



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Eric Abetz MP

Monday 1 June 2026

MEMBERS

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair)

Hon Clare Gade-Wright MLC

Hon Sarah Lovell

Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC

Hon Bec Thomas MLC

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. ERIC ABETZ MP

Acting Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs.

Ministerial Office Representatives

Tristan Bick

Chief of Staff

Rosita Gallash

Senior Adviser

Community and Multicultural Affairs

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Noelene Kelly

Deputy Secretary

Corrina Smith

Director, Community Services

Kristy Broomhall

Assistant Director, Community Services

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The committee met at 5.23 p.m.

Community and Multicultural Affairs

CHAIR - We had a little bit of a hiccup with the scheduling there, minister. So I'll get you to introduce your team, or maybe you might like them to introduce themselves, and if you could outline your role here for the members of the public who might be watching, as well as the committee. Then invite you to make any comment you wish to, then we'll go to questions.

Mr ABETZ - Look, thank you, Chair. Chair, I appear here at the request of the Premier to deputise for the previous minister, and I think we all know the circumstances. So, that's the basis on which I appear at this part of the Estimates.

CHAIR - For the portfolio of?

Mr ABETZ - For the portfolio of Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs, and I'm sure going to be exceptionally capably assisted by Noelene Kelly on my immediate left, the Deputy Secretary of Community and Government Services, DPAC, and Corrina Smith to the left of Noelene Kelly, who's Director of Community Services, DPAC. We will make ourselves available for questions.

CHAIR - We've got a new member on this side, too, and you two may not have met - Clare Glade-Wright. We will go straight to questions then, as we've lost a little bit of time.

Output Group 3 - Community and Multicultural Affairs

3.3 Community Services

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I'll go straight to output 3.3, community services line item. This line item falls by more than 50 percent over the forward Estimates. I understand the rationale that has been given that this reflects programs and initiatives that are reaching the end of their funding period. Are you able to provide the committee with a list of community services programs, services, grants or organisations that are not being funded beyond their current funding in this budget?

Ms KELLY - We can provide the copy of, similar to the question on notice we had last year, that shows each of the organisations, and how they're funded from 2024-25 through to 2029-30. So, we've got copies of those.

Ms LOVELL - Does that show those programs, or where funding is ceasing, we'll be able to - that's all spelled out?

Ms KELLY - Yes, that will show you.

Ms LOVELL - Brilliant.

Ms KELLY - And just to also comment there that keeping in mind that they are forward Estimates, so that they will be subject to further budget processes, and so on. I'm wondering whether or not, through you minister, whether you want me to broadly explain this document and how it works?

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CHAIR - That would be helpful.

Ms KELLY - So the package provides three tables. The first table provides a breakdown of the funding allocated within our 3.3 Community Services by organisation, that shows the core base funding as well as one-off commitments. The text in black is appropriation funding and the text in green includes funding through either the Gambling Support Program, through the Community Services Fund, or funding that we might not have spent in the previous year that we're hoping that we'll be able to carry forward into the new financial year.

Ms LOVELL - Can I just clarify on that? When you say hoping to be able to carry forward, is that reflected in the Budget, in that line item already, are those the green?

Ms KELLY - So, we haven't, they'll go through as rollovers for the end of the 2025-26 financial year. So they're not reflected in 2026-27 in the expenses table.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, thank you.

Ms KELLY - Table 2 outlines the funding allocated through appropriation under output 3.3 Community Services, for key deliverables that were funded in 2024-25 and 2025-26 budgets, but that continue into the 2026-27. But it does exclude items that are either in table 1, which I just talked about, or table 3, and I'll get onto table 3 in a second.

So, table 3 provides a list of competitive grants that are to be delivered in 2026-27 and their funding allocations. Just to note with those, for those competitive grants that were delivered this financial year, the list of successful applicants are included on the Service Tasmania website. So, the following applies to all tables that presents only the funding administered within output 3.3 Community Services, the funding allocations are current as of 27 May. There may be some changes as we head towards the end of the financial year. The funding figures have been rounded to the nearest whole value, and if you do a comparison with a question on notice last year, you would notice a couple that are out by \$1.00 or \$2.00. That is just because we did deeper analysis on those.

All figures are exclusive of GST. As I mentioned, the forward Estimates are indicative only, and will be subject to future budget cycles. And indexation has been included in the base or core funding, where applicable. So just to flag, as well, the package differs from the question on notice in November 2025, in that the new document only represents organisational funding that is ongoing. So those things that finished this year -

CHAIR - The current year?

Ms KELLY -Yes, that's right. So where it's concluded, it's not listed.

- Table 2 from 2025, which was one year, time-limited, 2024 election commitments, under output group 7.2 and 7.3, is not included, as all the commitments have finished.
- Table 3 from 2025, which is one year, time-limited other initiatives in the 2024-25 budget, under output group 7.2 and 7.3 are not listed, as all commitments have finished.
- Table 4 from 2025, which was the multi-year, time-limited 2024 election commitments under output groups 7.2 and 7.3, and Table 5 from 2025.

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- And now in Table 2, in the 2026 listing, where the funding continues into 2026-27;
- and then Table 6, from 2025 community grants programs, under output group 7.2 and 7.3, and output group 3.3, is now in Table 3, in 2026.
- And, to flag the reason why I keep mentioning output group 7.2 and 7.3, is because last year we had an output restructure and 7.2 and 7.3 became output 3.3.

Ms LOVELL - Can I thank you so much for that, and for this. It's really refreshing to have something like this proactively brought to the table. So, I want to acknowledge that and say how much we appreciate that. I'll probably have to go back and read your *Hansard* of that explanation with this table, before I fully understand what we've got, but thank you.

Just to clarify table 3, if I can just clarify, that includes the community grants? Oh yes, you've got that on the front: that's 'community grants program' grants. And the one-year commitments that you mentioned that were 2024-25 one-year commitments that are not listed, are they - do you have a list of those that you can provide, similar to this, that shows - or was there a bit that was given last year, wasn't it in the question on notice?

Ms KELLY - Yeah, I think that was in last year's, yes.

Ms LOVELL - So we could find that last year, yes. And that would be outlined in last year's.

Ms KELLY - Yes, that's right.

Ms LOVELL - Beautiful. Thank you. That's very helpful. You've actually pre-empted a number of my questions, I'll just have to skip ahead now.

Minister, community service peak bodies have consistently been calling for five-year funding agreements to provide certainty, and support workforce retention. And I understand the government have made a commitment to rolling on to five-year funding for many of these organisations. What progress has the government made towards implementing five-year funding agreements, and how many community service organisations currently hold funding agreements for five years or longer?

Ms KELLY - Through you, Minister. So yes, we have been working hard on the longer-term funding agreements. And we've split that program into three different stages. The first stage was where we were focused on the peak bodies, and that has been complete in terms of, we have got agreement through, from government, that the list of peak bodies that we presented can now go into five-year funding agreements. So, as to the funding agreements come to the end of their term, they would transition on to five-year funding agreements.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's so good.

Ms KELLY - That is great. Yeah, it's really great.

Ms O'CONNOR - Overdue. Significant for the sector.

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Ms KELLY - So now we're on to stage 2. So, stage 2 is around organisations who have been receiving funding for quite an amount of time, or for consistently, for a period of time, that -

Ms LOVELL - are core funding.

Ms KELLY - Yeah, core funding, or programs that have been in place for quite an amount of time. So, what we're doing with that, just to flag we have a governance structure in place with a government steering committee. The agencies that are relevant to community services and a working group. Each government agency is doing an audit of their organisations that fit into that stage two. Then are working on a case-by-case basis around pulling together the information and the details that are required to then present up through our secretary's board to cabinet for consideration around longer-term agreements.

The timing of that, is that the first tranche of that sort of first group of organisations we're looking at doing, leading into the next budget cycle, so we can get some answers on, or some certainty of 5 year or longer-term funding agreements for those organisations ready for next financial year.

We think stage two will take a couple of years because of the complexity of that. Stage three is then looking at the time limited funding, the really small or not small amounts, but the short-term programs.

