Council. The designs have been developed in close consultation with clinicians and staff from the North West Regional Hospital and Ambulance Tasmania, as well as key stakeholders including consumer advocates and Tasmania Police.

This 14.5 billion dollar project will deliver a reconfigured entry and waiting area with a new layout, expanded triage and assessment areas, enhanced facilities for people living with disability, mental health patients and those who have experienced sexual assault. The upgraded ambulance drop-off area will provide a safer and more secure work environment and improve patient flow, as well as improve pedestrian safety and access around the ED and ambulance drop-off area.

Mr WILLIE - I'm aware of that, but the question was whether the \$117 million was in the Budget. In your Facebook post that day you said it was fully funded and ready to get on with right away. How can you say it's fully funded if there's \$117 million missing from the Budget?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, as I say, and I said in the parliament the other day, the development application has gone in for the \$40 million mental health precinct which is siting and a key deliverable. We will deliver the services we promised and I look forward to exactly that.

Mr WILLIE - You said that if Canberra didn't fund it you would lock in funding yourself. You haven't done that. This is about you being prepared to say anything in an election standing next to cancer patients and it turns out not to be true.

Mr ROCKLIFF - No. I don't accept the premise of your question.

Mr WILLIE - It's not in the Budget. You said it would be fully funded in the election campaign.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, between 7 April 2025 and today, has any public funding been provided to pay for member for Lyons Mark Shelton MP's legal costs, and if so, how much?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll have to seek advice on that.

Dr WOODRUFF - And take that on notice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will seek advice and take that on notice, thank you.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. In relation to member for Lyons Mark Shelton's legal fees, can you confirm that in the matter for which Mr Shelton has received this assistance he was acting at the lawful direction of a minister of the Crown?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm unable to comment on that. I will take that on notice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Premier.

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Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, the DPAC RTI log on the website is only publishing the 2025-26 logs and if you want to see anything from previous years you need to email them and ask for the specific RTI request that you're after. The problem is that you don't know what's on the log because it's not published. How is this open and transparent for your government?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I appreciated the work of Tim McCormack and Rick Snell when it comes to RTI reform and was pleased to stand beside them both, I believe in around September last year, as they handed down their report. We said we would work through that very diligently and provide a response to that.

Previous to that, though, since March 2014 government has been committed to improving the transparency and accountability of government decision-making and a key focus of our transparency agenda is the commitment to improving processes and information access under Right to Information. That's why we commissioned an independent review into Tasmania's Right to Information framework and invested in systems and capability improvement through the Right to Information Uplift Project.

Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, I'm not asking about the framework, I'm asking about the DPAC RTI log on the website. It only has logs for 2025 and 2026 and you can email to request previous years but you have to know what's on the log already to be able to request that, but you can't see the log so you don't know what's on it. Will you rectify that so you can actually see what the log is for previous years so that it's open and transparent, in line with your response to the framework?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Ms Johnson, I know it's been a particular interest of yours for some time. I haven't got the detail in front of me with respect to the questions that you're seeking.

Ms JOHNSTON - Will you take that on notice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm happy to take it on notice. But if Ms Morgan-Wicks has an answer for you right now, then that could be even more efficient.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - And I always love to be efficient. I'm not aware of any decision why we're only publishing two years. I'd need to go and talk to my RTI team and my website team to find out some further information. That's not through any deliberate decision. And we've also just put a new website on, so I just need to probably check back with the department.

CHAIR - Premier, you confirmed earlier that the secretary of State Growth has been on annual leave since 7 March and this will continue until July. By my calculations, that's 16 weeks of leave. Is he on annual paid leave, and will he remain on annual leave until his return? Sixteen weeks seems an extraordinary amount of leave. Can you explain why he's accrued so much leave? Has your government negotiated a very generous annual leave entitlement for Mr Limkin? Can you please provide details of this arrangement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for the question, Chair. I'm not able to comment on individuals' employment matters. There are individuals - to this extent, I can provide answers, as before, of that type of nature. I'm not sure if Ms Morgan-Wicks has

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anything further to say. This is an individual personal employment matter, which I'm sure you'd appreciate.

CHAIR - He's a senior executive.

Mr ROCKLIFF - But it's still an individual personal employment matter.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - In relation to someone taking 16 weeks of leave, that can be negotiated with an employer in relation to the number of weeks of leave to be taken. I provided advice to the Premier before in relation to annual leave. I just have one recollection that I do think that there was an element of bereavement leave in that. But I don't know whether Mr Limkin has changed his application from annual leave to include also bereavement leave. I'd need to check back into that.

CHAIR - Can you take that on notice, please, Premier?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - The fact is Mr Limkin has been on leave since that date and until early July. Whether it's annual leave or a combination of annual leave and bereavement leave, it's a matter for what application he's put in. And certainly, commenting on an individual employee's arrangements is not appropriate any further.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, can you provide an update on the opportunity to increase employment in the State Service for younger Tasmanians?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question, Mr Vermeay. We are committed to leading efforts to increase employment opportunities for young Tasmanians. Supporting the employment of young people in the Tasmanian State Service helps ensure the workforce is sustainable in size and shape to deliver service to the Tasmanian community now and into the future. A workforce with a balanced age profile enables the transfer and renewal of vital skills and knowledge, strengthens the talent pipeline and helps young people to see clear and meaningful career pathways within the state services.

As of 31 March 2026, people under the age of 30 represented 14.6 per cent of the State Service workforce, a small increase from 14.45 per cent at the same time last year. We recognise that more needs to be done and we remain focused on expanding opportunities and improving access for young people across all agencies.

The State Service provides a range of targeted employment pathways for young people, including trainee, cadet and graduate programs delivered both centrally and within agencies. Government has also made commitments to supporting youth employment in the State Service through the Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy launched in September '24. We are committed to increasing opportunities for young people to join the State Service, and over the next 12 months we will work with all agencies to identify opportunities and strengthen the pathway programs.

Work is underway on the development of an early careers strategy which will set a clear vision for the State Service, which is strengthened by the talent, diversity and potential of people at the beginning of their careers. The strategy will provide a whole-of-government framework to attract, develop and retain early-career talent outlined in principles, improving pathways and removing barriers, and fostering supportive and inclusive workplace

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environments. Embedding early-career perspectives into workforce planning and service design will help build a State Service that is responsive, future focused and well positioned to meet Tasmania's needs now into the future.

As part of this work, consideration is being given to introducing a target to increase the proportion of young people employed in the State Service over the next three years. This would support agencies to focus effort, measure progress and ensure the State Service remains an employer of choice for emerging talent.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, Grant Howe said the investment would be amazing and he's really disappointed to hear that it's been put on the backburner. Who made the decision to leave the funding out of the Budget? Was it you or the Treasurer?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Willie, we are and we'll deliver the service -

Mr WILLIE - You said it would be fully funded.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will deliver the service and I know our Health minister has reached out to Mr Howe as well. We are committed to this service and we will deliver it.

