



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Jane Howlett MP

Wednesday 3 June 2026

MEMBERS

Rob Fairs MP (Chair)

Hon Josh Willie MP

Vica Bayley MP

George Razay MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr George

Ms Burnet

Ms Johnson

Mrs Greene

Mr Ferguson

Dr Woodruff

Ms Badger

Mr Winter

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. JANE HOWLETT MP

Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Minister for Women and Prevention of Family Violence; Minister for Racing

Minister for Racing portfolio

Minister's office

Deirdre Wilson

Deputy Secretary Primary Industries and Water, NRE Tas

Sean Carrol

Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner

Nicole Malcher

Executive Director, Legal & Policy, Office of the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commission

Anita Yan

Deputy Chief Operations Officer Finance

Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

Courtney Hurworth

Chief Reform Lead, Keeping Children Safe Reform Group, DPAC

Tegan Dwyer

Assistant Director, Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence, DPAC

(in the room)

Pip Hankin

Assistant Director, Women's Portfolio, DPAC

Tourism, Hospitality and Events Portfolio

Shane Gregory

A/Secretary, Department of State Growth

Brett Stewart

Deputy Secretary, Creative Industries, Sport and Visitor Economy, Department of State Growth

Andrew Johnson

Director Office of the Secretary

Calen Jeffrey

Director Events Tasmania

Katrina Birchmeier

Manager, Tourism and Hospitality

Danielle Harris

A/Deputy Secretary, Business Services

Sarah Kingston Clarke

Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Tasmania

PUBLIC

Racing

The committee met at 4.14 p.m.

CHAIR - Before we go to questions, I want to remind members of the order of the House establishing estimates committees, which provides questions must be relevant to the portfolio and outputs of a particular session. However, as with other sessions, I will permit broad questions about the minister's role as a member of the Cabinet in relation to the issues of public concern in relation to former minister Ogilvie, if the minister chooses to answer them.

The scrutiny of the Racing portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to please introduce persons at the table, names and positions for the benefit of Hansard, please.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. And at the table to my right is the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner, Sean Carroll; the Department of Natural Resource and Environment deputy secretary, Deidre Wilson, and Ms Anita Yan. Beside me to my left is my Chief of Staff, Luke Gaetani.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the estimates of the Minister for Racing is two hours. Would the minister like to make an opening statement.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, thank you Chair. We're delivering for Tasmania. We're getting on with the job, building a strong economy and a caring community. We continue to raise the bar when it comes to integrity and animal welfare in Tasmanian racing. Integrity and animal welfare will be the bedrock on which the Tasmanian racing industry will grow and continue to make a positive contribution to the Tasmanian community.

The 26-27 Budget supports this through \$6.8 million in funding to support racing regulation and policy to support the function and operation of the Tasmanian Independent Racing Commissioner and his office. The commissioner has powers and functions that help the Tasmanian government and broader racing industry improve standards and behaviours relating to animal welfare standards.

I thank Mr Carroll, who's at the table with me today, for the significant work he has done since starting in the role. The reforms provide a solid platform to build the confidence of participants and the community in the Tasmanian racing industry and to support the long-term prosperity of the industry for the people of Tasmania.

In relation to greyhound racing, the government's position has been clear and consistent. The Budget supports the government's commitment to phase out greyhound racing by 30 June, 2029, including support for the commissioner, industry participants and animal welfare.

As announced this week, we're developing a new support scheme to provide financial assistance and practical support for those participants who want to leave the industry soon. The scheme will be developed in consultation with stakeholders over the coming weeks to ensure it meets the needs of participants and supports the best outcomes for greyhounds.

PUBLIC

A funding package of \$4.8 million is in budget, supporting a careful and measured exit from greyhound racing. This is an initial appropriation to provide a level of certainty but the need for a clear legislative framework to manage the transition remains. The Budget allocates \$38.4 million under the existing 20-year funding deed to Tasracing.

Work has started on a new Racing Industry Funding Deed to ensure the financial sustainability of the Tasmanian racing industry, and I know that this is the industry's number one priority and the industry needs certainty and we will deliver on that. Chair, I welcome questions.

Mr WINTER - Minister, welcome. Minister, if a person was under investigation by the Integrity Commission for four years for a failure to declare and manage conflicts of interest when making policy and expenditure decisions, and the recipient of more than \$300,000 of taxpayer funded legal support to prevent the Integrity Commission from completing its investigation and making findings. In your opinion, would that person be deemed fit and proper to be a participant in the racing industry?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question, and these are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I won't be commenting any further.

Mr WINTER - The example I just gave was whether a person who was involved in those sort of legal proceedings would be a participant in racing. Do you think it's appropriate that someone involved in those types of proceedings would be the Minister for Racing?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, I won't be commenting any further.

Ms HOWLETT - Minister, is it true that you are the centre of the allegation through Loyetea under the Integrity Commission's investigation?

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

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, it's on the public and parliamentary record that \$303,800.44 of taxpayer money was spent on your legal costs between July 2023 and March 2026. Can you tell us how many invoices were approved to make up that \$303,800.44 amount?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question and, as I said, I won't be commenting any further. I've given an undertaking to provide full details when I am able to legally do so.

Mr WINTER - You haven't commented at all.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, I understand that yesterday in the Legislative Council you were repeatedly asked about the Supreme Court matter that you initiated. My understanding is that you refuse to answer these questions citing complexity and confidentiality. Is that correct?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, these are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I won't be commenting any further.

PUBLIC

Prof RAZAY - Honourable Minister. At the recent Hobart Cup, the starting gates were incorrectly positioned resulting in the race being run over a shorter distance than advertised. Stewards were reportedly advised by the starter and the starting gate supervisor that the gates were not in the correct position. The situation has caused considerable embarrassment for the Tasmania Racing Industry Australia-wide and has also resulted in wagering losses for punters. In most other race jurisdiction, the race would have been delayed until the correct distance was confirmed. What remedies have been considered to make sure that this does not occur again?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, for your question. The Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner has released his public report at the completion of the investigation into the incorrect placement of the starting barriers for the 2026 Hobart Cup. The investigation follows the request made by Tasracing on 10 February 2026 pursuant to the commissioners' functions under the *Racing Regulation Integrity Act 2024* and the investigation highlighted significant failings in the areas for improvements were identified in Tasracing's policies and procedures. I might see if the commissioner would like to add more to my comments.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister. Thank you for the question and bringing this to the attention of his committee. On 10 February this year, I became aware of the potential errors in the placement of the barriers of the Hobart Cup and I contacted Tasracing in relation to the matter. After I'd contacted Tasracing, I received a request from my office to conduct an investigation into the matter. I conducted investigation with the assistance of former chief steward Robert Cram from Victoria to provide his expertise in stewarding.

My investigation made a number of findings, and these findings are outlined in the summary report, which is available on my website. I don't know if you had a chance to read that or not. But specifically in answer to your question, I made nine recommendations and these include:

- Tasracing issue and media release confirming the finalisation of the Tasracing investigation, including the confirmed distance of the race as well as a result of the race and the retraction of the race record;
- Tasracing establish a procedure to support the application of adjustments in the spreadsheet which complies with the Tasracing Policy Review and Approval procedure.

You may be aware there was an error in that particular spreadsheet which led to the incorrect placement of the barrier.

- To support the Tasracing Policy Review and approval procedure Tasracing established a Records Management, Retention and Disposal Policy or equivalent with accompanying policy register to formalise a creation, storage, use, update and destruction of all information following approval by the Tasracing Board.
- Tasracing has provided a briefing to all relevant staff on the Records Management, Retention, Disposal Policy;
- a review of all Tasracing policies must be undertaken to ensure alignment with the Records Management, Retention and Disposal Policy; and,

PUBLIC

- the policy review and approval procedure, particularly in respect of document inversion control.
- Tasracing review and update their barrier management policy consistent with my findings;
- Tasracing establish a race day manual or standard operating procedures across all race day roles consistent with Australian Racing Regulations and my findings;
- Tasracing establish a steward's manual or standing operating procedure for all codes, race day and trials consistent with the regulations and my findings; that the TIU conduct face-to-face training for all stewards on the preparation of stewards' reports to address the standard and quality of stewards reports, the accuracy of reporting and observations and actions taken by the stewards during race meetings, including the expectations of matters detailed; that the TIU implement systems for review of stewards' reports to assess the standard and quality of reports for the future; that Tasracing undertakes a review of roles and responsibilities for all race day positions, including but not limited to operational integrity roles; that Tasracing introduced specific induction programs for all raceday positions, including but not limited to operational and integrity roles that incorporates on-the-job training as well as documented process policies, standard operating procedures, manuals or checklists; and that Tasracing establish an onboarding process whereby staff departing and key roles in the organisation are required to review and update relevant processes, policies, standard operating procedures, manuals or checklists, provided their departure was signed off by their manager.

CHAIR - I think the minister's time has expired on that particular question.

Ms JOHNSTON - My question, minister, is probably more to the commissioner, but through you. In relation to this integrity unit budget, they obviously have a number of key roles that they need to perform. Could we have a breakdown between the regulatory, investigative and administrative roles in terms of their budget allocation, if there is such a breakdown?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just see if the commissioner can provide that to you.

Mr CARROL - I currently don't have the breakdown of Tasracing's budget role. I'd certainly happy, if you want to put that in writing, to take that on notice and provide that to you. What I would say is that, in fairness to Tasracing, as was put to various committees, they have only taken over the TIU in the last 14 months, and it would be fair to say that Tasracing's done a commendable job in that they are restructuring what the integrity unit looks like from its time at the Office of Racing Integrity. I've just been advised that there's \$2.5 million for Tasracing integrity funding for the 2025-26 output.

Ms JOHNSTON - Okay. I just asked for broad sort of percentage figures. Obviously there are three key roles, regulatory, investigative and administrative activities. Is one resourced more than the other? Is it 30:30:30?