A couple of other things to mention there. One is that part of the work we're doing in that stage two is also looking at the outcomes that come from our relationships with those organisations. Not just providing an organisation for a particular purpose, but actually looking at that and saying, how is that benefiting Tasmanians? How can we link that through?

Ms LOVELL – Outcomes-based funding.

Ms KELLY - Yes, outcomes-based funding. I think it's in Victoria, when they provide organisations with funding for new programs, they actually syphon off things 10 per cent or something. They use that to then go into a review of that program to determine the longer-term functionality.

The other thing I wanted to mention was we're working really closely with what's called the Coalition of Peaks. You might have heard of about them. We met with them, I think it was 17 April. We had a discussion with them and talked to them about a range of things, including fuel and the impact on the community services industry.

We also talked to them about longer-term agreements and the outcomes framework. We're in the middle of scheduling another session, which is likely to be probably early to mid-July with them. We're starting to see a real shift as well in terms of how we engage with the community services industry too.

As part of that work with the coalition of interest, we're working on a partnership agreement between government and the community industry so we can collaborate but also get some consistency in what the priorities for the industry are and how we can match that to the government. To try and get some consistency in terms of how we prioritise, say our resourcing, for example.

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Ms LOVELL - Appreciate you may need to take this notice given the circumstances, but are you able to provide a list or a proportion of all the community service funding agreements administered by the department? How many are less than one year; how many are one to three-year funding agreements and how many are five years or more?

Mr ABETZ - Right, yes, that will be taken on notice. In my notes here I could not help but see, just read it, that its estimated government agencies were party to 434 funding agreements. There are quite a few of them around.

Ms LOVELL - Community services sector does a lot for government, so yes, there are. Chair, I do have more questions, but I know everyone will have questions.

Ms THOMAS - I have specific initiative questions. If you have more higher-level ones then you keep going. Thank you, and sorry if I missed what you said Nolene, in your very comprehensive overview. Can you just remind me what the figures in green are?

Ms KELLY – Green is funding where either we're funding it through our special purpose account, which generally we have funding in there for our gambling support program. But we do use that in areas like Neighbourhood Houses and so on. Green is also funding where we're putting forward through to Treasury at the end of the financial year to roll funding over from the previous, so from this financial year.

CHAIR - It's well spent money.

Ms KELLY - That's exactly right. We haven't been able to spend it this financial year; we roll that over. Also, where we might have funding that we've been given, funding for strategies or action plans. We might use that to provide specific project funding to organisations.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. Specifically in relation to the funding that will be going to Glenorchy City Council for the Moonah Multicultural Hub which is run by the Multicultural Organisation of Tasmania. I note there that \$75,000 has been allocated in green for 2026-2027, but then nothing in the out years beyond that.

Are you able to explain why that's only one year allocation and what the expectations are for -

CHAIR - Assuming the green money comes.

Ms O'CONNOR - It's also a bit of a pattern in this document.

Ms THOMAS - There's lots that are now filled in though, particularly for Neighbourhood Houses.

Ms KELLY - Yes, the Moonah Multicultural Hub will receive \$75,000 in 2026-2027 and that's been allocated from within our existing resources. There is a letter that's gone to Glenorchy City Council with a copy to MCOT (Multicultural Council of Tasmania) to let them know of that. That will be subject to budget submission for the 2027-2028 financial year.

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Ms THOMAS - MCOT this time next year will likely be in a similar position again where they have staff on fixed term contracts who aren't certain about whether they're going to be extended until they know the outcome of the budget a couple of weeks before their contracts end.

Ms KELLY - That's the case in that there is no funding at this stage for 2027-2028.

Ms THOMAS - Why is that? Was there a submission for funding to be provided beyond one year for that purpose?

Ms KELLY - I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure whether there was a submission put in for that or not.

Ms THOMAS - No, there wasn't. Not by Glenorchy City Council nor MCOT.

Ms KELLY - Not that we saw.

Ms THOMAS - There was a submission only for one year funding or there was no submission at all?

Ms KELLY - Through our Multicultural Action Plan, it's something that we will talk to Glenorchy City Council and MCOT about in terms of future year funding on that.

CHAIR - I do appreciate seeing the core funding across all of these organisations with the out years there. In terms of the rising cost of delivery of some of the services like some that have provided forms of transport or require transport to deliver the services. Have we factored in the cost-of-living pressures that everyone faces in terms of fuel costs and other costs that are just part and parcel of delivery services in the community like this?

Ms KELLY - For the majority of organisations that have ongoing funding, there is indexation that's put in that.

CHAIR - What's the indexation?

Ms KELLY - Going in 2026-2027 it's 3 per cent.

CHAIR - Which is less than CPI.

Ms KELLY - And that will be reviewed in 2027-2028 ready for the 2028-2029 financial year. It is something that has been raised. We met with representatives of the coalition of interest each week on the fuel supply and how that impacts them. That is something they have raised in terms of the general cost to deliver services. Then the impact of increased fuel costs. Interestingly, some organisations are also looking at how they deliver their services now and looking at whether they need to adjust that slightly to respond to that.

CHAIR - We probably talked about this last year, but I'm probably a bit brain dead by the end of the day, but the booster funding that basically runs out after this year.

Ms KELLY - Is that for Neighbourhood Houses?

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CHAIR - For lots of organisations but particularly Neighbourhood Houses. I'm looking at Neighbourhood Houses now, but I notice it's across other providers as well.

What is the purpose of that? Is this to help that additional cost of service delivery, or is there other things? Why was that put in place? I can't see, except for a couple of spots, I think where it does continue beyond this financial year we're looking at in this year's Budget.

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: the reason why different organisations will have booster funding will vary depending on the financial year it was provided, what purpose it was for, and what organisation it was for.

CHAIR - It's for different purposes for different organisations?

Ms KELLY - That's right. For Neighbourhood Houses, that will be considered as part of the work that's underway around the needs analysis that's happening at the moment, which is looking at the overall funding for Neighbourhood Houses and also governance and other matters relating to Neighbourhood Houses. We expect that there will be narrative in the review that's done, of the needs analysis that is done, around booster funding and also potentially the Community Connector Program funding, which is also listed in that table as well for Neighbourhood Houses.

CHAIR - So, the needs analysis, how far down the track are we with that, because that was committed to some time ago now?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: that was announced last November. We have engaged, effectively, three consultants to work on this and consultation has commenced. My understanding is that one of the consultants, KPMG, who are doing a core part of that work, met with Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania last week, I think it was. So, the consultation is fully underway. The timeframe for the needs analysis is with the aim to have the review or the recommendations come back in time to inform the budget cycle for the 2027-28 financial year.

CHAIR - So, we may see things change after that period in terms of the amount of funding?

Ms KELLY - That will be a matter for government, but -

CHAIR - A matter for the Treasurer.

Mr ABETZ - Government.

Ms LOVELL - Can I just confirm what the needs analysis is looking into specifically, was that Neighbourhood Houses?

CHAIR - It was a needs analysis of Neighbourhood Houses. Just looking at the appropriation budget for Community Services on page 219 of budget paper 2: is that work by KPMG being funded out of the 2026-27 Budget, like the \$33 million effectively?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: that's been funded through the 2025-26 Budget, however we're going to put forward a request to Treasury to carry forward some of that funding as well.

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CHAIR - When you look at the out years here, it drops away quite significantly. We noticed this last year. Is that because of the gaps in that table that you've provided, is that why?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: that's where you see a lot of those time-limited commitments finishing.

CHAIR - We've been told by the Treasurer earlier today that every department is required to make efficiency savings. Operational efficiencies, numbers are outlined. It's impossible to tell from the DPAC paper how much this is allocated to Community Services. What's your task in that? How much have you got to save or cut out of your budget in operational efficiencies?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: Department of Premier and Cabinet are addressing their budget savings as an organisation, as a whole agency, rather than specifically around each output. However, what I can say in relation to Community Services is that we are focusing on our salaries and non-salaries in terms of how we can make savings there. We've had a couple of positions that have been temporarily vacant that we haven't filled over the past 12 months. We have one position where a portion of that position will move to the Department of Health as part of the move of the Ageing portfolio and the other part of that position will be made a saving. We've also been looking at our non-salaries and things like -

CHAIR - It's a saving for you, but not for Health.