Mr WILLIE - You said it was fully funded in the election campaign and it's not in the Budget, so you need to be held accountable for that because you stood next to a cancer patient and made that promise.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will remain absolutely committed to funding \$174.8 million to deliver the entire first stage of the North West Hospitals Masterplan, as per our election commitment.

Mr WILLIE - Mr Howe also said it's fine to talk about long-term vision, but this seems to be a case of a politician having a short-term vision and being about the next three years before they have to go to an election again. I actually agree with Grant. These are the sorts of examples that are a pox on all of our houses. What do you have to say to Grant?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, firstly, can I say to you that the vision is for 20 years. As Health minister, if my memory serves me correctly -

Mr WILLIE - That's not what he understood in the election when he stood next to you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - we issued a 20-year master plan, so that's the vision and that will be enacted. But initial works are already progressing with upgrades to the ambulance drop-off area and the emergency department entry expected to commence in the second half of 2026.

The development, as I've said, and application for the \$40 million North West Mental Health Precinct has been approved and tenders for its construction have been released.

Additionally, while these projects continue to progress, work is underway on the next steps to deliver our commitment, which includes the determination of specific planning timeframes and costings. These types of critical upgrades within a working hospital are

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complex and must be carefully staged and managed and sequenced to ensure the safety of patients, visitors and staff while minimising disruption to clinical services.

Mr WILLIE - Do you apologise to Grant? You said it was fully funded and ready to start right away. That was clearly his understanding. Will you apologise to him?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are going to deliver what we committed to.

Dr WOODRUFF - In your term as premier, have all decisions made to cover the legal costs of ministers and MPs been made according to the government's guidelines for providing legal assistance?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe so, yes. To the best of my knowledge, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the DPAC website, there's a document that's called 'Addendum to the Policy and Guidelines for the Grant of Indemnities and Legal Assistance to Public Officers of the State of Tasmania'. That document lays out a specific policy for the granting of assistance for legal costs in relation to Integrity Commission matters. The document says:

If at any point it becomes clear the public officer is the subject of an investigation by the Integrity Commission, he or she may apply for indemnity legal assistance, in accordance with the provisions of the policy and guidelines.

Premier, if a public officer is being investigated by the Integrity Commission, what is the rationale for taxpayer funding being used to pay for their private lawyers?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not going to involve myself in matters around the Integrity Commission. You know why.

Dr WOODRUFF - I'm asking you to involve yourself about a document, which is on the DPAC website, that provides the guidelines. And I'm asking you what is the rationale for using taxpayer funding to pay for lawyers, private lawyers, on investigations of a public officer - any public officer? What's the rationale?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The guidelines are the guidelines. To my knowledge, we have adhered to those guidelines and will continue to do so.

Mr GEORGE - Premier, the definition of independent: 'free from control, influence or support of others'. Can you explain to me how a hands-off independent inquiry from government, in this case the salmon inquiry, can operate independently if it's your own department in control of the secretariat, the back-up, the resources and the communications?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Good question. I'll resist the temptation to talk about Climate 200 -

Mr GEORGE - You can go ahead, that's fine.

Mr ROCKLIFF - in terms of your independence and those sorts of things. I will resist the temptation. So let's, you know, be careful about these matters. But I get the point of your

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question, Mr George, and perhaps I can ask Mr Healey to comment further on this. However, with the appointment of the two people that I mentioned before, it will ensure the independence of the study. We consulted with both yourself, members of the crossbench, Greens and industry. We actually, through further consultation in terms of the terms of reference, included recommendations as well, and the conversation I had with the honourable member for Clark, Leader of the Greens.

Dr WOODRUFF - Franklin.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Oh, sorry. Franklin.

Dr WOODRUFF - You're talking about a future world which hasn't happened yet and may never happen.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm always getting ahead of myself when it comes to vision, but it was a bit too far and I do apologise. I'm sure you'd be a great member for Clark. But it's been well worked through, and Mr Healey, could you provide the process, and I believe which will be some assurances for Mr George around independence, please.

Mr HEALEY - I certainly can, and through you Premier. So, the role of the Department of Premier and Cabinet is purely administrative and facilitative. We've been very clear with both of the study leads that their work is their work alone and that they will be engaging with the funding provided, expert advisers and people who can explore all of the areas of the study reporting directly to them. We are, however, providing them with support in organising meetings. We provide them with support in just the finalisation of, and release of, documents that are their own words. We're doing that because we want to try to preserve the funding, the \$1,000,000 funding, to be spent on substantive work to support the study, and not on just administrative tasks that we can do within our team using our existing resources. So, all of the support and administration for the study is not being covered by the funding provided for the study.

Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, the joint committee on the commission of inquiry scrutiny recommendation report recently said it was concerned about the apparent inertia of government relying on the closure - about the closure of Ashley, sorry, and the time line for increasing the age of criminal responsibility, and it's out of step with the timetable for closing Ashley.

Do you accept that both of these delays put children and young people at risk? Will you commit to raising the age of criminal responsibility no later than 2029?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I was going to say that we have until 2029 to raise the age of criminal responsibility as per the recommendations, but you've included that in your question. And can I say that we are progressing substantial reform to keep children and young people safe. We have committed to implementing all 191 recommendations and addressing the 75 of the commission of inquiry. We are listening to and working alongside our children, young people, victim-survivors, so their voices guide reform. We are rebuilding public trust by making our services safer, more transparent and accountable. Staff across the Tasmanian State Service are undertaking training to strengthen identification reporting in response to abuse.

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We are focused on prevention as well as a response, and we are building systems that stop harm before it occurs and provide support as early as possible.

Now, there was a six-year reform time line. Implementation is progressing in line with the staged reform, I'm advised, and progress is being reported regularly through the Keeping Children Safe website to ensure transparency and accountability.

Ms JOHNSTON - My question is specifically about the age of criminal responsibility. It's reported that you've suggested that you will wait for other jurisdictions to act and then act then. If they haven't acted by 2029, will you still ensure compliance with the commission of inquiry recommendations and ensure the age of criminal responsibility is raised by 2029?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we committed to the 191 recommendations. In fact, I committed to implementing the recommendations even prior to the report being tabled, as you might recall, Ms Johnston, and then backed up that commitment once the report was tabled in August 2023, from memory. We made the apology in November 2024.

CHAIR - Mr Vermey.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Sorry, I was just finishing my answer to the honourable member.