Mr CARROL - To be fair, that's a question that Tasracing should answer. It is the responsibility of Tasracing to allocate what funds they get to their appropriate portfolios to

PUBLIC

ensure they manage them correctly. I suppose it's then my responsibility to assess if that's an accurate account of what those roles should occur and what they shouldn't occur.

Ms JOHNSTON - Or where the resources should be more deployed? Thank you.

Mr FERGUSON - Minister, first of all, thank you for your work in this portfolio and your commitment to it. I also congratulate Mr Carroll on his appointment as Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner. I've got a two-part question. Could you please outline how the Budget is supporting you to do your work, particularly with the racing reforms, some of which are very hot topics? The second part of the question is if the Racing Integrity Commissioner would be able to outline the key achievements in those 12 or 14 months of his appointment.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, certainly. Thank you very much for your question. Commissioner, would you like to speak to those two questions?

Mr CARROL - Yes, it's 16 months since my appointment in the role and over this time I think my office has delivered positive outcomes for the Tasmanian racing industry and the community. These outcomes have been achieved through strong engagement and consultation with Tasracing, the Tasracing Integrity Unit, the Racing Integrity Committee, the Tasracing Appeals Board and the Integrity Animal Welfare Committee that's been established.

Between 1 July 2025 and 31 May 2026, my officers received 144 complaints, with 69 received via the Racing Integrity Hotline and 75 complaints received by other means. These complaints demonstrate that the new reforms and the complaints management framework are fostering confidence in the independence of my office, which is crucial to the confidence the public has in the structure and independence of my office overall and the role my office plays in supporting integrity in racing and animal welfare standards.

Complaints have led to various referrals, investigations and disclosures across areas such as Tasmania Police, Tasracing, the Tasracing Integrity Unit and other government authorities. Some of those have been well documented in the media. I won't go into the details because some of these are ongoing or before various courts or appeals boards. I'm confident that these outcomes are having a direct impact on the integrity of racing and the improved animal welfare standards across each area of racing.

Since the inception of my office - and I'm happy to go into it at another time - my office has conducted four investigations outside those referrals through other agencies and they've been undertaken with key recommendations to support the functions, processes and systems of Tasracing and the racing clubs, including in relation to racing and animal welfare. These recommendations will be reported in my 2025-26 annual report released later this year.

Mr WINTER - Minister, do you deny that you've initiated any action against the Integrity Commission to suppress their work into the allegations against you?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Mr Winter. As I said, I won't be commenting any further.

Mr WINTER - Minister, it's been 10 months since your government did a deal with the Greens to shut down greyhound racing. We've now had the bill to shut down the industry in the Legislative Council since December last year. The latest position of many moving positions from you, the Premier and the government is that the bill now won't be brought on unless you

PUBLIC

know it's going to pass, but we heard from the member for Launceston last night, Ms Armitage, that she's not going to say how she's going to vote, meaning it's actually impossible for you to know that the bill is going to pass unless you bring it on. Are you really prepared to let this industry and the people who loved you, would have done anything for you, with their lives hanging in the balance indefinitely, when you know it is simply not possible for you to get the numbers before it goes to the floor?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, member, for your question. The government's position has been very clear and very consistent. Greyhound racing will be phased out by 2029. We want this achieved in an orderly transition with strong animal welfare protections and certainty and compensation for participants. The best way that we've done that is through the legislation that has passed the lower House. It's disappointing that we do not have certainty that the legislation will pass the Legislative Council. The Premier announced this week that we won't progress until we know that the bill will pass. We will continue to work with upper House members to address any concerns they may have. We know that this does not provide certainty for those involved in the industry.

On 25 May 2026, the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition resolved to pursue the following work plan over the coming months in line with its terms of reference: an examination of other jurisdictions, including any parliament -

Mr WINTER - This is now irrelevant to the question. Chair, this is wasting time.

Ms HOWLETT - No, it's not irrelevant.

Mr WINTER - Point of order on relevance. We don't have much time so I'm hoping I can ask another question.

Ms HOWLETT - We have two hours.

Mr WINTER - Is that okay?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the question I asked was actually about the mental health of the participants and the hold-up of the bill sitting in the Legislative Council. I was actually concerned when you talked about the mental health concerns that you have regarding these participants. Are you really prepared to let this community of people who supported you so strongly have their lives hanging in the balance for the next three years of uncertainty while this bill doesn't go through the Legislative Council?

Ms HOWLETT - As I've said, and I've made it very clear, we're prepared to work with the members of the upper House to address any concerns they may have. I know how difficult this is for participants.

Mr WINTER - I don't think you do. If you knew, you wouldn't be doing this to them.

Ms HOWLETT - I know how very difficult this is for the participants. The commissioner has addressed these concerns and we have worked with the commissioner's office and Tasracing -

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Just to move this on so we're not wasting a lot of time, minister, in the House of Assembly, you said, and I quote, 'because I put it in place, that's why I know' in relation to the mental health support that's been made available now on track'. There are two issues. The first one is that you claimed there was mental health support available on track, when it was not. Secondly, you claimed, 'because I put it in place, that's why I know', that you had put it in place. Then I received a letter from the commissioner stating clearly that it was in response, that the actions were taken by Tasracing in consultation with himself and the consultation group. Can you clarify, for the record now, was it you that put the mental health support in place, or was that incorrect?

Ms HOWLETT - No. What I can clarify is that I had a meeting with the commissioner. The date of that meeting, upon the delay of the legislation, I requested Tasracing, owing to the increased uncertainty and emotional impact that was communicated to me directly, that more support and wraparound services needed to be provided to participants, and that was a priority. And I requested this at a meeting with the commissioner and a meeting with Tasracing, and then the commissioner's office -

Mr WINTER - Saying that it needs more support is not the same as -

CHAIR - Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - - implementing the support on the track.

Ms HOWLETT - Commissioner, would you like to add to the process that we put in place?

Mr WINTER - I mean, why didn't you correct the record when this was clearly pointed out to you that you had misled the parliament?

CHAIR - Mr Winter. You've asked - I've given you plenty of leeway, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Under Standing Order 2, you're supposed to correct the record.

CHAIR - Please let the minister answer it. Mr Winter, please.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister: what I can say is that the minister is correct in that prior to the process of on-course counsellors being appointed, that there was conversations that was held with my office. But also, I'm aware with Tasracing that participant welfare not only was to remain a priority but there was to be measures put in place to address these issues at the track. Ultimately, that's a decision -

Mr WINTER - Did the minister put the counsellors in place on the track? Yes or no?

CHAIR - Mr Winter.

Mr CARROLL - I'm trying to answer your question, Mr Winter, if you don't want -

Mr WINTER - It's a really simple 'yes' or 'no' answer.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Mr Winter.

Mr CARROLL - Can I just answer the question?

CHAIR - Alright, we'll move on. Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the policy and guidelines for the grant of indemnities and legal assistance to public officers, which is on the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) website, requires public officers to notify their relevant responsible officer when a legal proceeding commences. When your Supreme Court matter started, did you advise the Premier about it, as required by the guidelines?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, these are very complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I will not be commenting any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - Have you, at all times, followed the requirements of the policy and guidelines for the grant of indemnities and legal assistance to public officers?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, these are complex matters and I will not be commenting any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, obviously, minister, there must be a suppression order in place for the Supreme Court matter that you initiated, so you can't comment on any detail about it, but have you sought legal advice about whether or not you can admit that it exists?

Ms HOWLETT - I will not be commenting any further.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. Minister, I want to ask about the lengths it takes for matters to be determined by stewards and for information to be presented. An example I want to use is Anthony Bullock. On 18 December swabs were taken from a race meet for three of his dogs, I understand on 18 December. The swabs came back, analysis came back, in February of this year, and it wasn't determined until 20 May. Is this an acceptable delay to you, minister, and perhaps if the commissioner has anything he wants to add in terms of the delay in terms of receiving information and then that matter being determined. Is there anything that can be done to improve that? Because it's a long time, it's six months almost since the race meet and when the action is taken.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, for your question. It is a long time, and I'll ask the commissioner to provide some details to that.

Mr CARROLL - Thank you and through you, minister: thank you very much for the question. What I would say is that the process of charges being laid to the time that inquiries are being held by stewards and subsequent appeals that are heard by the Tasmanian Racing Appeal Board (TRAB) is far too long.

Having said that, with regards to particular positive drug cases, there is a necessity for those to take a period of time, and a lot of time that is spent in analysing the particular samples, or whatever is being tested at the time, is out of the control of the controlling body, in this case Tasracing. There is a requirement that - certainly upon a positive test - there may be a requirement for a second test, and that can add to the time extension that's required.

PUBLIC

Once again, as far as the stewards panel is concerned, it is appropriate that the stewards panel to hear that, that might have been formed in the first instance, convened at a later date. And for whatever reason, whether it be through attending race meetings or other administration areas, those particular panels might not be able to assemble together at the same time to actually hear that particular meeting.

So, am I surprised that it takes six months for a matter to be heard from the time of the test? No, I'm not. Is it unreasonable? In the circumstances, I don't think six months is an unreasonable amount of time. It's disappointing, in that we don't have the process in place of analysing samples more quickly and receiving that information back. And I can understand the frustration both of the racing public but also other participants that takes place. But what I would say in that situation: they are all on the same playing field, and so there's not one rule for one, one rule for the other. Can we get it better? Yes, we can, as far as that's concerned, and it's something that we're certainly looking at.

If I look at and go one step further, as far as TRAB (Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board) is concerned, and I'm deeply concerned at the delays that are taken before TRAB. And I acknowledge the Short Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's response to serious allegations within harness racing in its final report and the recommendations they made in relation to TRAB. I welcome and support these recommendations.

I've also written to TRAB on a number of occasions expressing similar concerns to the committee in the manner in which TRAB's convened. Under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*, the TRAB must consult with members of the racing industry at least twice a year. I've attended all these consultation sessions conducted by the TRAB since my establishment in my office, and I'll continue to engage with and consult with TRAB to ensure that it serves and meets the expectations of the Tasmanian racing industry. But we've still got a long way to go as far as that's concerned.