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: they are part of a position. A part will go to Health and the other part of that position will go up as a saving. We're also looking at non-salary savings as well, around things like travel and other costs, so -

CHAIR - Of the \$33 million roughly in the appropriation for this line item, how much of that is made up of salaries?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: we have 21 FTE and that includes staffing for the Tasmanian Community Fund as well, of which there are three-and-a-half staff, 3.5 FTE.

CHAIR - What's the budget for those staffing, then? If I was to ask you to break down this figure - I think we did this, asked you last year - how much are salaries, how much are supplies and consumables, which is fuel, travel, whatever, IT, all that sort of stuff. Other than the money that's directly going to community service organisations, can we have a look at what the department costs are, if you like?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: to get the exact figure I'd have to ask the minister if we could take that on notice, but I think it's about \$2.4 million. Yes, it's \$2.5 million.

CHAIR - 2.5 in staff, or is that in salaries?

Ms KELLY - In salaries, yes.

CHAIR - In salaries, yes: and what about the other non-salary costs that are incurred? I'm just looking at the total amount out of the \$33 million that goes to like the system management, if you like.

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Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: I think we will have to get that for you.

Mr ABETZ - We'd take that on notice, yes.

CHAIR - Has someone got it? Taken on notice?

Mr ABETZ - Taken on notice, thank you.

CHAIR - Please take it on notice.

Ms LOVELL - Just on those staffing numbers. So you said 21 FTE, and I'm assuming that Ageing position will come out of that 21? A question, first of all, on that position that's moving to Health. So that, at the moment, is a one FTE position, is it in communities?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: yes, that's right.

Ms LOVELL - But it's moving as a part position?

Ms KELLY - That's right.

Ms LOVELL - Has the one FTE - has that just been on the Ageing portfolio or they've been doing other work as well, so the just the ageing part be moved?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: so 0.4 of that position has been working on Ageing, but we have - in our area, we have staff working across lots of different cohorts. So, it's very hard to say we've got - we can look and estimate how many FTE we have on each particular thing, but given any particular day where priorities are happening, or we're developing a particular strategy for a particular cohort, then we tend to have quite a fluid use of our resourcing across those priorities.

Ms LOVELL - The minister mentioned before the number of funding agreements that are administered by department; how many staff are responsible for managing those funding agreements?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: so, the number that the minister quoted before was - I can't remember what year -

Mr ABETZ - 2024.

Ms KELLY - 2024: and that was across community services industry, across all the relevant agencies that have community services. That was Department of Health as well and Education and so on, so that number didn't apply directly to us, and I can't remember the second part of your question.

Ms LOVELL - The second part of my question was: how many staff are responsible for administering funding agreements?

Ms KELLY - So, through you, minister: that's a really good question. The way we structured is that we have a grants team and the grants team actually lives within Service Tasmania at the moment. They administer grants across Department of Premier and Cabinet,

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and they have, I think, six or seven staff, but interestingly last year we had an audit done through our internal auditors, Wise Lord & Ferguson. They made some recommendations around the way we administer grants within Department of Premier and Cabinet, and we instigated that out of the review that was done into the Department of Health, just to do a health check and see what it was looking like, and one of the recommendations that they made was that we actually look at the business ownership of our grants. So, the funding lives within 3.3 community services, but we had cases where the grants team were actually administering those grants on behalf of community services but didn't have responsibility for the money and didn't have responsibility for the money and didn't have responsibility for the relationship with the organisations. We are going through a process at the moment where we still maintain the expertise and the knowledge of the grants team on helping our Community Services areas with risk assessments and actually writing the grant deed and administrative sort of function and expertise with that. But then our Community Services area is taking on more in terms of managing holistically that grant arrangement.

Ms LOVELL - How many are in the Community Services team, not the grants team, but how many staff have you administering funding agreements?

Ms KELLY - That's the 21.

Ms LOVELL - So, everyone?

Ms KELLY - Probably, mostly, yes. Even Karina and I do bits of things when needed.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm just trying to understand and think we're sort of digging into this space a bit, but on page 219, output 3.3 across the forward Estimates, the funding for Community Services effectively halves. The first thing I want to say is I know you're doing a great job here. Thank you, you've got to carry a lot of the weight here tonight, I'm sure, under the tutelage of the minister here, the acting minister.

Thank you, but the funding effectively halves. For us to be able to have a kind of granular understanding of what that is. Given we've established this 21 FTEs and the salary bill for that those FTEs is about two and a half million dollars. There's still a lot of money that is coming out of communities, so just to just to maybe step us through all of the elements of how the forward Estimates has come to look like that would be helpful.

Ms KELLY - The forward Estimates are estimates and they are subject to future budget submissions. The other thing to mention there is that we also get funding through, I mentioned before the Community Support Fund for the Gambling Support Program as well and that won't be shown in the appropriation. The appropriation also won't show anything that we carry forward or roll over to the next financial year. It's subject to future budget cycles as well. There are a range of programs that are in place now like time limited programs or recurrent or programmes that might have been in place for quite a few years. But at this point in time there's not funding in the forward Estimates for those. They will be subject to to budget, process and consideration of government.

Ms O'CONNOR - At a time when the expectation of government is for all agencies to live within the means of government has said they have, it's still a lot of uncertainty for the community sector broadly, isn't it? I'm really conscious of not trying to put you in a difficult position because you're not the minister, but that's a halving of community's budget. Is most of

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it about the out years of Community Service organisation funding? Might I add funding agreements that are expiring or that sort of thing?

Ms KELLY - There's certainly a large percentage of a large portion that is recurrent or time limited would be in that regard. One of the things I might mention there, and I am really conscious there's a lot I can't comment on there because it's not my role.

Ms O'CONNOR - Their policy and decisions of government.

Ms KELLY - That's right, but one thing I will mention there is I'm really excited about the work we're doing with the coalition of interest. We are making those connections and that we will be working with the coalition of interest in terms of the future of the industry and what that funding might look like. It's certainly something that I think that in future budget cycles we will be going to future budget cycles with some further clarification on longer term agreements. As government considers what we put up for example, through stage 2, tranche 1 for this cycle coming forward, that is then locking in funding for up to five years for those organisations. I'm not sure if I've answered your question correctly.

Ms O'CONNOR - You've had a good crack at it. I know it's a difficult situation for you to be in. Is what you're saying is that through that connection, that collaboration with the community sector that (a) there will be budget submissions that come up; but also, (b) there might be some efficiencies found in working together.

Ms KELLY - Yes, that's right. It's really around looking at an alignment of priorities. Where we might through the budget cycle go to government and say these things are coming towards the end of their funding arrangements and this is the impact if they're not funded going forward. If we're working with the coalition of interest and the organisations around what are priorities for them as well, then you will start to see alignment in terms of those priorities going up to government for future consideration.

What we hope as well is through the longer-term funding agreement programme that will actually be getting agreement on that and locking in that funding for that longer period of time.

Karina's just mentioned something there also. The Community Services strategies and the action plans and a few of the action plans are due to be delivered this year. That's really also around working with those particular cohorts and also government agencies to identify what those actions and outcomes are that we want to achieve in each particular cohort. Then put funding bids forward through the budget cycle to actually support those actions where they require funding. There are some actions that are about connection and working closely with other state government agencies or federal government agencies, but there are actions that require funding as well and they help guide that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Those budget bids would be coming up through communities, but also through the work that you're doing with community service organisations. It's a process where the requests or a shrinking pie will become up through the agency or through communities and the sector.

Ms KELLY - Yes, that's right. What we're really looking for there is or trying to work towards is to be able to from our part go to government and say look, these are the priorities that we're hearing from the Coalition of Peaks and, and from other organisations. I know that

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organisations put bids in through Treasury, but what we're looking for is from our administrative point of your bureaucratic point of view, sort of going up to government and saying, look, we've been working with the industry on this, these are these are really important things.