So, it still stands, the 191 recommendations that we support, and 2029, recognising that's three years away, to my knowledge we haven't backed away from that commitment. It's still in line with what we intend to do, albeit there'll be a need for a lot of consultation with respect to that. Is there anything further on that, Kath?

Ms JOHNSTON - So, even if neither jurisdiction has moved, we will still be implementing that recommendation, and the age of criminal responsibility will be raised by 2029? Even if no other jurisdiction has done it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, there will always be conversations happening between respective ministers responsible, and indeed the Board of Secretaries nationally as well, in terms of implementation of this policy commitment or a national consistency approach. I'm not sure where those conversations, in fact, are. However, we are still committed to our 2029 reform.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, I understand how important it is for the government to support programs that build social cohesion and encourage community participation. Can you please outline to the committee the level of support that the government provides across the state to support this significant number of community and cultural events?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are a lot of events, a lot of individuals, a lot of community organisations that, outside of government, provide a lot of support to individual people across the state and particularly people, Tasmanians in vulnerable circumstances.

We continue to support a number of cultural events, community charitable appeals to the Community Participation and Appeals Fund (CPAF), and the Budget includes a total of \$350,000 per year for that fund across the forward Estimates.

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The two new funding recipients have been identified through the Community Participation and Appeals Fund for 2025-2026, that being the Maddie Riewoldt's Vision and the Deepavali Tasmania Society of Tasmania.

CPAF was established in July 2015 and aims to build social cohesion and encourage community participation across Tasmania. It provides funding certainty to support the ongoing delivery of iconic Tasmanian events and charitable appeals through multi-year funding arrangements.

In 2025-2026, CPAF will provide funding to the following charitable appeals: the Salvation Army, the Red Shield Appeal - \$60,000. We've doubled the previous funding - it was \$30,000 for many, many years and we've doubled that in recent years.

The National Heart Foundation fundraising support, \$50,000; Australian Red Cross, \$10,000 for the Red Cross Calling appeal; Smith Family Christmas appeal, \$3000; Launceston City Mission winter appeal, \$2000; Hobart City Mission Christmas appeal, \$2000; St Vincent de Paul Society Vinnies Christmas appeal, \$2000; Cancer Council daffodil appeal, \$2000; and the new recipient, Maddie Riewoldt's Vision fundraising support, \$84,670 in the first year and \$53,115 for the remaining years. We've supported events in the previous year, including the Rotary Club of Deloraine for their craft fair at \$15,000; Multicultural Tasmania Harmony Week activities, \$30,000; and Catholic Care Tasmania's community Christmas lunch, \$5000.

The creative festivals will each receive \$15,000 per year over the forward Estimates, noting this funding reflects a combination of CPAC and other government funding sources. These include the Chinese Community Association of Tasmania for their New Year; Australian Italian Club for Fiesta Italia; the Greek Orthodox Church of St George for Estia; and I've mentioned the Nepali Society of Tasmania's Nepalese New Year festival. While the Diwali festival has previously been supported through CPAC, it will receive funding of \$30,000 in both 2025-26 and 2026-27 through the interim 2025-26 state budget and is therefore not listed as a CPAC recipient for that particular year.

Mr WILLIE - You won't apologise to Grant Howe. Why haven't you reached out to him personally, given his comments about your commitment in the election?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Our Health minister has reached out to Mr Howe.

Mr WILLIE - Why haven't you reached out to him?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I wouldn't make this personal, Mr Willie. I have a lot of respect for Mr Howe and his circumstances. We will deliver what we said we'd deliver.

Mr WILLIE - Well, clearly not. Have negotiations restarted with Larry Kestelman regarding the sale of Wilkinsons Point?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I met with Mr Kestelman recently. I wouldn't characterise that as restarting negotiations necessarily, but as I said to the parliamentary committee, Wilkinsons Point is a strategically significant riverfront site with the potential to deliver significant long-term economic and community benefits. That is why successive Tasmanian governments have engaged with the project.

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First, the pathway for the redevelopment of Wilkinsons Point originated with the Glenorchy City Council, not the state government. Second, the state's involvement occurred at council's request and within negotiating parameters that were already well advanced between council and the private proponent. Third, while negotiations have been underway for an extended period, no final binding land sale has occurred and any such transaction would only proceed if it were demonstrably in the public interest.

I've engaged recently with the Public Accounts Committee on these matters and we went through a number of matters concerning this. I want to I reiterate my support for the project that is an economic boon for the northern suburbs of Hobart. It will be activated with the development of surplus crown land at Wilkinsons Point. The LK Group is committed to invest some \$500 million to transform the site into a multiuse retail precinct, family resort and hotel complex.

The co-investment, if you like, or the co-opportunity of the Dowsing Point land is also a huge opportunity, particularly when there's the opportunity, as I understand it, for shared services infrastructure between Dowsing Point and Wilkinsons Point, which will enhance the viability but also look at the whole precinct as a huge opportunity for economic development and indeed housing for southern Tasmania.

Mr WILLIE - You said you've met with Mr Kestelman recently. When do you expect to renegotiate?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As soon as practicable would be my intent.

Mr WILLIE - There's no timeline on that, though?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are matters concerning the Public Accounts Committee and seeking further information, as I understand it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, returning to the DPAC guidelines about the payment of legal costs for public officers that I mentioned previously, they state that assistance should not be granted where the public officer has not acted in good faith. It refers to:

... actions or omissions that constitute serious and willful misconduct or a serious breach of a code of conduct applicable to the public officer.

As an example of not acting in good faith. Premier, do you agree that if someone is being investigated by the Integrity Commission it is, at the very least, questionable whether they've been acting in good faith?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe that everyone deserves a fair hearing in that sense. You would agree with that, I'm sure?

Dr WOODRUFF - What is the answer to your question?

Mr ROCKLIFF - People are innocent until proven otherwise.

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Dr WOODRUFF - But it would be questionable, it would call into question, whether they've been acting in good faith, wouldn't it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm comfortable that we have acted within the guidelines. I'm not going to dive into specifics.

Dr WOODRUFF - In the event that any public officer is found by the Integrity Commission to have committed misconduct, and that person has received taxpayer funding to cover their legal costs, would you then require them to repay that money?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe that's case, isn't it? I believe that's the circumstances through which the process ensures - is that right, Kath?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - For example, the Sam Tataka review of legal expenses in the commission of inquiry looked in terms of findings of misconduct or bad faith and made recommendations as to the repayment of legal expenses.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. So to be clear, Premier, if at any point one of your ministers or MPs was found by the Integrity Commission to have committed misconduct, would you require them to repay the taxpayers' money that had covered their legal costs?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Taking the personality, 'me', out of it -

Dr WOODRUFF - But you are Premier at the moment.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, but it's the process. I'll seek advice on that to provide more detail for you, but my understanding of the process is exactly how the secretary has outlined it.