I've raised these issues with the minister. It's something that we need to attend to.

Ms JOHNSTON - Following on from that, commissioner, the issues with TRAB - obviously there are a certain number of people who sit on the TRAB board, on the racing board. Is it an issue of resourcing around that, around the appropriate resourcing? Do you think that's a reason for the delay? I'm trying to understand what's the reason for the delay. Is it a resource issue? Is it the availability of the members? Is it a combination of the two? Because it is a very long delay and obviously is a matter of integrity in the races both for participants and for those who are betting on the races. To have these lengthy delays around serious integrity matters is concerning.

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister: what I would say is that the TRAB in itself is a very complex appeals board, in that it's very important that anyone appearing before the TRAB is provided natural justice. What we also need to take into account, at the end of the day, that it is, in essence, a sports appeal board. It's not a court of law, and it needs to operate as a sports appeal board.

I have concern in the way in which participants are represented before TRAB that those that can't afford expensive legal representation may not get the appropriate representation they require to actually put their case forward before the TRAB. So, it needs to be conducted at a

PUBLIC

level that it is available to all participants, and those participants that can't afford expensive legal advice, or legal representation, can have their case heard adequately.

I'm concerned at the time delay of hearings and appeal decisions being handed down. And some of the decisions that are handed down and the findings that are reported, in some ways, are like reports from the Supreme Court, and participants can't understand them. I've raised these issues with TRAB and received feedback. They have improved in that area, but we'll continue to monitor how they perform and continue to have those conversations.

Mr FERGUSON - I would just like, if the minister will support this, I'd just like to come back to Mr Carroll, to my previous question around the achievements of the new office over the last, I think now, 16 months and also in the first reporting period that's been provided to the parliament through its report, there is discussion about improved complaints handling and I'd like to understand that better, ideally with some sense for the committee, with an example so we can see that the reform is or isn't working as originally intended.

Ms HOWLETT - No, thank you honourable member, and before I pass to the commissioner. Look, under the framework all Tasmanian racing complaints and concerns are received by the Commissioners Independent Office. The Complaints Framework provides various avenues for all members of the public and participants to speak up when they become aware of circumstances or issues that could impact the integrity of racing or present concerns of animal welfare, and the Racing Integrity Hotline was launched on 1 February 2025, providing members of the public and participants the opportunity to share information that, being anonymous, about any integrity-related matters involving the Tasmanian racing industry directly to the Commissioner's Office.

Upon receipt, complaints are triaged by the commissioner's complaints and investigation team and referred or disclosed to the relevant agencies with additional relevant intelligence or information gathered by the commissioner's office. The commissioner's office then ensures that all complaints are handled within the published timelines. Since the establishment, the commissioner has received complaints from a variety of stakeholders addressing several areas of interest. The commissioner is committed to hearing concerns, and ensuring that they are dealt with appropriately, in the interests of transparency and improving public confidence in the Tasmanian racing industry.

Commissioner, would you like to add any further comments?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you, minister.

CHAIR - You have about a minute and 15 seconds.

Mr FERGUSON - And if I may encapsulate, in the minute remaining, is it working as intended?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you and through you, minister. What I would say is that I'm extremely confident in the complaints framework that we have put in place. Am I satisfied that the entire Tasmanian racing public are aware of the complaints framework? No I'm not. There's still some work to do in that. Am I satisfied that all members of parliament are aware of the complaints framework at the moment? No, I'm not, and as I said this time last year, that if

PUBLIC

a complaint is received, for example, by a member of parliament, it's important that they're referred to my office in the first instance to try and deal with this particular matter.

We are on a journey. I'm very confident that we will get to the position that we want to. What I think, and as I said to this time last year, the proof will be in the pudding as to how the number of complaints that we receive and, and how they're managed, as I said, we're still working with the public, but I think we're well on the way to getting where we need to achieve.

Mr FERGUSON - Appreciate that, thank you.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I wanted to try and understand a little bit more about what your position now on greyhound racing actually is, because I think it's now pretty clear that under the absurd proposition the Premier's put, you're never going to be able to bring the legislation back into Legislative Council and the Premier is now saying he will defund the industry anyway. I want to understand what that actually means. When the Premier says he's going to defund the industry, does that mean that he's seeking to withdraw regulatory oversight without legislative change? And wouldn't that be acting inconsistently with the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*?

Ms HOWLETT - As I stated previously, Mr Winter, I am happy to work with every member of the upper House to address any concerns that they have in relation to the bill. I'm committed to work with those people, and the best way - it's disappointing that we do have uncertainty that the legislation will pass the council, but the as I said, the Premier announced yesterday that there is a voluntary exit program that the commissioner will have oversight of and those who are wanting to exit the industry early, voluntarily, can make contact with the commissioner. Commissioner, would you like to speak more that?

Mr WINTER - I just want to draw you back to the actual question, which was trying to understand what your government's position actually is. Is it your government's position that it intends to withdraw regulatory oversight without legislative change? And do you agree that would be acting inconsistently with the *Racing Regulation Integrity Act 2024*, and I'll quote from that, it says:

It's an act to provide for the regulation of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing, to ensure integrity of persons involved in such racing, to safeguard the welfare of animals and for related purposes.

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, we want a model that is balanced, fiscally responsible, that approaches and prioritises high dependency participants and their well-being, ensuring their strong animal welfare outcomes and supports the orderly phase out greyhounds in Tasmania. And as members would be aware, the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner is developing the phase-out plan for the greyhound racing industry and will be undertaking further consultation during this.

Mr WINTER - Point of Order, Chair. The question's quite important to, I think, everyone involved in this. I'm trying to understand the position. Is the position, when you say defund, are you saying you intend to withdraw regulatory oversight without legislative change? I am more than happy to hear from the department if you're not sure on the answer.

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Our position is very, very clear, Mr Winter, and you're very aware of the government's position. Commissioner, would you like to add.

Mr WINTER - It would be interesting to hear from the department. I assume they've got some advice.

CHAIR - Mr Winter, it's up to the minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Certainly, deputy secretary, if you would like to add some advice to this.

Ms WILSON - What I would say is that the minister and both shareholder ministers have requested that that there's the assessment of the Future Funding Model for Tasracing beyond the current funding deed, and we're currently doing that work. This will provide information on important economic analysis.

Mr WINTER - But is the position you intend to stop regulating greyhound racing and without a deed?

Ms WILSON - We will be reporting on those funding options no later than 31 August.

CHAIR - Can I remind Mr Winter and all other members to please go to the minister or through the Minister? Thank you.

Mr WINTER - I apologise, Chair.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. Just to make sure it's on the record and where the report will be delivered to government no later than 31 August.

Mr WINTER - Minister, it's still the same question. Is it the government's position that he intends to withdraw regulatory oversight from greyhound racing even if there's no legislative change?

Ms HOWLETT - The government's position has been very, very clear Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - I'm sorry, this is a really important question that people really want to know on all sides of this debate. Is the government's position that it intends to withdraw regulatory oversight of greyhound racing even without legislative change?

Ms HOWLETT - We currently have a bill that has been through the lower House, and we will seek to speak to members of the upper House who may have concerns -

Mr WINTER - The Premier's position is that even if the bill doesn't get through -

CHAIR - Mr Winter, you have asked a question and they must respond.

Mr WINTER - I'm just trying to get the answer so we can move on.

Members interjecting.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - You support ending funding to greyhound racing, too.

Mr WINTER - I do not support this policy at all.

Members interjecting.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Chair, can I make a brief point of order and that is that I don't believe a single question has been interrupted, but the answers are constantly being interrupted. I just ask that the usual professional courtesies be provided. I don't think anybody minds the occasional geeing up of an answer or an interjection, but it is incessant and it's unreasonable.

CHAIR - I understand that. I know this is a very passionate subject, especially for Mr Winter. I get that. I do ask that interjections be kept to a minimum simply because Hansard finds it very difficult to be able to understand when more than one person is talking at one time.

Mr WINTER - Chair, I want to thank you for your ruling and I appreciate that. I am very happy to try and cease interjections. I am really keen to get this answer. It's really simple one and I hope I can get that.

CHAIR - Yes, I know you've asked the question a few times now and the minister has responded. I will ask the minister: do you have anything else to add to your previous answer.

Ms HOWLETT - The deputy secretary was still adding to her comments. As I said, the government remains committed to the passage of the Greyhound Legislation Amendments Phasing Out Reform Bill and the government's position is that the legislation delivers it in an orderly transition with strong animal welfare protections and certainty for participants is not only preferable, but it's absolutely essential, Mr Winter.

CHAIR - Now, Mr Winter, I will give you your third question because a lot of your interjection in that was in regards to the same question you were asking. But to all members, please do not abuse my leniency in regards to allowing clarification on questions, which all members, I'm giving you that opportunity, but please don't abuse it, minister.

Mr WINTER - Minister, if defunding is restricted only to withdrawing code funding while maintaining the government's regulatory function as required by the legislation, this also requires further explanation. So, for example, does the government intend to continue collecting the point of consumption taxes from greyhound racing? If so, will these funds be returned to the code to support its administration?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a matter for Treasury, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - I'm sorry. That's a matter for you as Racing minister.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, on 28 May this year, Ms Ogilvie told the House of Assembly that she had initiated a Supreme Court matter. If Ms Ogilvie could admit the existence of her case, why can't you tell parliament about yours?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, for your question, and as I have repeated multiple times, these are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I will not be commenting any further.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, it would be very easy for you to say if you are not involved in a Supreme Court matter, which is what all your colleagues did last year, but you refused to answer then and you're refusing to answer now. Minister, can you rule out being involved in a Supreme Court matter?

Ms HOWLETT - I will not be commenting any further, Chair.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well your refusal confirms the fact that you must be involved in a Supreme Court matter, that's the only conclusion I can draw.