The Neighbourhood House needs analysis is a really interesting example there. It sort of differs a little bit and we are certainly working with the Coalition of Peaks, but that's a really interesting one where the sector, if we call them a sector, have said that the need in the community is outstripping the funding that they're getting. So, government is undertaking that needs analysis to determine what that looks like.

Ms O'CONNOR - It's ever thus though, isn't it? I mean, whether there are the needs in the community, whether you look at the Health system or housing, the Community Support Fund or the Community Support Levy. Would you mind reminding me how that comes out of the gambling expenditure and how it's expended within Communities Tas? Some goes to harm minimisation programs; some goes to Neighbourhood Houses. Does that basically max it out.

Ms THOMAS - Some goes to sport.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right, yes sports grants.

Ms THOMAS - Yes, sports grants.

Ms KELLY - While Karina's finding something for me to give you the broad overall approach from our approach, in terms of community services, and we run the gambling support program. We put in a submission, or a bid, each year to the fund, and request funding. Typically we have received around \$5 million or thereabouts, \$5.1 - 5 million. Our submission actually is divided into a number of different programs. There's the compartment on providing funding for online, phone, and in-person gambling support. Focusing, I just remembered to say we're focused on the non-regulatory gambling harm minimisation. There's a component that is on the services, a component on community education. Actually, we're just about to in July relaunch the Know Your Odds campaign, which is really great. We've had a refresh of that. We do research. There's a research program we've just received back on sports betting in young males, which is a very concerning, but really interesting research piece of work. The research we do, is sort of target research that would then help inform our education programs, and those sorts of things going forward.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm looking for a bit of breakdown at how the Community Support Levy is distributed now.

Mr ABETZ - Sorry, I got distracted. Sorry, so what was the question again, please?

Ms O'CONNOR - To understand how the Community Support Levy, which establishes the Community Support Fund, is dispersed within communities. Noting that it sits in Treasury, just to understand the breakdown of the expenditure through the Community Support Levy by Communities Tasmania, and Treasurer if you know if there's any spare monies sitting in the Community Support Fund?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, I think there is at the moment. But generally, I think we have designs on it.

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Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I'd be very interested to understand what those designs are, and whether they're an investment in the community, as someone who used to administer this part.

Mr ABETZ - It is for the purposes of harm minimisation and, with that which we were talking about earlier.

Ms O'CONNOR - Oh I see, okay.

Mr ABETZ - For the facial recognition.

CHAIR - Self-exclusion part?

Mr ABETZ - Yes. Self-exclusion, the back office and I can't say too much about it, but I think we have agreement from industry they will fund some of that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I'm sure. The least they can, but yes.

Mr ABETZ - That we will be looking after the back-office stuff to make sure.

Ms O'CONNOR - You mean the regulatory, or?

Mr ABETZ - No, the that which is shown on the camera goes to -

Ms THOMAS - A software program.

Mr ABETZ - that government runs.

CHAIR - You will host that?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, we will control that.

Ms THOMAS - IT platform or something?

Mr ABETZ - Yes.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - What's the current balance of that fund?

Mr ABETZ - I wish I knew, and I don't know that off the top of my head.

CHAIR - Someone may be able to give that to you.

Mr ABETZ - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Could you just remind us how the CSL is extracted, where, the percentage of it, and exactly where it comes from in gambling expenditure? It's not reserved by law. Well, it might be. It's quite a hard sort of percentage that's taken out to put into the CSF.

Mr ABETZ - Community Services Levy, which goes into the Community Services Fund.

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Ms O'CONNOR - That's right. It used to be about 2.50 per cent of something.

CHAIR - The profits from gambling, wasn't it?

Ms O'CONNOR - Something like that.

Ms THOMAS - Here it is. That's the split, anyway.

CHAIR - While other people are maybe trying to do determine the balance of the fund, and how such money is in there. Can I go to a slightly different area? This flows on a bit from what Cassy was asking about the reduction in the budget overall. You did talk a little bit about how you'll be making some of the savings that's required under your area. Do you expect any redundancies to be required to meet your savings targets?

Ms KELLY - No, I don't see any redundancies required. It's probably more a question of whole-of-agency level rather than specifically for the Community Services area.

CHAIR - But if we had the whole of DPAC here, I would ask every one of them, because this is a bit of a discreet area within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. I'm just trying to understand where the people are going from.

Ms THOMAS - A follow up to that perhaps we heard earlier from Treasury about the approach they are taking at a departmental level, asking each of their outputs to come back with a work plan. I'd be interested to know if you have any understanding of DPAC's approach and whether you've been asked by your secretary to come back with a work plan or particular savings strategies, whether it be redundancies, not filling positions, or changes to functions in your output.

Ms KELLY - Certainly, each area, if you like, has been asked to consider how we can make savings.

CHAIR - Was that prior to the Budget's submission this year or is that since then?

Ms KELLY - Prior to the 2026-27 Budget coming down. We've been doing it over the last few months. We've been looking at how can we certainly reduce our non-salaries. For example, like where have we got money that we can do things differently, like travel and those sorts of things. But also where in terms - and you've probably heard this through Treasury - certainly our agency has what's called an establishment management committee. When we have a vacancy, that goes to the establishment management committee for consideration and there are discussions on what the impact is if that position's not filled. Also, whether or not there are any other resources within other areas that might be able to fill a particular gap. Whether we can actually look at different ways of filling that position in terms of whether it's at the same FTE and level and so on.

CHAIR - Are you expecting then - has the secretary asked of you to prepare a plan to show how you're going to meet your bit of the task?

Ms KELLY - We've certainly put forward what's achievable at a basic level on what we can do. The example I used before about that position where 0.4 is going to Department of Health with older Tasmanians and 0.6 is being offered up as a saving. That was something that

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we have put forward to our organisation to say that by reprioritising some work that we're able to put that up.

CHAIR - Point 6 disappears and 0.4 goes to Health in that one. So, that's a legitimate genuine savings. Do you have any vacant positions at the moment?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, we do have some vacant positions and they're subject to the Establishment Management Committee that I was just talking about before. They go up and are considered through that. Some of those vacancies are short-term vacancies. They might be because someone's on secondment to another agency. We've got one staff member who's on maternity leave who's due back fairly soon. Some of them are short-term vacancies that we may or may not fill.

CHAIR - Do you have an obligation to offer a person maternity leave, the right to come back for legal obligation?

Ms KELLY - She said she'll come back.

CHAIR - You also said some of them might be filled.

Ms KELLY - Oh, sorry, on a temporary capacity. For example, we might have a staff member who's on the secondment or might be on maternity leave, we may or may not fill that position for that period of time, but certainly when our staff member is due back in a few weeks.

CHAIR - I'll rephrase the question. I misunderstood what you were saying there. Have you got any vacant positions that you don't intend to fill?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, only the one that we've talked about, that one that we're splitting 0.4 and 0.6. Certainly our other vacancies the plan is to put up through the Establishment Management Committee for consideration to fill in. It may be that we're told, no, that we can't feel them for whatever reason, and it might be that we have staff in other areas that can fill them.

CHAIR - Other areas of community services.

Ms KELLY - Other areas within Department of Premier and Cabinet.

CHAIR - What concerns me a little bit, say, that was the case. If there was a vacancy in Community Services, a legitimate need for it to be filled. So rather than recruit someone to it, you recruit someone from somewhere else in DPAC. That somewhere else in DPAC, do you count that as a saving?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, it depends on whether they then fill that position in another way or not. But yes, sometimes it might be that you're down one position or one person.

CHAIR - Like the saving over the counter once. Is that the expectation? Wonder if that's your expectation, Minister; vacant positions whether they're filled or not filled will only be counted once?

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You're not going say you've not filled a vacancy that's a legitimate saving, but if you've moved someone from somewhere else, that's counted as a saving across the broader department. That's not really a saving, is it?

Mr ABETZ - No. If you move one from one area to another, no.

CHAIR - You can't **count** that as a saving? Unless you move them down a rung, that would be a bit tricky, wouldn't it?