Dr WOODRUFF - So they would be required to repay the money that taxpayers have paid?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is my understanding.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you.

CHAIR - Premier, I want to go back to the 2021 Watt review which Ms Johnston brought up earlier. The whole reason behind that was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the State Service, which ironically is what the Treasurer claims to want to achieve through his cuts to the State Service. One of the recommendations was to implement all recommendations fully by July 2026. How many of the Watt review recommendations have been implemented?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question. The focus for the next stage of the State Service Review is on recommendations that align with the work undertaken by the Efficiency and Productivity Unit. This includes implementing a functional leadership framework for the Tasmanian State Service that identifies and supports the delivery of shared services and capabilities across agencies. These align with recommendations 21 to 23 in the Tasmanian State Service Review. This also means prioritising the recommendations that ensure state services are aligned with the evolving needs of community, government and budgetary contexts, and focusing on the value of outcomes delivered. Continuing to implement

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recommended reforms will strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the State Service, leading to improved outcomes for the government and the Tasmanian community.

To date, priority has been given to implementing reforms with strong linkages to recommendations arising from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings. The Department of Premier and Cabinet's website includes an update on the State Service Review recommendations underway and those that are complete to April 2026. There's a strong alignment between this review and the recommendation of the Tasmanian State Service Review, in terms of the Woolcott review, in terms of modernising the *State Service Act*, strengthening values and conduct expectations, and making sure the legislative framework better defines the purpose of the State Service and the standards expected of employees.

CHAIR - Sorry, Premier, but it's not really getting to the heart of my question, which is around the implementation of recommendations from the Watt review. Which ones have been implemented, and are you planning to implement them as promised?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Okay, so I stand to be corrected, but the Department of Premier and Cabinet website includes an update of the Tasmanian State Service Review recommendations that are underway and those that are complete to April 2026. Look, I stand to be corrected, I haven't been on the website for that particular purpose. There is a progress report on the website: 15 recommendations completed and 19 underway.

CHAIR - So, not going to be finished by July 2026 by the sounds of it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, but it's underway.

Mr GEORGE - Premier, I've realised in the 12 months since I was elected what a tight hold your office has on the resources available to non-government members. Your office shouldn't really be in control of the resources available to MPs whose main job it is to hold - or at least who's part of their job is to hold the government to account.

Your own chief-of-staff provides budget letters to non-government members. Various integrity bodies have pointed out how inappropriate it is that when a major part of the role of non-government MPs is to question and hold government to account. So it may be that these resources are entirely appropriate.; it may not be. I'm not expressing a view either way. But they shouldn't be at the discretion of your office.

Would you agree to have discussions with non-government parties and independents with a view to putting decisions on resources into an appropriate independent body's hands?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll give that consideration, thank you, Mr George. What I won't be doing is aligning the resources of opposition parties, and the Greens and independents, as I understand it, I won't be aligning it with other states, because if I did it would be dramatically reduced. If you want to look at other states and think, 'yep, let's go the same as New South Wales', let me tell you, the Labor opposition, their resources, as I understand it, would be decimated.

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Mr GEORGE - I'm looking for appropriate resources in Tasmania in independent hands. That's all.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yeah, so look, I'll take it on notice. But can I say that MPs are provided with far more resource than ever before, individual MPs, and I'm proud of that fact because MPs need to have the resources to do their job. We all represent constituents, constituencies and those that elected us. And so MPs should have the resources. They are way, way better than 2002, let me tell you, and I must give credit to one of my predecessors a long way ago, premier Paul Lennon. There was a significant uplift in resources in and around 2006, if my memory serves me correctly. But there has been consistently more resources provided to independent members of parliament, both upstairs and downstairs, in recent years. In terms of independent oversight of that, I don't know what that would look like, Mr George, but I'm open to ideas in that sense. Yes, I'll leave it at that.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, how is the Tasmanian government using Brand Tasmania to help build a stronger economy, create jobs and a caring community for Tasmania?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is important that people feel connected, supported and proud of where they live. And can I say again, Brand Tasmania, seeing Jess in the audience there, does wonderful work in terms of encourage investment, growth and creation of jobs. That's exactly why Brand Tasmania is so important and why it'll be a key component of proposed new enhanced Tourism, Events and Creative Tasmania. It's not just about promoting or marketing. This is Brand Tasmania. It is about bringing Tasmanians together around a shared sense of identity, pride and purpose. Through Brand Tasmania, we're supporting businesses, local councils, community organisations and industries to work together in ways that strengthen both our economy and our communities.

We know that when communities are united and caring, people are more likely to stay in Tasmania, start businesses, invest in their future and contribute to their local communities. Brand Tasmania helps build that connection by celebrating who we are, telling Tasmania's story authentically, which is so important, and making sure our values are reflected in how we plan for the future of our state. Importantly, this work also supports jobs growth by helping create a Tasmania where businesses want to invest, where workers want to live and families want to build their future here in Tasmania.

Other places may see branding as simply advertising. In Tasmania, it's far more than that, because we're using our place brand as a practical tool to strengthen community confidence, support economic growth and create opportunities for Tasmania. And I appreciate the question, Mr Vermev.

Chair, I have a response to the last question Ms Johnston raised.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's the RTI question.

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes.

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Mr ROCKLIFF - To support the launch of the new website, the Department of Premier and Cabinet prioritised the last two years of the RTI data. DPAC will continue to upload previous years to the new website. There is no intention to reduce the amount or nature of public release of DPAC information. And I'm advised they will have all DPAC RTI disclosures from 2015 onwards uploaded on the DPAC website by tomorrow. So, that's a high bar. We're not quite there. I'm sure you can give us some scope for the rest of the week.

Ms JOHNSTON - Wednesday will be fine.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's the advice that I have.

Ms JOHNSTON - That's excellent news. Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, will the land sale at Wilkinsons Point be what it's valued at now, or will it be revalued once it's connected to the necessary infrastructure for development?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll take that question on notice. There has been a valuation. Yeah, we'll take it on notice, thank you.

Mr WILLIE - What is the proposed zone for Wilkinsons Point to allow it to be developed? Are there planning changes being explored to that land before it's sold to the LK Group?

Mr ROCKLIFF - At this stage, it's important to confirm that the Crown land at Wilkinson Point has not been sold, but the precinct has the potential to deliver new opportunities for local suppliers, create jobs during construction and provide activation for a potential expanded ferry network to further benefit connectivity across greater Hobart.