Ms HOWLETT - I will not be commenting any further.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, Prof Razay has the call.

Prof RAZAY - Honourable minister, there have been some achievements since the appointment of our Racing Integrity Commissioner. Can I ask you to outline what have been achievement over the last 16 months, and what the future reform are envisaged to improve our racing industry?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. Prof Razay, and that's a really important question and there's certainly always room for improvement in the industry. The government, as I said, we've delivered the largest integrity reform in decades through the racing regulation and integrity bill, which is based on evidence and industry's best practice as recommended in the Monteith Review. Integrity is the bedrock on which the Tasmanian racing industry will grow and continue to make a positive contribution to the Tasmanian community. The new legislation and reforms, which are some of the strongest in Australian sport, are based on evidence and industry best practise. They provide a solid platform to build the confidence of participants and the community in the industry to support the long term prosperity of the industry and for the people of Tasmania, and the new legislation came into effect on the 1st of February 2025 last year. The new racing regulations have certainly raised the bar a lot higher. Commissioner, would you like to add to those reforms?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister, what I would say in answer to your initial question is that, what I look forward to, to our office into strengthening the overall integrity of the Tasmanian racing industry is the publishing of the standards that my office is currently developing. The Act requires that my office prepare standards for the Tasmanian race industry, including but not limited to integrity and animal welfare. These standards aim to set minimum standards for policies and procedures to be developed and implemented by Tasracing across a range of key areas, establishing a governance framework across each area for Tasracing to optimise via policies and procedures. My office will publish the first tranche of these standards by 30 June 2026 on our website, and these standards include complaints handling, investigations and disciplinary action, document and data management, conflicts of interest, fit and proper person, prohibited substances, wellbeing and safeguarding, and an education framework. My office has consulted extensively with Tasracing and the Integrity and Animal Welfare Advisory Committee in the development of these standards. At

PUBLIC

the last meeting of this committee these standards were presented and discussed. Each committee member has been asked for their feedback prior to these standards being finalised.

The final standard relates to animal welfare and is currently in draft. We are undertaking a significant industry consultation on finalising this standard, given the significant scope animal welfare covers in the racing industry. To provide some insight into this particular standard in general terms, the animal welfare standard aims to set minimum operational and governance standards at Tasracing in relation to animal welfare, including the Animal Welfare Codes of Practice - which you will be aware that we did an assessment of the racehorse code of practice and there's about to be a greyhound code of practice produced - and the setting of a standard regarding traceability and animal information reporting and inspection program, and the process and governance around complaints, breaches, and sanctioning education. Further standards will then follow based on my identification discussions with all stakeholders.

CHAIR - Thank you, commissioner. Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, through you to the commissioner, if I may, obviously since you've taken over as commissioner from the former Office of Racing Integrity, there's been a significant - and I don't want to put words in your mouth - but identification of gaps in information and you've done a significant amount of work in auditing that information, whether it be the number of greyhounds in the industry, information that the Office of Racing Integrity held or didn't hold completely. Would you be looking at doing an audit of trainer licence requirements in terms of making sure that the provisions that they need to meet in order to hold a trainer's licence have been met? I'm thinking in particular about Mr Bullock, for instance, in the greyhound racing industry over a number of years didn't hold a kennel licence and the Office of Racing Integrity were unaware of that. Is that something you're turning your mind to, to do an audit of all those licensing requirements to make sure that they're being met?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, for your question and I'll pass you to the commissioner.

Mr CARROLL - Thank you for the question. Through you, minister, what I would say is the regulation of licensing is the responsibility of Tasracing. There's been significant discussion and I think it's no secret that my office has entered into MOUs with all councils around Tasmania to assist in identifying the responsibilities and requirements that they may have with regards to kennels, or in fact, stables appropriate to the licence that each individual participant holds. Previously, can I say that the racing industry has held those licence applications to the highest standard they should be? No, they haven't. What I would say is that Tasracing has spent a significant amount of work and time in assessing each licence application moving forward to make sure that they meet the requirements. What I would also say is, and as I previously just mentioned, with the fit and proper person standard, that Tasracing will then be required to have a policy in place regarding fit and proper person to assess that to make sure that it meets the community standards as to what's required, whether that be through the declaration of previous indiscretions, through law enforcement or otherwise, to make sure that there can be an appropriate assessment made whether that person should be holding a licence or not. It'd be inappropriate for me to comment on any individual that would fall within this framework. But what I can say is that I'm very pleased with the way in which Tasracing is moving towards making these proper assessments.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Does the MOU extend between yourself and the councils, but also to Tasracing so that they can get that information at the point of issuing the licence?

Mr CARROLL - Certainly, information that comes into my office through the legislation that I have that I can share that with Tasracing.

Ms JOHNSTON - So, it goes through you to Tasracing so they can do those checks when someone's renewing their licence or applying for a licence?

Mr CARROLL - If that's required, yes.

Mr FERGUSON - Minister, we've already had some discussions and questions about greyhound racing and the transition. We've talked about the legislation and how you're handling that, but you're also on record as saying that you want the focus of the transitional period to be squarely about participant wellbeing and welfare. You've also made similar comments about animal welfare of course, and so I'd like the committee to move to the point where we can focus ourselves on what those support services to the industry are that are available because clearly there's perhaps some people that are unaware of the support services and the intention of government to be supportive during this transition time.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and that's a really important question. The commissioner and Tasracing have kept me informed of the support services being made available to the greyhound racing participants. I've been advised by the commissioner that in January this year he wrote to Luke Gatehouse of Greyhounds Tasmania advising him that Tasracing and the commissioner's office had increased the number of counselling services available to greyhound participants through the Tasracing EAP provider and they went from two to six sessions.

In addition, Tasracing and the commissioner's office arranged for counsellors to be in attendance at designated greyhound meets over a four-week period from the week commencing 25 May. I understand that information sheets have been provided to members of the greyhound racing community via SMS also at race meets. Information can be also accessed on Tasracing and the commissioner's website and through the transition plan. The commissioner is currently procuring other counselling providers to ensure a range of services are available in the north and in the south of the state. The commissioner may like to add some more detail to that.

Mr CARROLL - Thank you and through you, minister. The minister's covered off most of what I would have said about this but what I would say is that my office and myself personally are in constant communication with Mr Gatehouse who is representing Greyhounds Tasmania, as to the type of support services that the industry, the participants require and we've pivoted to what that should look like.

It was made clear to us that there was some concern as to whether participants would access online EAP services and there was a request to made that we should have counsellors at race meetings. That has been put in place. Even within the last 48 hours in relation to a particular provider that we had initially spoken to, a request has been made to speak to that provider to see whether they could provide those services. I won't go into the detail of who that provider is; it would be unfair to those people who have requested. But we will ensure that the counselling services that are required by those participants are available to those participants, regardless of where those services may come from.

PUBLIC

Mr FERGUSON - Can I just please ask a clarifying question, which I'm not looking for a long answer, but could I ask that you do exactly as you've opened the door to making sure that those support services, I won't call them counselling, you have, but those support services are tailor-made for the needs of this community and by listening to this community, understanding what they feel their needs are and how they can be best fulfilled. I mean, I'll just leave it there, but I would just invite you to take that thinking on board.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's a statement.

Mr FERGUSON - Yeah, it is, because I can see why some people might resist the offer.

CHAIR - Yeah.

Mr WINTER - Minister, do you accept that the legislation - that you brought to the House in 2024 and is now enacted - requires your government to continue to regulate greyhound racing and in fact, it's not legally possible to simply defund the industry and its regulation without legislative change.

Ms HOWLETT - As far as legislative change is concerned, I will ask Deidre, deputy secretary, to speak to that.

Ms WILSON - Through you, Minister. The department is focused on engagement with the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition to support the government responding to the work program. There is currently a bill before the House and that is the policy position of government.

NRE Tas is also engaged with Treasury on the assessment of the future funding model for Tasracing, beyond the current funding deed. The department is focused on implementing the government's policy position as stated.

Mr WINTER - The government's policy, minister, is actually not only the bill, but it's the government's stated policy position through the Premier is that the bill, if it can't pass, then you will simply defund the industry anyway. Has the department received any legal advice about whether it is legally possible to simply cease the regulation of greyhound racing without legislative change?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment on whether any legal advice has been sought or not.

Mr WINTER - What? I'm sorry, the government comments all the time about whether they've requested legal advice. I can recall straight away the Premier last year saying he'd sought legal advice about caretaker convention. It's totally normal and appropriate. I'm not asking what the advice is, I'm asking whether you've sought legal advice through the Solicitor-General or anywhere in relation to your defunding policy.

Ms HOWLETT - Are you asking the department?

Mr WINTER - Well, I can't ask the department directly, but I'd love it if you referred it to the department.

PUBLIC

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, without commenting on the specifics of this matter, there are principles that apply relating to privileged legal communications that I'm talking at first principles. I'm talking in a general sense. All state servants, including myself, are bound by statutory duties of confidentiality relating to legal communications.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right and it's not appropriate for me to comment on whether any legal advice has been sought or not.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the industry has stated, and I believe in a letter to you and the Premier, that it is very confident in its position and its legal advice that your defund greyhound racing policy actually isn't legally possible. How confident are you that the Premier's policy to defund greyhound racing without legislative change is actually possible?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, as I have said multiple times, the government remains committed to the passage of the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill.

Mr WINTER - Do you realise that what you're doing sends you straight back into court again on another matter? If you continue down this path of saying you're going to defund the greyhound racing - actually start doing it - the Tasmanian taxpayer is going to have to pay even more. Do you realise that the direction this is now heading is not into the Legislative Council, but actually into the courts, where Tasmanian taxpayers could be up for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars of compensation as you wilfully head towards disobeying your own act that you, as minister, put forward into the House only two years ago. Do you understand that?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll take that as a comment, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Do you understand that to -

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. That was three questions.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you minister. I mean, just for the record, these are interesting lines of questions from Mr Winter given his own party's leader has now said that the Labor Party themselves will defund racing.