Mr ABETZ - I would have thought that would be difficult given the -

CHAIR - *State Service Act.*

Mr ABETZ - Yes. That would be interesting.

CHAIR - Probably impossible.

Ms KELLY - In relation to the Community Support Funds. Each year the Community Support Fund is \$8,360,000, and that's derived from a 3 per cent levy on casinos -

Ms O'CONNOR - Gross profits?

Ms KELLY - Yes. Four per cent on clubs, 5 per cent on hotels. And if the amount doesn't reach that \$8,360,000 figure then the government tops that up.

CHAIR - Any thought to increasing those percentages, Treasurer?

Mr ABETZ - Not at this stage.

CHAIR - We did try that previous time, didn't have any luck then either.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you. All good.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Can you tell me please about Equality Tasmania and working it out? It looks like they're losing their funding, but I think I heard you say something about they can make bids for elements in their action plans. Is that right? Did I get that right?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, so, we do have funding from last year that we're aiming to carry forward into 2026-27 for the new LGBTIQ+ strategy that was launched late last year and that we expect from some of that funding that we'll work on, with working it out with Equality Tas around those actions and tie them to funding for them.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - And when that's exhausted what happens?

Ms KELLY - We go through the budget cycle process to bid for more funding for that particular program.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Okay, thank you. I'm here representing West Winds and the Geeveston Neighbourhood House. Can you tell me a little bit about the Community Connector Program and the decision to double it?

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Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, the Community Connector Program has been running for a couple of years now, and it's about having resources within each Neighbourhood House, as the name suggests, to connect to community, connect community members to particular services and programs, and there's been funding in the in the Budget through until, there's a little bit in 2028-29 but there was Community Connector Program funding to 2027-28. There was a decision made based on a request from Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to bring forward the 2027-28 Community Connector funding into 2026-27 and what that means is it basically gives Neighbourhood Houses about an extra \$62,000 in 2026-27. It basically doubles the amount of money they'll have for the Community Connector Program. So, other than a tiny amount - and you'll see it in the table - that Community Connector Program funding basically runs out at the end of 2026-27 because it's been brought forward, and the expectation I think is that the Neighbourhood House needs analysis will consider the future funding for Neighbourhood Houses, but in particular part of that will be also the Community Connector Program and whether it's seen as valuable and how it should be funded going forward.

CHAIR - How do you measure the outcomes of that, or how would you, sorry?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, the consultants will go through their interviewing Neighbourhood Houses' boards and managers. They're working with Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and we're also getting profile data and analysis for each community and bringing all that together, and there will be a range of recommendations, and it will be a government decision in terms of funding going forward in that regard.

CHAIR - Thank you, Sarah.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. I just want to go back to the conversation we're having before with Cassy and I apologise if I missed some of what was said. I was trying to multitask with that question on notice, so I might have lost focus for a moment, so if I repeat anything you can tell me. Just the discussion around the demand for community services, and I know you've got the needs analysis happening for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania. Are there any other kind of formal measures or mechanisms that the department uses to measure the unmet demand in particular for community services across the sector?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, really, I suppose that it happens in a number of different ways so the community services industry actively engages with government and does that formally through the budget process, but also throughout the year, around programs that they're offering and supports that they require. And also, we work with organisations throughout the year as well and, through that, raise with our relevant minister around priorities that we see. And, I think I mentioned before about the Coalition of the Peaks and the work that we're doing there, and looking at how we can collaborate, really, or align priorities as well, so that government is hearing from the different channels, similar requirements in terms of that.

Ms LOVELL - Do you collect any information on waiting lists or incidents where they've had to refuse service, or not been able to meet the request for demand that they're seeing through various organisations? Do you collect that data at all?

Ms KELLY - Through you minister, our grant deeds have particular KPIs that are relevant to those particular organisations. And, as well as the KPIs and the regular reporting that they provide, our team meets with different organisations around the services that they're offering and their needs. So, that comes through in that way. We don't formally, sort of, request

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that, but the other thing, and using Neighbourhood Houses again as an example, we get a census data from them a couple of times a year and that's where you start to look at that trend over time, to see the number of people that are coming to participate in Neighbourhood House programs and activities. And, you might see that that's increasing and really, there's been a number of reasons why I think the needs analysis is being done, but that's part of it, in terms of that increasing demand from the community and what the Neighbourhood Houses are able to deliver with the funding they get.

Ms LOVELL - I think that'll be really informative piece of work, actually. That census information that you get from Neighbourhood Houses, do you get that from all of the organisations that you fund, or just Neighbourhood Houses?

Ms KELLY - Just the Neighbourhood Houses. Each organisation will have different KPIs that they report on.

Ms LOVELL - And does the department anticipate demand for community services increasing or rising over the forward Estimates, given what we've seen in previous years?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister. This is just my opinion, to be honest. My opinion is we're seeing that happen now, through the fuel supply and the increase in fuel costs and things like that. That's certainly - organisations are saying that to us. But that's just my opinion.

Ms LOVELL - My next question, I will put it to the minister.

Mr ABETZ - And in recognition of that, the \$500,000 for the food providers was made available.

CHAIR - So, it's anecdotal evidence you hear?

Ms LOVELL - Thank you for that answer. I don't want to put you on the spot. I'll put my next question very clearly to the minister. Minister, given that, how do you reconcile - what I think we can all expect an increase in demand, with a reduction in funding over the forward Estimates?

Mr ABETZ - I think the departmental officials have explained how some are running out for the various organisations.

Ms LOVELL - Oh yes, I understand why we're seeing a reduction in funding, because of those contracts and various programs ending, but how do we reconcile a reduction in funding with an increase in demand? I know you've only been the minister for an hour -

Mr ABETZ - Not even that.

CHAIR - No, he's only acting at the moment.

Ms LOVELL - But you are the Treasurer, too. To me, and you know, if you are happy for your officials to answer, great, I -

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister -

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Mr ABETZ - If you feel comfortable.

Ms KELLY - Sorry, and I'm not sure whether I'm going to answer your question, but I'll say this bit, and then you can answer your question again. I think what we've seen for a long time is that we are funding community organisations based on outputs rather than outcomes. So, we'll give this organisation this amount of money to deliver this particular program for this amount of time and then that comes to an end and you might have had 100 people turn up and really love that program and think it's really great, but for government, how do they actually determine the difference that this has ultimately made in the community and in people's lives? That's where moving to this outcomes framework, which is part of stage 2 of the longer term funding agreements, will help with that to determine, and that'll be based on the wellbeing framework as well that was launched late last year around those elements that make a good life in Tasmania, which is something that TasCOSS were particularly working on. So, I'm not sure if that's answering your question?

Ms LOVELL - It doesn't entirely, but I'm not going to push you on it because I understand the position that you're in. I guess, for the record, I would say, I don't think those two things reconcile, particularly increase in demand and a projected decrease in funding.

CHAIR - We'll leave it there for now?

Ms LOVELL - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - I just want to go back to the Neighbourhood Houses funding to start with. Last year, I recalled we had a conversation about the capital improvement program funding, and I can't seem to see that listed in the Budget anywhere. Can you point me to where that should be found? I think it was, was it \$6 million?

Ms KELLY - Through your minister, that's different to the booster funding. So yes, there was \$6 million and I'll just get my table up so I can look at the year that that started.

CHAIR - It was \$2 million in 2025-26, something like that, wasn't it?

Ms KELLY - Yes. So, that started in 2024-25 through to 2025-26, 2026-27. So, we have that funding available. That is something that hasn't progressed as quickly as we would like, in terms of addressing the, expending the money, but actually supporting Neighbourhood Houses in terms of the needs that they've got, in terms of that capital improvement program. There was some work that was done through the last CIP round, and we did an assessment of each house and had like a register, if you like, of things that needed to be fixed and some of those were done through previous funding. We're about to go back out to houses to get an update on what their building issues and facilities issues are, and any outstanding works that were from that list. Then we'll use that funding and prioritise that for those fixes. But I will say, through your minister, that this that hasn't progressed as quickly as we would have liked.