The parties have not yet agreed on a master plan for the precinct and have not progressed beyond stage 1 of the land sale process. Negotiations are focusing on protecting the interests of the Crown, including retaining ownership of MyState Bank Arena and sufficient Crown lands for the current and future needs of the arena, public access and amenity, and transport upgrades. The second is to incur only minimum reasonable and necessary costs by government to activate the point.

The Department of State Growth, I'm advised, has implemented changes to its processes and governance arrangements in response to the findings of the Auditor-General's report on the proposed land sale at Wilkinsons Point in 2025.

Mr WILLIE - What I'm trying to establish here is that previously it was valued at about \$6 million, zoned as 'recreation'.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mm'hm.

Mr WILLIE - What I want to know is that if it's connected to infrastructure and rezoned for development, whether it will be revalued for sale because it will be worth significantly more?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll take that on notice, but I thank you for the question.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, from the 1 August 2024 to present, in relation to Liberal ministers and MPs, what's the total amount your government has spent on the legal costs for these people?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Would you allow me to take that on notice?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, thank you. Secondly, other than Madeleine Ogilvie MP, has any of your other ministers secretly initiated a Supreme Court proceedings?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I don't accept the premise of your question but I'm happy to take that on notice as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. So, you can take on notice answering whether other ministers have had Supreme Court proceedings but you won't answer any questions about Madeleine Ogilvie's Supreme Court proceedings in relation to Cabinet decisions about payment of money for that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll seek advice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will you also seek advice on the question I asked you about when Cabinet made a decision to pay for Madeleine Ogilvie's legal costs?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've provided you with the answer and I'm not going to comment any further.

CHAIR - Premier, I want to go to the population strategy. With much fanfare you announced your government's Population Policy in 2024, which was stage 1 of your action plan. The policy emphasises the need to increase the state's population to foster economic growth and improve the standard of living for all Tasmanians. The Population Policy was going to be overseen by the Department of State Growth and quarterly population snapshots were going to be published. Now, that State Growth will be abolished, which department will be responsible and which minister? Also, why hasn't your government published a quarterly population snapshot since December 2025?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In 2015 we set the very aspirational population target of 650,000 people by 2050. We've continued to deliver on this target by ensuring our economy is strong and we are building the infrastructure needed to support a growing population. In fact, in 2022 we achieved the interim population target of 570,000 people, a full eight years earlier for the target we were aiming for in 2030. The latest ABS data shows Tasmania's population continues to grow to an estimated 576,659 people as of September 2025. We are growing our population sustainably, targeting growth in young people and skilled working-age residents who can make a contribution to the Tasmanian way of life.

Tasmania's population policy, Planning for Our Future, provides a clear long-term plan to attract, retain and support people across all regions. The policy brings together housing, planning, skills, infrastructure and regional development to deliver better outcomes for current and future generations. Supporting young Tasmanians to build their future here is a key priority, alongside attracting new residents to our state. Ensuring Tasmania is a place where young

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people and working-age residents, including those looking to establish families and older Tasmanians, can thrive is absolutely critical.

Through sustainable population growth, we are supporting our economy and enriching the social fabric of Tasmania. Under the Liberal government, we are ensuring that Tasmania is the best possible place to live, to work and to raise a family.

I've spoken about retaining young Tasmanians previously because it relates to our public service. Liveability is the key lever. People stay and move here when there are jobs, housing, childcare, schools, transport and strong local services.

Population change is a shared responsibility requiring coordinated action across state and local government. That's why the Tasmanian government established the Future Populations Network with the Local Government Association of Tasmania to share data, build capability and support locally-led future-focused population planning with councils, key stakeholders and state government working together for a greater outcome.

Regarding progress to date, since 3 July 2023 when the stage 1 action plan was released, significant progress has been made across a range of areas to make Tasmania -

CHAIR - Premier, I'm sorry, but that doesn't get to the heart of my question at all, because it's really about who's going to be the minister responsible and why the monitoring of your population data isn't turning up on the website?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe it is; the March 2026 edition is up on the website. Mr Ellis -

CHAIR - And Mr Ellis will be responsible?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Mr GEORGE - The latest research by the National Australia Bank shows that about 15 per cent of jobs in Australia are either highly or significantly exposed negatively to AI. Already they note a slower growth in jobs and that's obviously going to catch up with Tasmania as it has nationally, if it hasn't already. I haven't seen anything in the budget papers or government announcements about how you're preparing for what seems like the inevitable. There is money available for advancing and enhancing the implementation of AI in Tasmania, but that will be in conflict to the hit on jobs. I'm wondering how, in your mind, these two conflicting scenarios play out in government policy?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There's the policy position of the AI Accelerator, which I'm sure you acknowledge -

Mr GEORGE - Yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and then there's the demographic challenge of the impacts of AI. I'm not sure if we've read the same report or not, but my understanding is that the age group that's most impacted by the rapid acceleration of AI will in fact be the 18 to 35 year olds. We do need to address - correctly to your point - some of the consequences of AI, particularly for that age

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group and focus on that demographic particularly as that is the one I understand is going to be the most affected by it.

I welcome your suggestions around that and the policy settings around AI more broadly, but particularly for that demographic, we'll need great focus, in my view. I have discussed this with some people when I read that data. I'm not sure if it's the same report you're referring to, but I'm concerned about it, so I'd welcome your engagement on that as well.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, can you update the committee on how the government's decision in the 2026-27 Budget to extend free public transport for another year is helping Tasmanian families with cost-of-living pressures, including public transport across the state?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will. Success has many mothers and fathers and everyone in between. I noticed the Greens claimed great credit for the extra year of public transport.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's right; we have been talking about it consistently for decades.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I think 'Greens win' was the Facebook post.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know Ms Burnet has probably claimed credit for as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - We did suggest it.

Ms BURNET - I wouldn't be that bold, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I acknowledge people of all parties have mentioned free public transport and it's not actually a win for anyone except the commuter.

Dr WOODRUFF - Exactly.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I was pleased with the modal shift. I think Kinetic, from memory, was around 45 per cent to 47 per cent extra and Metro around 35 per cent additional, which is great. People have embraced the opportunity of free public transport. I was very interested to meet with a bus operator the other day who was informing me how good it is also for commuter wellbeing and safety, because more people are on the bus, so therefore people feel safer.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's right. That's what happened in COVID.

Mr ROCKLIFF - People do feel safer, and because there's not the need for that transaction of money, then for some people, that is obviously a huge benefit in terms of cost of living, but it also reduces a potential barrier for people being upset or aggressive towards the bus operator and others on the bus. People just get on the bus and they go and sit down and there are more people around and it works extremely well. So, I was pleased to get that lived experience from a bus operator, because I've received many questions in the last couple of years, particularly around bus operator safety and intimidation and those types of things.