Mr WINTER - No, he has not said that.

Mr FERGUSON - I thought he had.

Ms HOWLETT - He did say that.

Members interjecting.

CHAIR - Order. Dr Woodruff has the call.

Dr WOODRUFF - Perhaps the commissioner can give us a perspective on the safety and welfare of greyhounds in Tasmania. Minister, to you and also through you to the commissioner. I'm not sure if you saw the vision online from Launceston's greyhound meet the night before last. The track was soaking wet after days of rain and dogs were slipping all over

PUBLIC

the place. It was quite distressing to watch. As you know, greyhound racing on its simple physics is already impossible to make safe for dogs and that conditions like those make it even more risky. The same can be said for racing in extreme temperatures. We know that dogs are at high risk of heat stroke in conditions over 24 degrees because they can't regulate their body temperature.

Through you, minister, to the commissioner if appropriate. Commissioner, have you the power to regulate the industry? We know you've got the power to regulate the industry and impose higher standards and we've seen you do it with the Equine Code of Conduct and the standards for housing horses. Will you do the same for greyhounds, not just for housing conditions but for racing conditions also?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, I'll hand over to the commissioner to make comment.

Mr CARROLL - Thank you and through you, minister. To answer your first question, and as I mentioned earlier, my office has been in constant consultation with Tasracing in the development of a code of practice for greyhound welfare. We had been waiting for the decision on the bill to ensure that the code of practice for greyhound welfare aligns with any new legislation. However, given the delay in that, I'm mindful that animal welfare concerns, particularly as they relate to the care and welfare of greyhounds, continue to be raised.

A draft code of practice has been provided to the Integrity and Animal Welfare Advisory Committee for comment and feedback, and Dr Kate Savage, who's my Independent Veterinary Advisor to my office, has also reviewed and provided feedback on the code of practice. I've requested that Tasracing release its Code of Practice for greyhound welfare, that it should be released by the end of June, regardless of any decision of the bill. As a code of practice is a living policy document, certain provisions of the Code of Practice may be subject to change as a result of any final decision in the bill. As far as what occurs in particular race meetings and under the rules of racing - that is a decision for the stewards to make as to what takes place on race day - what I would say in regards to racing is, in line to some of your comments, not in relation to this particular race day, but I'm aware of concerns that have been raised in respect of the Launceston race track for 278 metre race start distances where a number of greyhounds have been injured this year. These concerns identified an increase in risk to the injury to greyhounds at this distance, as well as the 780 metre distance starts from the same starting box. Having become aware of this risk and the uncertainty behind the change and the risk profile, on Monday I wrote to Tasracing in respect of these concerns and requested an immediate action to ensure the welfare of greyhounds is safeguarded, and I made the immediate following recommendations:

That a cost proposal and survey for remedial works as identified by consultant report be obtained by Tasracing as a matter of urgency, or proposed alternate remedial actions for safer greyhound racing for 278 metres starts be provided to me for further consideration, and Recommendation (02): That all greyhound races are trials from the 278 metre start position at the Launceston track be immediately suspended until the outcomes of Recommendation (01) are known and agreed to Tasracing via my office.

PUBLIC

Having received these recommendations on Tuesday, Tasracing wrote to the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club advising that the 278-metre and 780-metre races will be suspended immediately until the cost proposal and survey of the remedial works was obtained. I understand that the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club and Tasracing are working through this and until this cause is identified, no racing at these distances will take place given the known increased risk of injuries to greyhounds over these distances. I thank the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club for raising these concerns with my office in the first instance, and whilst I acknowledge and appreciate that these recommendations will further impact the greyhound participants and require some rescheduling by Tasracing, these recommendations are critical to ensure that animal welfare remains a priority for racing in Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, commissioner. It's good to hear those actions that you're taking. So, through you minister to the commissioner, the government has been very clear in its policy about greyhound racing, that it should be phased out because it's not compatible with community's views of animal welfare standards. Could you just speak to the Code of Practice changes you talked about then? I suppose what I'm asking is, will you consider reviewing all the standards and local rules of racing to ensure that the risk to dogs can be mitigated in addition to what's been done around the Code of Practice?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you and through you, minister, whilst I won't go into the specifics of the Code of Practice, because it's still in draft form at this stage and it hasn't been finalised, what I would say is - I think that, hopefully, you can draw some level of comfort as to what was in the Code of Practice for race horses - that there'll be significant guidance given there as to the standard of kennelling that's required for greyhounds within Tasmania. But further to your question in relation to ensuring high animal welfare standards of greyhounds since the announcement was made, what I would say is that my office has instigated and funded five extra Tasracing staff that their duties are aligned to animal welfare standards within Tasracing. There are two extra animal welfare officers, a dedicated investigator to complaints that come in regarding greyhounds issues, a traceability officer to ensure that there is appropriate traceability of all greyhounds through the phase out period, and a project manager that will manage the project of transition on behalf of Tasracing. They have their own working group that reports into our working group. You also would have seen or be aware that Tasracing, through my instructions, have conducted two audits of all greyhounds in Tasmania to make sure there's appropriate traceability and whilst that, at this stage, may just reflect the number of greyhounds that we have in Tasmania, what I would say where a level of comfort can be drawn by the racing community is that there was a 96 per cent rectification on the records that were kept with an OzChase as to the location and status of those greyhounds and so, we'll have a point in time accurate reflection of what's occurring with our greyhounds in Tasmania which I think is really pleasing from a high animal welfare standard point of view.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Following on from Dr Woodruff's questions, from the two audits you've done in terms of the greyhound racing numbers, are you able to provide your current understanding of how many greyhounds are currently registered for racing in the industry? And then if you have a breakdown in relation to those in terms of the number of trainers with how many dogs, whether it be one to, you know, zero to five, five to ten or have you reported 20 or plus? And are you able to also provide a number of trainers who derive their primary income from greyhound racing?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honorable member.

Ms JOHNSTON - Through you, sorry, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - I will see if the commissioner has any of those details.

Mr CARROLL - Thank you. Through you, Chair. There are a couple of issues that you asked me to attend to, the first one being in relation to the audit. What I can say is the audit was only finalised in the last few months and there were a total of 1052 greyhounds that were audited. Of that there were 893 active greyhounds, 133 retired greyhounds that are awaiting to be rehomed, 26 non-microchipped greyhounds and from 168 licenced participants.

Ms JOHNSTON - And of those licensed participants, how many were trainers?

Mr CARROLL - I think they were all trainers.

Ms JOHNSTON - They're all trainers.

Mr CARROLL - Sorry, I think there were four non-registered persons.

Ms JOHNSTON - And in terms of the 168 licensed participants, how many of them had more than 20 dogs? How many had more than 50 dogs?

Mr CARROLL - It's interesting cause we were only just discussing this about two hours ago.

Ms JOHNSTON - Or whatever that might be.

Mr CARROLL - And I don't have the numbers in front of me.

Ms JOHNSTON - Would it be fair to say, I suppose, even though I appreciate you trying to get the numbers, would it be fair to say that most of those participants had a very small number of dogs and there were only a few participants who had a large number of dogs? Would that be a fair to say, whilst you're getting that direct information?

Mr CARROLL - So, what I can say is that of a number of trainers that had dogs, the largest trainer had 70 greyhounds because at that particular audit and the second largest trainer, I think, had 30 greyhounds. The top 20 trainers had - and I can give you a more accurate reflection - I think it was essentially 80 per cent of all greyhounds in Tasmania. The bottom 20 greyhound trainers had one greyhound. The next 20 bottom trainers had between two and five greyhounds. It fluctuates there. So, my office has done a complete audit as to the number of trainers that have each amount of greyhounds. Now, that will fluctuate on a weekly basis.

Ms JOHNSTON - But at a point in time at that audit. Is that something you're able to take on notice and provide?

Mr CARROLL - Yes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. Is that alright? Thank you.

PUBLIC

Mr FERGUSON - My question is to either the minister or Mr Carroll or perhaps the department. I understand that the Greyhound Racing Transition Working Group is in place. In fact, Mr Carroll has already discussed it to Dr Woodruff's question. Could you update the committee on the work of the Transition Working Group in general terms, and then specifically when did it last meet, for example, and what are its areas of focus for this transition?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, for your question. As members would be aware, the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner is developing the phase out plan for the greyhound racing industry and will undertake further consultation during its preparation and the working group is key to this. Do you have dates as to when the working group?

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister, the working group, on its initial gathering, was meeting on a fortnightly basis. Now, it meets on a monthly basis. At the moment we've been gathering information in developing a transition plan that will provide guidance to the industry in relation to the phase-out of greyhounds.

There's no doubt that has been impacted in the delay of the bill being debated and passed. What I would say is that we hope to have a draft transition plan that, at this stage, is aligned to what's proposed in the bill, by the end of June this year.

I can go through all the objectives of the transition, but I won't bore you with all those things.

Mr FERGUSON - Well, there's also time. I'm probably just looking for the greater effort going into what areas, if you don't mind me putting it that way.

Mr CARROLL - Certainly. First and foremost, and as I've always said, the transition plan will focus on both the participant and greyhound welfare, to start with. The backbone of that will be ensuring that by the time that 30 June 2029 comes around, that we have the appropriate rehoming model, that we won't have an extraordinary number of greyhounds that I'm unable to rehome at that period of time. So, everything will start from that point and work its way backwards. We will implement a model for active greyhound racing to be reduced and phased out from the period of, at this stage, 1 September 2026 to 30 June 2029, in line with the expiry of the funding deed.

From that we will also, as I said:

- Support greyhound racing participants through the transition period and going through a framework of wellbeing support, compensation and workforce and transition programs.
- Ensure the retirement rehoming of all racing greyhounds during the transition period, and as soon as possible after 1 July, including through the support of the Greyhounds as Pets program, a development of a framework incorporating other support services.
- Ensure the transition plan provides strong and effective communication with stakeholders, including particular members of the greyhound industry, animal welfare groups in the community.