Ms THOMAS - So, where is that \$6 million showing in the budget papers?

Ms KELLY - So that's in our appropriation.

Ms THOMAS - It's in your \$33 million?

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Ms KELLY - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - Right.

[inaudible]

CHAIR - We will write you the question about the breakdown of salaries and non-salary items, et cetera. Can you actually break it right down to, you know, this is obviously there's capital expenditures different from operating expenditure for the community organisations and Neighbourhood Houses, et cetera. It's just, this money - well, from the budget papers you can't tell. That's why you're asking the question Bec?

Ms THOMAS - That's right, that's my concern, and my concern is it gets lost, and we've got more government assets that are potentially falling into disrepair because they're not maintained to the standard that they ought to be. I guess, in terms of talking about these Houses as government assets, do they sit on the asset register of DPAC, or where do they sit, and how will they be considered with this new Building Tasmania, which is going to take over all assets apparently?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister. So, the majority of Neighbourhood Houses live in houses that are owned by Homes Tasmania. There are a couple that I think are owned by DECYP and a couple by council. But the Neighbourhood House capital improvement program is listed in table 2 of the new document, on page 13.

Ms THOMAS - Right, okay. It's \$2 million a year, but it hasn't been expended in 25-26 is what you're telling me, so will there be a request to be rolled forward to 28-29 or \$4 million spent in 26-27?

Ms KELLY - We'll roll it through into 26-27 and spend as much as we can, but some of the 26-27 might have to roll over into the following year if we don't get to spend all that money.

Ms THOMAS - Get it spent before they take it. Also on Neighbourhood Houses. The connector program doubling is a one year fix clearly so, I think just to be clear, what you're saying is that the outcomes of the Neighbour House needs analysis will inform investment decisions going forward with the connector program or increase peak core funding to houses, those are investment decisions that will await the outcome? The government will await the outcome of the needs analysis before they make those decisions?

Ms KELLY - That's right.

Ms THOMAS - On that needs analysis - and sorry if I had zoned out before when you're talking about this - but I know the consultant's been procured. My understanding is to do that work, but when did you say you expect it to be completed?

Ms KELLY - If you like, I can go through the consultation framework with the dates. We are expecting it to be delivered in October of this year in preparation for the next budget cycle. In early May, there's been meetings with the manager or the CEO of Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and key staff on the board to seek their feedback in terms of the consultation process and what that might look like and then in June - sorry, just before I say that. We have now got contracts in place with the three providers, and just to explain those: KPMG has been

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engaged to do the main report. Profile.id is the company that's been engaged to do the profile data of the community organisations and they're also undertaking a broader survey that anyone can address, and they'll be analysing that data.

The third organisation that we've engaged is 3P Consulting, and in particular Kym Goodes, as she's very well known and loved in the Neighbourhood House world, and she's really a support to the consultants and to us through this process. She has been engaged around the consultation framework and she's also looked at the surveys and she's meeting quite regularly with us and the consultants to ensure that the needs of the houses and the community are taken into account.

The three are engaged. My understanding is KPMG met with Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania last week, as I mentioned. Later in June, there'll be some regional roundtables, so all network houses, members of NHT and non-members will be invited to attend roundtable discussions and there'll be one in each of the regions, north-south and north-west and that'll include opportunity for the board members, the house managers or key personnel to participate in those.

CHAIR - Can I just classify then, like people from Phoenix House in King Island can come to that and how will they be supported to get there?

Ms KELLY - Yes, absolutely they can participate in that. We haven't worked out the logistics of how that will work, but we will take that and have a discussion with them.

CHAIR - Also on the west coast: there's Zeehan, there's Rosebery, Queenstown, you've got these very remote communities. It's a big effort for them. You're trying to cut down travel in your department. You're asking them potentially to travel.

Ms KELLY - It is an important point you make. The other thing I think I'd say there is there's real value in the Neighbourhood House managers, board members coming together and having that discussion, so they're discussing as a group as opposed to individually.

CHAIR - The question is, would they be facilitated to do that if they use their own budgets to travel?

Ms KELLY - There's also an online one, as well, where more remote organisations might be able to -

CHAIR - It's not the same as being in the room when these discussions are had.

Ms KELLY - And also opportunity for one-on-one as well. There's also a house survey that will be undertaken during May-June. That gives people also the opportunity to do it, not just face-to-face, but through that. There'll be about three or four weeks for people to respond to that.

The survey that I mentioned before, the profile.id will be doing: that will be undertaken in May-June as well and that'll be three to four weeks. Then there will be targeted one-on-one interviews to be held with a mix of houses. That's really to deep dive into particular topics or issues that particular houses might be having. That'll include a mix of board members plus house managers, to be held in July.

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I've already talked about the community sector expert being 3P Consulting. Then additional consultation may occur after these forums and the survey and things like that. There may be some additional consultation required.

In terms of the ultimate timeline there, we're looking at - the consultants have been engaged; the engagement of the community sector expert will be for the full period of time. The needs analysis consultation essentially goes for eight weeks. We're looking at completion date towards the end of July for that. The community needs modelling that Profile.id we will be doing, is eight weeks. We expect that to be completed by mid-July. The needs analysis draft findings we expect to come through in probably very late August to September, with the final report and the recommendations coming through for government's consideration in September-October.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, acting minister, I guess, I know this is difficult given you're acting minister, but will you as acting minister make a commitment then that the findings of these pieces of work that are being done, these analyses, will be released and acted on and presented to the Neighbourhood Houses sector in time to inform their budget submissions to government? It's going to be very tight. If government's receiving the findings in October, they need to get budget submissions in November, December at the latest. Will you make that commitment?

Ms KELLY - I expect that this will - without wanting to speak on behalf of a minister - I would expect this will be a high-priority for a new minister to focus on this and for us to undertake the briefings. The other thing to mention as well is that we'll be getting that early draft in August-September, so we'll be able to start having those preliminary discussions around what the analysis is telling us and the sort of themes that are coming through that.

Ms THOMAS - Acting minister, whether it's you as the minister or not, will you make a commitment that as Treasurer you'll take a keen eye on the findings of this? Given the importance of this funding to the community sector and the fact that this Community Connector Program particularly is time-limited now as it sits in the Budget now, it's very important to the community - can you make a commitment that Neighbourhood Houses will be no worse off in 2027-8?

Mr ABETZ - The government will take account in its decision-making the findings of the analysis.

Ms THOMAS - You won't make that commitment that Neighbourhood Houses will be no worse off?

Mr ABETZ - We can play the rule-in rule-out game, but -

Ms THOMAS - It's not a game. It's very important to the community sector.

Mr ABETZ - The government's commitment to community houses, I think, has been shown in this budget. What the future holds, I'm not going to be committing this evening.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. If we can go to page 12, just for clarity - sorry, on community houses and off the back of Bec's questions - the gap in the forward Estimates for the Community Connector Program is partly explained by the fact that it's been front-ended to this year, isn't it, and then what's the \$9,500 about again?

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Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: this one's a little bit complex, and without going into too much detail, we had a shortfall in the Community Connector Program. We put a funding request in to meet that shortfall over the forward Estimates, and that funding went beyond the actual main amount of the Community Connector program. We've brought the bulk forward, but we've got \$324,000 in the final year. If you split that up amongst the Neighbourhood Houses that gives you \$9000.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm sure it will be put to very good use. Page 12 of the document that's before us is funding for elder abuse prevention in migrant communities and amongst older Tasmanians, but there is, again, the out years gap. MRC, which had a time-limited elder abuse prevention program up north and south, has nothing from next year onwards. Is there any indication of what the intention is there in terms of maintaining the elder abuse prevention capacity? I note also that there's been an extra allocation to Relationships Australia, which I presume is an election commitment. The green is funding from other sources. Maybe you could explain the \$400,000 over two years for Relationships Australia relating to elder abuse prevention, that's the elder relationship service; where does that money come from? Is that Commonwealth funding? But also, what's the projection of how those extra elder abuse programs will be funded?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: that actually comes in under the responsibility of the Ageing minister, and the reason why it's in this spreadsheet, and I think we might have talked about this last year, is that the funding for older Tasmanians sits within output 3.3 at the moment, but because -

Ms O'CONNOR - And then it will go to Ageing.