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Since we announced our free travel on public transport, Metro confirmed a further 5000 passengers took a bus on the first day of free fares compared to the prior week. I'll mention these figures: 37 per cent up on Metro services, 46 per cent on Kinetic, 30 per cent on Tassielink services increase, and 20 per cent more on the Derwent Ferries as well, which is great.

CHAIR - Premier, would you like to wrap up your answer, please, so that we can get to the next question?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Okay. I thought you'd like to hear lots about public transport.

CHAIR - I'm sure we all do, but we can probably read about it. Mr Willie?

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, Chair. Premier, do you or your office get access to a draft of the Budget before it's finalised?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, the Budget's a Cabinet decision.

Mr WILLIE - The question is whether you, or your office, get access to a draft before it's finalised by Cabinet.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we work on the Budget as a Cabinet, so I'm assuming so.

Mr WILLIE - The question is about your office - whether you get a draft version sent to your office prior to Cabinet signing off on it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, no, that comes through Budget Committee, and then Budget Committee work to take it to Cabinet. I believe that's the process we use.

Mr WILLIE - So, your office doesn't get an opportunity to edit the Budget prior to Cabinet signing off on it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - All departments have been put into the wording of the budget, and we also look around the figures and all those presented. We see draft chapters as well.

Mr WILLIE - Did anyone in your office make changes to the draft Budget before it was finalised?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe so, yes.

Mr WILLIE - And did that concern the number of public sector jobs?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll just take advice on that. I'd have to check.

Mr WILLIE - So you're taking that on notice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - It's curious, because -

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CHAIR - Last question.

Mr WILLIE - -in the March state of the state, you had a 2500 number. In the interim Budget, it went up to 2800. Then in the Budget, the commentary and the number is around a 1700 figure, but as of today, it's back at 1800. So did your office edit the number in the Budget and the commentary?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe the figure is 1714 to 2029-31, and for 2031-32, it's 1800.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, I've probably asked scores of questions this morning about the legal costs that have been spent by the taxpayer on government ministers. Would you consider stopping this time-wasting in future and introducing public reporting of legal costs that have been spent? Maybe something like an annual disclosure?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'd have to seek advice on that, Dr Woodruff. I can't make these decisions without seeing the full and frank advice of the consequences of such a move.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, can I take on notice that you'll provide some advice about that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - You can ask. Yes, I could give that strong consideration.

Dr WOODRUFF - On notice I'll put that question -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Strong consideration, yes.

CHAIR - Ms Johnston.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, that was one question, with respect.

CHAIR - We'll go to Ms Johnston. We'll go around. We've been fairly generous.

Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, the Treasurer, Mr Abetz, told the multi-partisan budget panel that whilst increases in taxes was not in his DNA, he would entertain it if it was the will of parliament. Parliament subsequently passed a motion suggesting it was the will of the parliament, but you overruled that, claiming that raising taxes would hurt Tasmanians. Premier, raising casino taxes would be paid by one casino operator. Why have you ruled out raising casino taxes?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we ruled out increasing any taxes - or, no new taxes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Why have you ruled out casino taxes, though? What is your rationale for ruling out the raising of casino tax?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Because our commitment was no new taxes. And we've managed, unlike the federal government, to have strong surpluses, peak debt. Also with, you know, savings across agencies and efficiencies, and ensuring no new taxes, which aligns with our commitment.

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Mr GEORGE - Premier, I'm following up on the unexpected question that Mr Vermeij asked about Brand Tasmania. We know that Brand Tasmania relies on clean, green and sustainable, very strongly, and the excellence of food and our produce generally. I'm wondering how that fits when independent scientists have warned that the Maugean Skate's been driven to the edge of extinction by salmon operations over in the west coast, and the outbreaks of endemic disease and the use of antibiotics in the south-east. How does that fit in with the beautiful image of Brand Tasmania?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, each industry has a responsibility to be sustainable. The Maugean Skate - of course we remain firmly committed to protecting the endangered skate while supporting a sustainable salmon industry on the west coast of Tasmania.

Now, recent milestones and the captive intervention program have demonstrated Tasmania's world-leading conservation response, including the successful return of two adult Maugean Skates to Macquarie Harbour following more than two years in captivity. The successful release followed extensive behavioural and environmental conditioning undertaken by IMAS researchers and provides valuable knowledge to support future conservation actions, including potential release of captive, reared animals, if required.

You know, it's about, as I say, continuous improvement as well. I've mentioned this many times in parliament. There has been a huge shift when it comes to sustainable operations of farmers, foresters, miners, fish farmers, over the course of the last couple of decades. That continuous improvement will continue on into the future, with innovation and potential regulation, transparency, and accountability. That is an important part of our brand, that we ensure that our resource-based industries are ones that are held accountable.

Mr VERMEY - Premier, Neighbourhood Houses network provides important support for communities at a time when Tasmanians are feeling increased cost of living pressures. Can you outline to the committee how the 2026-27 Budget continues to support our much-loved Neighbourhood Houses?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, they do a wonderful job, and they were particularly very effective for Tasmanians in challenging times. The pandemic - there was, I remember, we provided funding to Neighbourhood Houses to assist with - it was a rapid increase in cost of living around the energy price increases a few years ago, albeit we have the lowest regulated energy prices in the nation, but still there was an uplift and a big impact on household budgets and cost-of-living more broadly, but they are pillars of healthy and supportive, inclusive communities and especially in addressing, as I say, the cost of living and other social areas, the 2026-27 state Budget brings forward \$2.33 million of Community Connector Program funding that was originally allocated for 2027-28 and this will deliver approximately a \$60,000 increase in their funding as they receive two lots in 2026-27 and 2027-28 of Community Connector Program funding in 2026-27 and future funding will be determined by the outcome of the Neighbourhood House needs analysis work which I understand is now underway.

The Budget also includes funding for HATCH, the Health Action Team Central Highlands at Ouse, which will be recognised with Neighbourhood House status and funding for the first time.

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Since 2021-22, our government's provided the Neighbourhood House network with funding support of more than \$96 million, as I understand it, including annual base funding, indexation uplifts, capital-improvement funding, community-connector funding and peak body funding as well, and this is a clear demonstration of our investment in delivering for Tasmania and to getting on with the job and building a strong economy. Most importantly in this case, a caring community as well.

I have visited a number of Neighbourhood Houses over my time. They're all different in the way they connect with their local communities, or they are a product of their community and I commend the people who work within their Neighbourhood Houses, the various services they provide, particularly supporting vulnerable Tasmanians, and that's why we do reach in and support their very necessary work.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, just to be clear, you've indicated your office made changes to the draft budget before it was finalised. Did your office alter the commentary on the number of public sector redundancies?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have to take advice on that, but I'm advised that we didn't provide any comments regarding the FTE figures and budget but I'll double check and provide an update if required.