PUBLIC

- The establishment of appropriate legacy plan relating to the greyhound industry in Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you, commissioner.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I wanted to go to the deed, which is very important. I've been doing my research ahead of this and I found back in GBE hearings in 2023, when I asked the former minister Mr Ellis about this, and Tasracing said they had submitted a proposal around the deed in October of 2023, which is almost three years ago.

Under RTI, I found a letter to you from Tasracing on 12 December 2024 with another proposal. And then I understand that there's been a further delay from further RTI documents that have been uncovered. Minister, part of that is there's an understanding in the industry that the deeds expire in 2029. But of course, there's actually three deeds and one of them, as I understand it, expires in 2027. Can you explain what on earth is going on here? And why is it in particular the working group involves no-one from racing? There's Treasury and NRE on it, but it appears as though there's no-one on it fighting for the racing industry.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the honourable member for his question. It's important to remember that it was a previous Labor government who made the decision in 2009 to sell TOTE Tasmania, robbing the industry of its previous self-funding capability. As I stated many times, it was a very reckless decision of you, the former Labor leader, to send Tasmanians to an early, unwanted election.

Mr WINTER - I wasn't here in 2009.

Ms HOWLETT - That has certainly impacted on the timeline of the deed. I know that the deed is the industry's number-one priority. It's really important for the thoroughbred industry, for our breeders, to have a deed in place. And we know that the industry needs certainty, and we have been working on the deed for quite some time.

Now, Treasury and the Department of NRE have been working on that deed. Deidre, would you like to add any more comments on that deed? Look, you know, it's important to know it's not the review of a deed, whether there will be a funding deed or what that looks like. There is certainty beyond 2029 that there will be a funding deed in place. Thank you, deputy secretary.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, the shareholding ministers wrote to Tasracing in March 2025 to advise that they had approved that Treasury will -

Mr WINTER - Sorry, what date was that?

Ms WILSON - March 2025 - that Treasury will engage with our department to identify holistic options to progress the review of the future funding model for the Tasmanian racing industry, including the funding deeds.

As the minister has said, we've commenced that work. The report will provide important economic analysis undertaken by Treasury, including the economic benefits of the government's funding to Tasracing, analysis of Tasracing's financial model and benchmarking against other jurisdictions to inform an appropriate funding model.

PUBLIC

In terms of engagement, we as a working group have engaged with the commissioner and will engage and continue to engage with Tasracing as is appropriate. This would be one input in the decision-making of government concerning the deed, and it will have a focus on aspects around the shape of the deed. As the minister has said, there is a commitment to continue to support a funding deed.

Ms HOWLETT - Correct.

Mr WINTER - Minister, a question in two. Firstly, the CEO of Tasracing told the greyhound transition committee that it would take as much money to run two codes as it does three. Do you agree with the CEO on that point?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, my main priority right now is working on that funding deed, and that is what we have been doing to create certainty for the industry and we will continue to work on that deed. As I previously stated, working on the deed had to come to a halt because you took the state to an unwanted election.

Mr WINTER - Minister, your government has been working on this deed since at least October 2023, which leads up to almost three years now, and you're trying to blame me for this not going through, which is pretty extraordinary.

Ms HOWLETT - No-one wanted the election. I can certainly say that.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the issue is around - what was that, sorry?

CHAIR - Minister, please. Mr Winter has the call.

Mr WINTER - I was interested in what the minister had to say. It might have been adding something,

Ms HOWLETT - It was a reckless grab for power.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the concern that the industry has at the moment is that Tasracing has just put out its proposed schedule for next year, which appears to delete a significant number of race meets across thoroughbred and harness racing. This significantly takes away hundreds of thousands of dollars of stakes money and support back into the industry. Can you confirm the reason why that's happening is that in 2024 there was a change of interpretation from the Department of Treasury and Finance, and as summarised under RTI that I received from Tasracing, Mr Jenkins states that Treasury decided that it would no longer index the funding because minister Archer had not signed an amendment deed in 2018.

Ms HOWLETT - Well, what I can tell you - it is a Treasury matter but -

Mr WINTER - Well, it's a matter that impacts your portfolio greatly, and this output.

Ms HOWLETT - It is a Treasury matter and we have been working on the deed, Treasury and the department of NRE. We'll continue to work on that deed and we know how important that deed is for the future. There will be a deed. There's no question about that. We're just working through that process and -

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - So when you say that there will be a deed and there's no question about that, minister, the problem I've got with that is that you also said that your government would not shut down greyhound racing or any other code -

CHAIR - Mr Winter, is this a clarifying question?

Mr WINTER - It is, yeah.

CHAIR - Can you just say 'clarifying'?

Mr WINTER - So in relation to the question, I'll read the exact email from my question. It's a letter from Andrew Jenkins, the CEO of TasRacing to your chair- well, then-racing-advisor, Luke Gaetani. It says;

G'day Luke. I'll give you a call to discuss. In summary, since 2018, Treasury has paid indexation on the funding deed to Tasracing in line with the attached variation at CPI. We've today received advice from Treasury that the variation was not signed by the minister in 2018 and, that being the case, Treasury intend to pay indexation for financial year 2025 at the original indexation CPI less 1 per cent. This will impact Tasracing's income and budgeted loss for financial year 2025 by \$360 000.

Given indexation was paid at CPI since 2018, Tasracing believes it's reasonable that we would budget accordingly, ongoing, and unreasonable for Treasury to take on the position that they have.

Do you accept that this decision by your government has ripped hundreds of thousands of dollars out of the industry and has directly led to these races being deleted next season?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and I'll take that as a statement and that is a matter for Treasury.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, we've seen recorded footage of trainers loading greyhounds into the starting gates forcibly by grabbing greyhounds' tails. Greyhound Racing Victoria last year confirmed that this is unacceptable handling of a greyhound and the practice now seems to have finally stopped in Victoria; we are disturbed to see it happening in Tasmania and there is replay available on the Tasracing website that can be viewed that shows evidence of this. Is tail-grabbing behaviour considered acceptable by Tasracing? If so, why? Related: will you act to ban tail-grabbing in greyhound racing?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. As I said, it's important that we continue to raise the bar higher when it comes to animal welfare. I am unaware of the comments that you have just made and what Victoria has done. From my perspective, it is unacceptable. Commissioner, would you like to add anything to that?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you, and through you, minister. I am aware of the particular incident that that you've raised, and that matter has been referred to Tasracing for the integrity unit to address and get back to my office. I haven't received any reply back from them yet, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment on that particular issue until I get the appropriate response from Tasracing.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, and thank you, minister. I guess your answer suggests that you would be taking some action in this respect?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. On another matter, it's a rare thing for a race event to go through without at least one greyhound falling in the race, sadly. The footage is highly disturbing when dogs tumble and fall at speeds of up to 70 kilometres an hour. Those injuries aren't always apparent, and when they're checked afterwards by the on-track vet, it's not always the case that the effect of falls can be identified. The Northern Territory has a 10-day mandatory stand-down period for falls and that advice has been received by freelance journalist Susan Metcalf, and she said;

As of 2 January 2024, the Racing and Wagering Commission, the governing body for greyhound racing in the Northern Territory, enforced a mandatory 10-day stand down period for any greyhound that falls during the race. This policy aims to safeguard animal welfare and reduce the incidence and severity of injuries.'

That was a statement from the operations manager of the Darwin Greyhound Association, Greg De Lanty. Minister, will Tasracing consider moving to align with the Northern Territory to ensure that no dog is expected to race while potentially bruised after taking a significant tumble?

Ms HOWLETT - I will need to speak to the commissioner about other jurisdictions and what they have in place or if they have a 10-day stand down period in place. I think if there is a significant fall, I can see why the Northern Territory have put that in place. I guess, it's like with any athlete, you can have an injury and the soreness is not shown immediately, but it follows days after. Commissioner, would you like to add anything?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you, and through you, minister. What I would say is that I'm certainly encouraged by the high standard that our stewards have put regarding animal welfare standards and, in particular, on-track injuries, whether that be through any of the horse codes or the greyhound codes. All codes have a stand-down period that's applicable to them. Certainly in relation to the stand-down period that can be enforced, that is not just one that can be enforced on the day of racing, that can be enforced for any period after the day of racing in which an injury or fall occurs.

Dr Martin Lenz, who is the Tasracing vet, has a very good history of assessing animals even after the race has occurred, in subsequent days. I'm certainly happy to speak to Northern Territory about the policy that they're putting in place and assessing its appropriateness for here in Tasmania and having those discussions. Certainly, my independent veterinary advisor, Dr Kate Savage may be aware of that. I'll raise that with her, see whether it's something that we need to address as far as our code of practice is concerned.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, commissioner. Just to finish the comment, I suppose the standards that we've had in another field in sport show us how times change in terms of our understanding of physiology and concussion in football, for example, in AFL is a big issue. So I think the understanding of the impact on the physiology of dogs is what we're seeing other states addressing. So some action in that area would be good.

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Happy to have some conversations.

Dr WOODRUFF - I think the work that Dr Lenz is doing is not mandatory, so that's the difference, in the Northern Territory there's a mandatory stand down period.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, a number of welfare advocates have been quite concerned about the pressure that's going to be put on them in terms of rehoming of greyhounds through the transition period. They are keen to understand more the outline for funding moving forward in terms of supporting, particularly those rehoming organisations, recognising the Dogs' Home, RSPCA, Brightside, Illoura, Small Paws currently don't receive any funding for rehoming of greyhounds and they've been doing so for many, many years for greyhounds exiting the industry, often not through appropriate means that have been endorsed. I'm keen to understand a bit more about what that funding profile might look like moving forward, either through you to the commissioner or yourself directly.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and that's part of the work that the commissioner is working through and -

Mr CARROLL - Thank you and through you, minister. As you'd be aware - and I've raised these concerns before committees that you're Chair of and also in other chambers - as has been well documented that my office has received an allocation of \$4.8 million to address the transition plan and the transition budget, to provide some guidance and advice at a high level. This budget submission covers the following costs:

- a working group,
- a feasibility study,
- workforce to support the transition of the phase out,
- veterinary care,
- emergency kennelling, rehoming, and
- compensation via Tasracing, for quarantine, race-day expenses from the reduced racing schedule.