Ms KELLY - It will move to Department of Health from the beginning of the new financial year. However, we also administer that fund, so we can answer that question now, purely from a funding point of view.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, thank you. That would be good.

Ms KELLY - We identified funding within our budget to enable the Relationships Australia Tasmania Elder Relationship Service to continue, and sought the approval of the Minister for Ageing for that. The funding came from the Elder Abuse Action Plan, unspent funding through that. We requested through the minister to continue the Relationships Australia funding for those two years, but as per other areas, that will be subject to a budget cycle process in forward Estimates. In terms of the Welcome Cultural Services and the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania, there is a budget commitment in 2026-2027 under the key deliverables table that provides that \$50,000 in 2026-2027, and again, any further funding for that will be subject to the budget submission process.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is Relationships Australia operating the Elder Abuse Helpline?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, that's Advocacy Tasmania, which is recurrently funded.

Ms O'CONNOR - The Relationships Australia funding, what is that service?

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Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: more of a counselling-type program. If you flip back to page 11, just under Older Tasmanians, the Elder Abuse Helpline is listed there about halfway down the page, and that's the recurrent index funding there.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just going back to the needs analysis for Neighbourhood Houses, I know that there's a sort of a rolling awareness, if you like, within the agency that in some communities the need for a Neighbourhood House grows, and Kentish Community for many years has been asking for its own Neighbourhood House. Have there been any applications to communities from other communities like, for example, Smithton that present a case that they have the socioeconomic circumstances to warrant a new Neighbourhood House? And when was the last time we got a new neighbourhood house, because I think it's been 34 since forever?

Mr ABETZ - In Ouse: that was one of our announcements in the Budget.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, that's 35 neighbourhood houses now, is it?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: there's actually 36, but one's-

Ms O'CONNOR - Pheonix?

Ms KELLY - No. The one based at Dowsing Point is funded by the Australian Government and the Tasmanian government funds the other 30, so 35, once Hatch comes on board. Through you, minister: we do receive queries from communities who are interested in establishing - and the one that you mentioned, Kentish House and Ouse Hatch, certainly since I've been involved in this portfolio, are the two that that we've sort of had relationships with or have had approaches from. It is something that, through the needs analysis - actually working through what is the process to determine a new Neighbourhood House.

Ms O'CONNOR - It's an established process, though, isn't it? I used to be the minister for communities. Isn't there an established sort of set of metrics that are examined, that present the case, if you like, for a new Neighbourhood House; is that right?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: it is, but it hasn't been refreshed for quite a while, probably quite out of date and something again that we would see the needs analysis that would provide some more contemporary metrics around how that might be determined, so -

Ms O'CONNOR - Good. The needs analysis wouldn't be looking, necessarily, at other communities that have a need for a Neighbourhood House. It's looking at the existing sort of network and what the needs are of those houses?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: yes, generally it's focused on the current, but particularly through the work that profile.id are doing, where they're looking at the sort of population data and data within communities and things like that, there may be, through that, that ability to go, actually we probably should have one here, or that there's a real need here.

CHAIR - Demographic data, you're talking about?

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right.

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Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: we're also working with profile.id so that after the needs analysis, we will still have access to that data that will enable us, moving forward, to be able to be informed rather than having to undertake another big review to have access to that. We're just working through what that might look like, so -

Ms O'CONNOR - Is the needs analysis looking at food security and food deserts?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister: broadly, in terms of the services that that the Neighbourhood Houses provide, and that's where we were talking before about that there will be one-on-one interviews with particular Neighbourhood Houses, because - you know this really well - going to Neighbourhood Houses, they have different roles that they play in the communities. You might have some that have a social supermarket, provide free bread, low-cost meals and those sorts of things, whereas you might have other Neighbourhood Houses where that's not required as much, but they provide different services, so - and that really comes through in terms of the needs of those houses and the feedback that they provide the consultants. We also have our food resilience strategy that, again, we launched late last year. There was quite a bit of funding in the budget over the forward Estimates for that. We are currently working on the action plan on that in terms of that need.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. On the food resilience matter, a little bit of money for Eat Well Tasmania and then no extra funding since 2025-26. There's the School Food Matters where little bit of money in 2024-25, a significant amount of money for the School Lunch Pilot program in 2024-25 and then just these big flat lines in the out years. What's the plan if you've got a food resilience strategy but no money to fund it, what happens?

Ms KELLY - Eat Well Tasmania is primarily funded through Department of Health and School Food Matters is funded through DECYP. That transferred to DECYP. There's just a little note there on page five over on the far-right hand side.

Ms O'CONNOR - At full value, and do we know - look, I can ask the minister for education at some point.

Ms KELLY - Yes, the other thing to mention there is the action plans that accompany our strategies, so in the case of the food resilience strategy, we work with the sector or the food industry on that but we also work with the government agencies as well in terms of when we put the action plan together. In terms of getting a holistic picture across government in relation to the various programs that occur in that area, and those action plans go up to what's called the secretary's board, which are all the heads of agency.

Ms O'CONNOR - Black cabinet. It's called the black cabinet, well, colloquially.

Ms KELLY - And by doing that, that gives that ownership, across the agency. While the food resilience strategy and then the subsequent action plan are being led by premier and cabinet as a central agency. It's really holistic, all the relevant government agencies contribute to that.

Ms O'CONNOR - I have a little community pantry in our Hobart office and the demand for donated foods is very high. In the food resilience strategy, if you have a look at sort of all the pressures on us as Tasmanians, but also that we're islanders, that we're highly dependent on imported foods.

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If there's anywhere in the country that we could do food security well, it would surely be here, given our primary producers and that social infrastructure we have with Neighbourhood Houses, Child and Family Centres and the like, and organisations like Loaves and Fishes and Foodbank. What sort of work is happening to coordinate those supply chains, so we have more on island capacity to feed people Tasmanian grown food through those networks that we have?

Ms KELLY - A couple of things there. There is a - I'm going to call them a group called Food Secure Tasmania, which is not an incorporated body but is made-up of representatives from the food sector that work together on sort of priority issues. As part of the developing the action plan that will go with the strategy, we're looking at that governance model from the industry further on what that actually might look like going forward.

Certainly, Loaves and Fishes are represented on food secure Tasmania and ensuring we have the voices of working with that broader sector. Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania's on that group also. We actually want to work through the action plan to formalise that governance, so it's got a formal governance.

Ms O'CONNOR - I guess - Thank you.

Ms KELLY - Sorry.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, no, don't apologise, you're going beautifully. I guess my question relates to sort of in the action plan, will there be structures and supply chains. Will there be connections driven between primary producers. I know some of that exists right now, all the way from our fantastic primary producers through to people who are unable to afford to feed themselves or their family. just to understand that practical connection.

CHAIR - So, townies need to know where their food comes from.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Mr ABETZ - What a good idea.

CHAIR - Yes, it would be perfect. We know where it comes from.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, some of townies actually grew up in the country, just saying. Or on an island.

CHAIR - You grew up in Queensland, I mean, seriously.

Ms O'CONNOR - I grew up on an island; I grew up in lots of places, but on a remote island.

Mr ABETZ - While still growing up?

CHAIR - No, she was damaged from growing up under Bjelke-Petersen.

Ms KELLY - Organisations like Loaves and Fishes have connections with food producers. We were talking to Andrew at the TasCOSS briefing, and he was saying that he's got a contract with a farmer for carrots. He gets X number of carrots as a result of that. But

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then the farm has also given him all their spare carrots, like the carrots that don't make the carrots.

CHAIR - They're not perfect carrots; they're the odd bunch.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, but they're still as nutritious.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right.

CHAIR - They just look a bit different.