Mr WILLIE - Not comment whether you edited. Whether your office made edits.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll find that out.

Mr WILLIE - There seems to be some confusion within government around what the number is. You've been at 2500, 2800, back down to 1700, and today it's at 1800.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I get the feeling you're disappointed. Are you disappointed it's not 2800?

Mr WILLIE - No, I am trying to get to the bottom of what you're doing.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we're wanting the rightsize and right-shape public sector to deliver for Tasmanians. I was very open and transparent in my 25 March state of the state address, which I believe I had the figure of 2500. It's now 1800 to 2031-32. It will be 1714 to 2029-30. We have new revenue. We have the National Health Reform Agreement which was hard fought for but clearly provides the opportunity for an uplift in funding in Health. We have increased GST as well, which is welcome, and then we make decisions around a sustainable public service. There's also the population.

Mr WILLIE - Well, that's what it's based off, isn't it? It's a ratio of the population. The population hasn't changed that much, but this figure seems to be bouncing around everywhere.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm not sure what you want, Josh. Do you want more to go?

Mr WILLIE - No, I'm trying to get to the bottom of what you're doing. I didn't wreck the Budget. That was your government.

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Mr ROCKLIFF - We had budgets to reflect the need. People can criticise past budgets, but there was significant uplift when it comes to the commissioner of inquiry.

We had delayed healthcare because non-emergency elective surgery was effectively cancelled for 12 months. And so, that latent effective of providing the necessary support in the health system compounded health issues for Tasmanians.

I remember you arguing across the table, or at least your shadow minister of Health at the time, then, around how we must ensure we put more full-time paramedics on when they were part-time, of which we did. I hope I've got the terminology right.

Mr WILLIE - I'll draw you back to the question which is about the public sector job cuts and the number which is based off the ratio and the fiscal strategy. The population hasn't changed that much, but this number seems to be moving around a lot.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I take your disappointment that it's not higher. Mr Healey, could you provide some explanation to the committee around the number, please, and tie in the population.

CHAIR - A brief answer if you can.

Mr HEALEY - As I mentioned before, the 2500 number comes from the difference between the current ratio between public servants and the population. If you had to reduce the FTE instantly, you would have to lose at that point in time 2500 FTEs. But when you actually roll that out over the forward Estimates and through to 2032 and you look at the Treasury's population projections, you can see that population growth does lessen the task in terms of FTE reductions over time. And that gets you to your 1800 figure. As I mentioned before, the 1714 are the estimated number of FTEs based on the average salary across each agency that is built into the operational efficiencies in the Budget across the forward Estimates. They're all numbers that talk to slightly different things.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, Ms Ogilvie made a so-called clarification statement to the 2025 Budget Estimates Committee. Did you or anyone in your office see that statement before it was tabled? If not, were you advised about it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I said before, when it comes to matters concerning Ms Ogilvie, these are complex matters and I've provided comment and I won't be providing any further comment.

Dr WOODRUFF - You've had plenty of opportunity this morning to answer a whole range of questions about Ms Ogilvie, and we take from your refusal that you must have known the truth about the fact that Ms Ogilvie did mislead parliament. Is there anything you want to say now to disavow us of that conclusion?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I say, these are complex matters. I'm aware of the Chair's comments and we've been through this many times today.

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Dr WOODRUFF - We're forced to come to that conclusion, Premier, because there are many ways you could have answered the questions that I've asked in no way can be covered by a false assertion that it's got to do with court proceedings.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've provided and answered these questions.

Dr WOODRUFF - What standard of honesty and integrity are you going to apply to minister Ogilvie's replacement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ministers are aware of their expectations.

Dr WOODRUFF - That obviously hasn't been good enough.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, we'll move on. A question from me and it goes to the population strategy as well. Your population goal is for 650,000 people by 2050, and you want to attract young people to the state. Premier, how will this occur with the rental vacancy rate at such record low levels? How will you increase the retention of skilled migrants and their families by supporting the implementation of a simpler, fairer, faster migration system in Australia?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Can I have the last part of the question again?

CHAIR - I wondered how you're going to retain skilled migrants and their families.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Retain them to Tasmania?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Firstly, they're welcome to Tasmania, wherever they come from. Migrants to Australia, we welcome them to Tasmania with open arms. And we must provide opportunity for people that come to Tasmania to live here, to work here, to invest here, raise a family. That's why our focus in this Budget is around budget sustainability, but also provide for a growing economy and a caring community. That's why, even though you disagree, we need to ensure we invest in enabling infrastructure, whether it's enabling infrastructure in our visitor economy through the two new ships and through our new port infrastructure; enabling opportunity through the stadium project at Mac Point as well -

CHAIR - Yeah, but what about the housing issue, which was the first part of my question?

Mr ROCKLIFF - and also through the Dowsing Point opportunity and looking at that surplus defence land as well.

CHAIR - It's a long way away.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Through the reforms in planning. But over the next four years, we've got \$900 million in housing to ensure we continue to deliver, to your point. This investment will continue to put roofs over people's heads, provide support across the spectrum of housing. Also investment in crisis accommodation, social and affordable housing or, indeed, supporting Tasmanians into owning their own home.

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The latest report on government services showed strong results for Tasmania across both housing and homelessness services. Tasmania continues to lead the nation in social housing growth, with an 11.2 per cent increase since 2020 - an additional 1547 dwellings, averaging around 300 new homes each year.

We know there's more work to do and that is why the '26-27 Budget continues to provide investment right across the housing spectrum.

Ms JOHNSTON - Premier, the rate of casino tax was reduced a few years ago by your government to compensate the Federal Group for the loss of their monopoly. But in that time, their profits have increased, rather than declined. Raising casino tax to the previous rate, at the minimum, wouldn't be introducing a new tax; you'd be removing a discount that is not needed. Why don't you remove this particular discount? And are you ruling out increasing own-source revenue by not removing this discount?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, no. I accept what you've said at face value and your scrutiny of the matter at hand. So I need to get further across that and your argument, of course. We promised no new taxes and -

Ms JOHNSTON - It's not a new tax. It would be an increase on an existing tax rate.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yeah, okay. We're very mindful of the investment environment and climate we have in Tasmania. I hear daily almost around the challenges with payroll tax that -

Ms JOHNSTON - They get an exemption from that as well.

Mr ROCKLIFF - businesses have. A lot of businesses speak to me about payroll tax, and they always have for the last 20 years or so. I'm not across exactly what you're referring to. I didn't have any plans necessarily for what you're speaking of. I'm sure the Treasurer will welcome your engagement.

Ms JOHNSTON - Would you be open to considering an increase in their tax rate?