The budget covers participant welfare, rehoming, compensation considerations and once the compensation model has been established in the transition plan, there will be a further budget application for what that looks like. This was only discussed earlier today through our working group as to the rehoming options that are available.

I'm on public record saying the longer this bill drags out, the more issues that I'll have as far as rehoming greyhounds is concerned and the costs associated with that. I'm very concerned about that, as is the working group. The longer it takes, if and when the bill is passed and there are any amendments required to the transition plan that require additional investment or funding, then a further budget application will be made through my office by various other organisations.

It's made quite clear to the working group, for example, if I use the RSPCA, for example, if they required extra funding to ensure adequate rehoming, then that would come through my office through a budget application.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - And so I understand the RSPCA is on that working group. A representative is on that working group. In terms of broader engagement with the animal welfare community, how is your office achieving that in terms of being able to - obviously RSPCA speak with themselves and I know that they're heavily engaged with other groups, but how are you particularly going to make sure that those other groups that currently rehome at the moment will be part of that conversation?

Mr CARROLL - Once again, as far as the working groups are concerned, and I thank Andrea Dawkins for the work that she's doing. She's certainly been leading those areas of rehoming and providing the working group guidance as to different organisations or different individuals that may be able to rehome or foster greyhounds until appropriate rehoming can be found. I think at this stage we looked at the potential modelling of 12 organisations that could potentially rehome greyhounds and spoke to some of those individuals. That will require additional funding to make sure that those groups or individuals have the appropriate funds to make sure that they have positions available for the number of greyhounds that we're going to face as far as rehoming is concerned.

Ms JOHNSTON - Just a point of clarification on funding towards rehoming, is that for rehoming purposes exclusive of veterinary care that might be needed for those dogs that are exiting the industry? So, obviously, dental work or desexing or other work, whether it be injuries - is that rehoming funding more just for kennelling and the expenses of rehoming rather than the veterinary care of that particular dog or any needs?

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister. It's probably not as easy to try and put them all in one bucket because there are several layers here as far as that's concerned. We're aware there may be need for emergency kennelling. We're looking at those particular options. There was provision made as far as the rehoming veterinary services that are required, as far as desexing and dental is concerned. But as I said, once it is established what the rehoming model will look like, there'll be a further budget application made.

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner and Tasracing recently announced an update of the Tasracing Code of Practice for Racehorse Welfare. I understand that Tasmania is one of a select number of jurisdictions to have such a code. I further understand that the short inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's response to serious allegations within harness racing final report supported the code.

Can you comment on how this can help Tasracing or Tasmanian Racing to continue to thrive and grow?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. The updated Tasracing Code of Practice for Racehorse Welfare was released on 1 January 2026 following the Commissioner's assessment which was undertaken at my request. I'm confident that the updated Code of Practice establishes a set of standards that are industry-leading and support the care and welfare of race horses. While I understand that there are concerns in the Code of Practice, particularly relating to the standards for accommodation, I'm comfortable that these standards reflect contemporary community expectations regarding animal welfare, in particular ensuring that racehorses have access to appropriate shelter. The Commissioner can provide any further questions in relation to the Code of Practice.

PUBLIC

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister. What I would say in our assessment of the Tasracing Code of Practice for racehorses is that there was significant consultation that was undertaken through various industry groups and including the Trainers' Association that was offered to provide a submission in relation to the Code of Practice.

In receiving all the submissions from the various working groups, and I've mentioned to Dr Kate Savage before, who's my independent veterinary advisor, an equine international medicine specialist and past president of the World Equine Veterinary Association, who provided to me support and assessment of the Code of Practice. Her extensive expertise has ensured that the assessment and its recommendations were evidence-based and address community expectations in respect to the welfare of race horses.

To the minister's point I understand concerns have been raised regarding the cost for compliance of these standards, particularly as they relate to the standard of shelters. I'm satisfied that the standards adequately address the welfare concerns for animals whilst providing flexibility necessary to assess the various elements of property when determining whether shelters - and to quote Mr Winter in a hearing that 'a rug is not essentially shelter' - that was provided beforehand. I make no apologies for these standards that may result in trainers needing to invest in their property to ensure that the quality of the shelters and/or stables meet these standards to the expectation of the community.

Mr JAENSCH - And are they performance-based standards or are they setting minimum sort of solutions?

Mr CARROLL - They set minimum guidelines for the standards at the moment and I would say I've been really pleased with the way in which Tasracing is going about ensuring these standards are put in place and they've been going to properties, visiting and speaking to trainers.

Mr JAENSCH - Yeah.

Mr CARROLL - I should also say, just because the word 'shelter', as mentioned, doesn't mean that it's a fixed shelter, appropriate shelter can be provided by vegetation, trees or hedges or so forth that protect the horses from wind or rain or so forth. That will be an assessment that will be made ultimately by the Chief Racing Integrity Officer of Tasracing and, and at this stage, they're going through that process of speaking to all the trainers.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I want to ask you about the Selinger report. I've seen a copy of - I think what's termed as a draft report and I understand, speaking to race clubs, that there's been another meeting today with Mr Selinger. Have you received a final copy of Mr Selinger's report or a draft report?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. I do believe there was an industry meeting at Campbell Town today. I've only received a presentation via Mr Selinger, I'm not sure what the board has received, whether it was a verbal presentation or I can take that on notice.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - I appreciate that. What's the timeline on when Mr Selinger's final report will be concluded?

Ms HOWLETT - I would have to take that on notice.

Mr WINTER - There's been -

Ms HOWLETT - Unless, would you like to add any comments?

Mr WINTER - It's a different Selinger report to the one you did, I think.

Mr CARROLL - Well, I was going to say there may be clarity regarding that and once again, whilst I acknowledge the expertise that Mr Selinger brings to the table as far as his racing background is concerned but also the sports administration background, I think there seems to be some confusion in regarding to the reports that Mr Selinger has done and you and I have spoken about that. Certainly, when I first started, there was a report that Mr Selinger was doing that stopped essentially, once the announcement for greyhound racing was commenced.

Mr Selinger, I and Tasracing had a discussion as to what work was required moving forward and Tasracing, it was decided, would engage Mr Selinger to conduct four pieces of work. So, there are four pieces of work that Mr Selinger is currently undertaking on behalf of Tasracing as far as different areas are concerned, so it may be essential that you provide guidance as to which particular report.

Mr WINTER - You and I have chatted, you've done your one, which I've talked about in the committee, and I understand there's a new piece of work, which is what I was asking about - which is why I was asking the minister. Minister, there's -

Dr WOODRUFF - That was three questions, Chair.

Mr WINTER - That was two so far.

Dr WOODRUFF - No -

CHAIR - No, he was clarifying the Selinger reports, cause there were -

Dr WOODRUFF - There were still three questions.

CHAIR - There were two separate ones.

Dr WOODRUFF - That was the third.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the concern across industry is that there's now a push on to start merging race clubs and potentially shutting down the Devonport Racing Club at Spreyton. Can you confirm that there's a proposal now to merge race clubs and can you comment on the future of the Spreyton Racecourse?

Mr WINTER - Thank you for your question. Chair, the government is fully committed to ensure racing has a long future on the north-west coast and in relation to the equine codes and the north-west coast. I'm advised that at their most recent board meeting, Tasracing's board

PUBLIC

resolved to proceed with the replacement of the all-weather tapeta surface at the Devonport Racing Club and submissions of development applications for a harness training facility. Just to be clear, the Devonport Racing Club and harness racing will have a long future and an appropriate facility, and track investments will certainly be made.

Mr WINTER - Does that include the harness track for the -

Ms HOWLETT - The training track, yes.

Mr WINTER - The six-and-a-half billion is there for the harness facility? For Steve Davis and the president there?

Ms HOWLETT - Well, the training facility - and absolutely we're committed to the training facility.

Mr WINTER - Thank you and thanks for the additional. I appreciate that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, in a recent RTI request, Tasracing provided information about greyhound deaths, many of which were for unknown and unrecorded reasons, and I believe Ms O'Connor has referred a copy of that RTI request to the commissioner so he's aware of it.

A question about the list - one prominent and notorious trainer, Anthony Bullock, has many dogs that have died without a cause. In addition, some of the deaths were not reported at the time. There are other trainers that were guilty of this as well. Can you please tell me what's being done to sanction trainers such as Mr Bullock who either don't report deaths or don't provide information about deaths of a greyhound in their so-called care?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for your question, honourable member. Commissioner, would you like to speak to that?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you. Through you, minister: what I can say is, I think that there've been some amendments since your RTI request was received, in that there were - and whilst this doesn't deflect from the unknown causes of deaths that are recorded from that - I think there were two greyhounds that were noted as being 'deceased for accidental causes'. These were in another state, not in Tasmania. There were also three greyhounds that were updated to 'deceased for unknown causes' and they were from injuries that occurred in another state and not in Tasmania. So that would decrease the number of greyhounds that were deceased from unknown causes or in Tasmania, as far as that's concerned.

What I would say to this is that - and I've certainly spoken to Tasracing about this - last year, certainly - and I congratulate Tasracing for doing this - there were, for the majority of greyhounds that had died, there were necropsies that were done in relation to the cause of death that was discovered. If it was decided - and whilst that shouldn't be budget-driven, it certainly has to be taken into account if there is evidence or the cause of death can be explained through other means. So, what has occurred is that the Chief Racing Integrity Officer has made a decision, if those deaths can be explained for other purposes in an investigation or through discussions with other veterinary providers, that they would not perform the necropsies it required. So, the reason for death may have just been an entry that was done by a person from an administration point of view.