Ms KELLY - You see someone like Loaves and Fishes who have this incredible connection out to those primary producers, they also have a massive warehouse undergoing changes at the moment. They have kitchens that make meals that do the school Food Matters Program that feed into that. Then they also distribute food out to other organisations like Neighbourhood Houses and so on. You see an organisation like that, that is almost like this linchpin of that whole process. Part of the action plan is mapping out. Loaves and Fishes do that, but how do we map that out for other organisations as well?

Ms O'CONNOR - How do you pull in food banks, for example, what is the role of Neighbourhood Houses? How do you reach remote communities who might not have a Neighbourhood House?

Ms KELLY - That's right, we have Foodbank and Loaves and Fishes on our weekly fuel meeting we have. Foodbank has been talking about, as a result of the cost of fuel and so on, looking at potentially changing their model of how they distribute food, so they're going to more remote locations. They might, and I don't understand this fully, but they might sort of deliver to a hub and then the other communities travel to get that food.

Ms O'CONNOR - They could look at drones.

Ms KELLY - Yes.

CHAIR - Can I go back to Clare?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - The government's Hundred Day Delivery Plan talks about establishing a Community Services Industry Partnership Agreement to address red tape and longer-term funding agreements. Could you please provide an update, and list the number of participating community service organisations?

Ms KELLY - I was talking before about the Coalition of the Peaks. To step back a little bit, there's a Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031, and there was a governance review undertaken of that last year. There were seven recommendations in that, and our organisation met with TasCOSS to work through those recommendations. TasCOSS then went to the peak bodies.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - How many peaks and the Coalition of the Peaks?

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Ms KELLY - Karina is adding them up. They went and discussed, and it was agreed that developing a partnership agreement would be the priority recommendation for us to progress this. There's 21.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Thank you.

Ms KELLY - I mentioned before we had a meeting on 17 April, which is our first meeting with the Coalition of the Peaks, and we've got another one in July. We were hoping to do it in June, but time's getting away for us. Likely we would do that in July and we're engaging a facilitator who is endorsed through the Coalition of the Peaks and through us to help us facilitate the development of the partnership agreement. The partnership agreement is really around how the government and the community services industry work together on priorities, so that the government isn't getting mixed messages around what are priorities and how we should progress.

This is before my time, but my understanding was that there was a partnership agreement in place some years ago, and that lapsed and certainly it's something that we're definitely hearing through the coalition that that will provide the foundation for us moving forward once we've got that and we've got agreement about how we're going to work together. Then that will enable us to move through those next steps around things like priority funding and that sort of thing.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - So, how many community service organisations do you anticipate to be part of it?

Ms KELLY - The peak bodies represent the relevant community organisations. There are a couple of population cohorts that don't have peak bodies, and that's actually something that we need to address through this work. An example is the food sector that we were talking about before. That's something that, with Ms O'Connor's question around how do we look at that governance and not necessarily saying that there will be a peak there, but at the moment what we're doing is that we've invited two of the big food organisations to join the Tuesday meetings, the fuel meetings, so that their voice is at the table as well. We invited them to the 17 April meeting, and it is likely that they'll come to the one in July as well. The aim is for a 2027 agreement, and that sounds like a long time away but we did put that forward to the coalition at our meeting on 17 April and they were comfortable with that date and particularly TasCOSS mentioned that they wanted to be done properly and they wanted it to be not rushed. The initial feedback was that they were comfortable with that.

CHAIR - Great. Thank you.

Ms THOMAS - I just have a question in relation to concessions take-up, does that sit with your area?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, yes, sort of.

CHAIR - I think she might need to ask the question a bit further, keep going.

Ms THOMAS - Well actually let me rephrase, the questions around older Tasmanians more specifically, I know the funding sits with you, but it's being transferred to the Minister

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for Ageing, which is also the minister for Health. Will the funding be reprofiled, for want of a better word or transferred across to there? How is that kind of work?

Ms KELLY - Through you, Minister? Yes. As of the date it moves across. There's a couple of things there. There's a Minister for Ageing and you're meeting with her on Wednesday afternoon?

Ms THOMAS - Yes.

Ms KELLY - But in terms of the transfer of older Tasmanians to Health: the funding and that 0.4 of a staff member and that will move when that machinery of government change happens.

Ms THOMAS - So questions about that, then, should we be here with the Minister for Ageing to answer questions about that then.

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, yes, we will.

CHAIR - Okay, well it will be nice to see you again.

Ms THOMAS - Bet you can't wait. On Wednesday, yep.

Ms KELLY - It's Wednesday.

Mr ABETZ - But I'm sure they'd struggle on without me.

Ms KELLY - Yeah.

CHAIR - They'll have another minister; they'll have a real minister that time.

Mr ABETZ - I'm sure they'll struggle on without me.

Ms THOMAS - Well, I have another question then, if I may continue on. In relation to funding for Volunteering Tasmania, I understand that none of Volunteering Tasmania's budget priority submission asks were funded, particularly one of the critical projects that they offer funding for was for a new State of Volunteering Report, which they believe is essential to establish a baseline to measure the success of the Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy 2025-2030, and to monitor trends across the industry, particularly ongoing, concerning decline in formal volunteering participation. Acting Minister, are you aware of the fact that Volunteering Tasmania were not successful in their budget submission request? And is there any scope for assisting them some other way?

Mr ABETZ - I must have been constructively aware that they weren't successful, but not specifically.

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, a difficult one for me to answer because it's a government funding decision. We do have the Volunteering Action Plan, that was a Volunteering Strategy. That strategy and the action plan will come this year, and as part of that we will also put in a submission through the budget cycle for funding for delivering that.

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We'll work with Volunteering Tasmania around some of those actions, and whether or not there's a funding be putting through that.

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, we do have a small amount of money that we received through the budget last year for the action plan. We'll be applying to Treasury to roll that over. So there will be a small amount of money there for next year, and that's something we can work with Volunteering Tas, as well.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. In relation to the registration to work with vulnerable people fee, there was a commitment to the fee removal pilot for volunteers. So, can you just clarify what funding is provided, and for how long for that in this budget?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, that was a two-year commitment, so 2025-26, 2026-27. The Department of Justice who administer the Working with Vulnerable People program received \$250,000 out of the \$300,000 for 2025-26. And they'll receive the full \$300,000 for 2026-27. That money comes to us, and there's an internal process to transfer that money across.

Ms THOMAS - I understand the two-year pilot commenced on 1 January 2026. Will the funding be rolled over further, so that it's for a full 2 years? So the full year of 2027?

Ms KELLY - Through you, minister, yes, the program will run from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027, so that's a full 2 calendar years.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. Chair, I want to take the opportunity to just be clear, when I was asking earlier on, as I was scanning through the document you helpfully provided, talking about the funding for the Multicultural Hub in Moonah, that \$75,000 is the funding that's provided through Glenorchy City Council. But, I know there's also another allocation to MCOT specifically, with peak body funding of \$167,644 in 2025-26. And then that continues on through the forward Estimates, and is indexed. So, that's additional funding the government provides direct to the Mutlicultural Council of Tasmania (MCOT). And we know those discussions that you have ongoing with MCOT and Glenorchy City Council, will there potentially be conversations about whether that \$75,000, if it is hopefully continued on, will go direct to MCOT, rather than through the council?

Ms KELLY - Yes, that funding that's on page 6 towards the bottom. That's their recurrent peak body funding. And we'll be looking at when their grant deed is up, putting them into a five-year funding agreement, so they have that certainty. But yes, in terms of the Moonah Multicultural Hub, that's a further discussion we need to have within MCOT and the Council, and then again put that forward through to government for budget consideration.

Ms THOMAS - Council owns the facility but my understanding is that \$75,000 goes directly through to MCOT, so I could never really understand why it needed to be provided through the council.

Ms KELLY - Yes, it's probably an administrative issue that will be fairly straightforward to work through.

Ms THOMAS - Has it started?

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Ms KELLY - Those conversations have started.

Ms THOMAS - Oh, that's great. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - I'm conscience of the time. Are any pressing questions from anyone?

Mr ABETZ - If I may, Chair, just to say very quickly, two officials at the table have been nothing short of excellent and thank you very much.

Members - Hear, hear.

The committee adjourned at 7.15 p.m.