CHAIR - Ms Johnston, to be fair, we will keep going. Good line of questioning, but we'll have to keep going. Just to let everybody know that we'll be finishing at 12.12 pm. We're on to Mr Vermeij, and for the interests of getting around again, could we just have a relatively short answer, Premier. Thank you.

Mr VERMEY - I've had friends and others comment on the success of the Little Tasmanian project that's supporting Tasmanian families to get the best possible start in life. Can you give us a bit more information on that project, please?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for the question and, I'm sure, to other questions, ensuring our young people grow up with confidence and with a great deal of pride within Tasmania is extremely important. I'm sure it's the hope of all parents. As Premier, my vision for Tasmania is a place where people feel valued, everyone feels valued, encouraged, included and supported to be the best they can be. And we need to start at the very beginning to make sure Tasmanian children and their families and carers have the opportunities they need for the best start in life.

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That's why we're pleased to support the Little Tasmanian project, providing \$300,000 per year for Little Tasmanian library bags to be given to every baby born in Tasmania.

It was launched in 2023. Little Tasmanian uses storytelling and creative resources to support health, wellbeing and literacy development in early childhood. Every baby born in Tasmania gets a Little Tasmanian library bag. That's around 5800 babies every year, if my maths is correct. And the third version has been just released. The theme of the new bag is Tasmanian food, farming and nutrition, and it has a new board book called *Katie's Kitchen*, featuring real food and farming legends from across the state. It has a cup-and-bowl set, a Tasmanian onesie, a library card voucher and magnets sharing the key health and wellbeing messages for the first 100 days.

Since its launch, child and family health nurses have delivered more than 17,000 bags to newborns, 10,000 Little Tasmanian library cards have been issued across the state and over 1000 people have joined Little Tasmanian events at libraries and other early years services.

There are positive signs our approach is working. Over 600 parents and caregivers have responded to an evaluation survey run in partnership with the University of Tasmania, which is open until mid-June. Families from Kingston to King Island have shared their feedback. So far, 48 per cent of respondents have started reading to their baby earlier because they received a Little Tasmanian book, which is fantastic. And 85 per cent have said that Tasmania is a good or excellent place to raise children, and many families feel more welcome and supported and have built stronger relationships with service providers. They've used play mats for tummy time, they have taken their library bags to libraries, and they've sent photos of their babies in Tasmanian onesies to family overseas. Many have described Little Tasmanian as a demonstration that the government cares about reading, about families, and about our next generation of children. And may that continue.

Mr WILLIE - Premier, you said earlier that you'd take my question on notice, but I don't know why you have to when your chief-of-staff is sitting right there. The question is: did your office alter the commentary on the number of public sector redundancies? You can ask your chief-of-staff.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll take it notice.

Mr WILLIE - Your chief-of-staff's right there.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll take it on notice.

Mr WILLIE - Well, he would know whether your office has altered the Budget.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I said we'd need to check.

Mr WILLIE - Is it usual practice for the Premier's office to alter the Budget prior to Cabinet signing off on it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, all agencies and all ministers and minister's officers have input into the budget process.

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Mr WILLIE - Is it usual practice for the Premier's office to edit the Budget prior to Cabinet signing off on it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, our responsibility is to ensure the Budget's right.

Dr WOODRUFF - Premier, I'm not sure how you think your answers to our questions this morning look to people who are watching, but your minister has resigned because of overwhelming evidence that she misled parliament. Isn't it true that you can't answer any of the questions I've asked because you and your government have been weaving a dishonest web since the years from the 2021 pork-barrelling election. Isn't it so complicated now that you've got nothing safe to say?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I reject that notion.

Dr WOODRUFF - I can't think of another reason why you didn't come up with any words, any responses.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I reject the premise of the question.

Dr WOODRUFF - If in future you become aware that another one of your ministers has intentionally misled parliament, will you require them to resign as soon as you become aware of it? Or will you again do nothing and hope that things just disappear?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, ministers accept their responsibility, as Ms Ogilvie has done.

Dr WOODRUFF - It took years and the recent six months of questioning to get Ms Ogilvie to accept her responsibility. Then you're telling Tasmanians you didn't know anything about it and had nothing to do with the situation the whole way along.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've provided answers.

Mr WILLIE - He knew.

Dr WOODRUFF - You're completely unbelievable.

Mr GEORGE - Premier, as I understand it, the restructuring programs of teams and agencies and programs is underway as part of the government's redundancy implementations. I understand also that you're redefining position descriptions and agencies so that it's possible to replace public servants from a higher level with those at a lower level. Is it part of a money-saving strategy to remove positions under the premises of restructuring and then replace them with people at lower levels? If that's the case, how is the government going to ensure that program quality is maintained, community needs are met and public servants are paid fairly?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We need the right size, right shape and right structure of our public service. As that's an operational matter in terms of the question, I'll refer that to the secretary, Ms Morgan-Wicks.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Under our policy which is managing positions in the State Service, it provides several tools for the management of the size of our workforce. One of those

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tools is the WRIP program, which deliberately targets the encouragement of staff who are voluntarily choosing to retire to make way for youth employment in the State Service. Each secretary needs to be careful in terms of the number of WRIPs that are offered in an agency for the very premise of your question, that we don't want all the very experienced people to walk out the door and have very young, new and learning staff replacing them to the detriment of service provided to the community.

It is a balancing act, but we also owe a duty to our youth, our young people who are studying in universities - and as I speak, my daughter's had an exam this morning - to look at jobs that are available in the Tasmanian state sector so that when we all retire we actually have a service that is here and performing very critical services that we provide. It is a deliberate program that has been around for years -

Mr GEORGE - So are you restructuring programs so that high-level jobs now are paid at low levels, or look like low-level jobs?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - This is a way in which we can encourage youth employment. It's a way in which we can gracefully support people to retire, and often that's through reducing, for example, a five-day work week down to three to assist them in terms of retirement, and it also helps in terms of the management of the budget. Those young people will come in at a lower grade and there are business cases with every single WRIP that is proposed and accepted, and we make sure that that evens out in terms of the financial expenditure so that we can sustain our budget.

CHAIR - We're almost finished, but I've got about 20 seconds to ask a question. Premier, the Climate Change Office is having its budget substantially cut by 66 per cent in one year and eventually it is estimated over the forward Estimates to be cut by 82 per cent from 2025-26 figures.

I think that might be time, unfortunately. That brings us to the end of the time for scrutiny of the Premier. Thank you, everybody. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at 1.00 p.m. after this break.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank you, Chair, and I thank members for the scrutiny, the DPAC team and our Premier's Office team as well.

CHAIR - Thank you.

The witnesses withdrew.

The committee suspended at 12.12 p.m.