PUBLIC

I'm satisfied that there has been no negligence on behalf of Tasracing in identifying specific causes of deaths as far as greyhounds are concerned, from the deaths that I know and from the lists that were provided. As I said, in determining those, I think there were a number of, as I said, another five deaths that were attributed to interstate, not in Tasmania, as far as that's concerned.

I can assure you, Dr Woodruff, that if there is a concern in any way as to the death of a greyhound, that there'll be a significant investigation that is undertaken as far as the Tasracing Integrity Unit's concerned. There have been investigations that have been conducted, and I can't speak to those at the moment because some of those may be ongoing about the list that you provided, and I know that doesn't answer the question that you want now, but certainly, once those investigations have been finalised, I'm happy to brief you on those.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. You provided some useful information. I accept that but notwithstanding the interstate cases of the interstate deaths, there are still deaths where there's no information provided about the deaths of the greyhounds, which is not about a Tasracing thing, it's about what hasn't been provided for the records. But I have a specific question about some instances where the cause of death is listed as 'snakebite'. In terms of what you just said about necropsies, is it the case that causes of death listed as snakebite are mostly theoretical and not proven, and there can be a mistaken assumption that mixes up snakebite with exercise-induced rhabdomyolysis, which is over-exertion, essentially?

Mr CARROLL - Through you, minister: it would be inappropriate, as I said earlier, for me to comment on - and any potential investigation that may be undertaken by Tasracing Integrity Unit at this stage. And whilst I won't confirm or deny if there is an investigation being conducted in relation to the matter that you're speaking about, I've got a level of confidence in Tasracing and the Chief Racing Integrity Officer and the vet, Dr Lenz, in making an assessment as to the cause of death that's been recorded here. I don't know, and I can't comment, and it would be wrong for me to comment, on the particular case you're talking about as to what evidence was found as far as that's concerned. So, as I said, that may be a question for Tasracing, but I'm confident in the position that they've put forward.

Dr WOODRUFF - Because it is a question, isn't it? Most greyhounds are kept caged. It's extraordinary to imagine that so many greyhounds are getting bitten by snakes, and it would raise a question about the conditions that they're housed in in the first place if they're exposed to snakebite. It's just an extraordinary - feels like it's an implausible cause of death to occur so many times.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, on 6 May, the Government Administration Committee B finally tabled its short inquiry. I think members here who were on the committee will say it wasn't a short inquiry. It was a Short Enquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Serious Allegations in Harness Racing - if it is a misleading title to the inquiry. I appreciate that it wasn't that long ago, but I think the issues that were canvassed in the report itself, as well as the recommendations, are well known. What is the government's response to that particular report and when can we expect something more formal to be coming forward in relation to that? Particularly with concerns regarding workers compensation and the issues around the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board which we touched on a little earlier?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank Dean, Kristie and Rog' for the incredible length of time that that took. We acknowledge the work of the government administration over

PUBLIC

the 18-month inquiry, which was an extraordinary length of time, and I'd like to thank all members who made submissions and who also appeared before the committee, including the officials from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, both current and former.

The government will respond to the recommendations of the committee in full once we have considered the findings and the recommendations. We will request advice where appropriate from the Independent Racing Integrity Commissioner and also Tasracing

What I will say is that integrity and animal welfare will be the bedrock on which the Tasmanian racing industry will grow and continue to prosper and make contributions to the Tasmanian community. And we thank you very much for the incredible work that you've done. The reforms provide a solid platform to build the confidence of the participants and the community as well.

In October last year we released a code of practice, as we stated before, in relation to racehorses in Tasmania at the time. It was only a few states in Australia to possess such a code. Commissioner, would you like to add any more to that?

Mr CARROLL - Thank you, minister, and through you. It's probably not appropriate for me to comment on the particular findings of the committee itself but what I would say is that I've been very pleased by the acceptance of my office by the racing community that was probably driven through this inquiry commencing in the first instance, and also the acceptance as to the need to change, which I think has been the priority of the appointment of myself and my office.

I think what we're seeing is that the racing industry is in a period of transition at the moment. As I said before, we're putting in place some standards and methodology that's going to provide confidence in the racing industry, not just here in Tasmania but throughout Australia. As far as the final report goes, I'll discuss those with the minister and take from there what I need to, to address the issues that are front-and-centre as far as the racing industry is concerned.

I can confidently say that a lot of those issues are already being addressed and first and foremost, by developing an appropriate complaints framework. As I said earlier, I'm confident now that the race industry is, the majority are, aware that they have a single point that they can go to if they have a complaint and they can be confident that complaint will be dealt with in a timely fashion.

Ms JOHNSTON - Without wanting to discuss the matters that are still on foot in relation to the harness racing industry, and I'm aware that there are a number of matters that still relating to the participants at this inquiry looked into are still on foot. Have you, Minister, further engaged with Tasracing in particular around workers' compensation issues to ensure - and I want to give full credit to the racing participants who did provide evidence and thank them for their cooperation and their eagerness to have these matters resolved. Have you had further discussions since the reports been tabled with Tasracing and particularly in relation to workers compensation because it is an issue of serious concern for racing participants and the broader community?

Ms HOWLETT - I certainly have, but not since the report was tabled. But workers' compensation is absolutely critical and it's a conversation that we've had ongoing.

PUBLIC

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, as you said just a couple of minutes ago, integrity will be the bedrock on which the Tasmanian racing industry will grow and thrive into the future. As part of the improvements being made under the government's landmark reforms, I understand that a wagering audit was undertaken by the commissioner's office. Can you tell us about some of the outcomes of the audit that have led to positive changes in the racing industry?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for your question, honourable member. In September 2025, the commissioner's office announced the outcomes of its first wagering audit of relevant Tasracing stewards. This was the first occasional wagering audit was undertaken by Tasracing or the commissioner's office.

As a result of this audit, the commissioner issued a number of recommendations to Tasracing and these recommendations included that Tasracing:

- review and update its codes and policies to provide clear direction on wagering, conflicts of interest, and other matters by all Tasracing employees, including stewards, contractors, board members and volunteers;
- develop and implement a detailed education on its codes and policies, with ongoing training and education provided; and,
- conduct an immediate briefing of all stewards on the racing steward's code of conduct and the rules of racing, focusing on the obligations directly related to stewards.

The recommendations made by the commissioners strengthen the integrity functions of Tasracing, as well as its process and its systems, and the audit and its recommendations also provide greater assurance to industry participants and the wider public about the transparency and accountability of stewarding in Tasmania and the commissioner may like to add some further comments to this.

Mr CARROLL - Thank you and through you, minister. Just adding to what the minister has said that we'll be conducting a further audit and currently are undertaking the framework for that audit with Tasracing. We would expect to have that audit conducted within the next four to six weeks.

More importantly, from the initial audit that was conducted, and the recommendation is that there is a education framework for all Tasracing and employees, contractors and board members as to what is acceptable behaviour and what is not as far as wagering is concerned.

At the end of the day, racing is a sport that is based on wagering. However, there has to be clear guidelines as to who can be involved in that wagering to maintain the highest level of integrity within Tasracing or not. At the moment Tasracing is developing that internal policy to provide that level of confidence.

Mr JAENSCH - Would you anticipate that the audit will become a regular cycle?

Dr WOODRUFF - One question.

Mr JAENSCH - It's pursuant to the same topic.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - One question for a Dorothy Dixier at this time of night, Chair?

CHAIR - Sorry, are you clarifying something, Mr Jaensch?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I want to understand whether the audit is a once-off event as a part of reform or if it's a rolling feature of the new way of doing business?

Mr CARROLL - It will be an annual event that will take place, so we can expect to see that occur on a regular basis.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. Thank you for your indulgence, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Thanks. Well and yours, as well. Harness racing friend.

Mr JAENSCH - No, no. You're welcome.

Mr WINTER - Minister, have you received any advice about whether Tasracing's TasInsure communication was in breach of caretaking conventions or any laws or government policies?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question and I'll just grab my information. The Premier asked the Head of the State Service to conduct an inquiry into the matter last year and the Head of the State Service is satisfied with the explanation provided and the way that the Tasracing board responded to this issue.

Mr WINTER - Minister, have you received any advice about whether Tasracing's communication was in breach of caretaker conventions or any other laws or government policies?

Ms HOWLETT - No other advice has been received.

Mr WINTER - You're not aware of any advice about whether - you've received no advice at all about whether your own GBE breached caretaker conventions?

Ms HOWLETT - Well, as I said, the Premier asked the Head of the State Service to conduct an inquiry into the matter last year and the Head of the State Service was satisfied with the explanation provided and the way that the Tasracing Board responded to the issue.

Mr WINTER - So, you're saying that the head of DPAC doesn't even acknowledge that there was a breach of caretaker conventions?

Ms HOWLETT - It hasn't been communicated to me, but I can take that on notice-

Mr WINTER - Thank you, minister. Can I move onto the next question? In terms of how this all rolled out, has there been any movement around Tasracing around an acknowledgement that this communication should not have happened?

Ms HOWLETT - On the matter of the Tasracing's communication to the industry in relation to the TasInsure, we released the RTI as requested by the parliament. The board chair has stated in no way did Tasracing endorse or recommend the election commitment during the

PUBLIC

caretaker period, and the Tasracing CEO, in fact, removed the material after you raised the matter with the Chair.

CHAIR - Time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence. Now, we'll take a short break. Time taken for breaks must be made-up and I please encourage members to be as quick as they can.

The committee suspended from 6.14 p.m. to 6.21 p.m.

Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

DIVISION 10 -

Department of Premier and Cabinet

CHAIR - Before we go to questions, I want to remind members of the order of the house establishing estimates committees, which provides questions must be relevant to the portfolio and outputs of a particular session. However, as with other sessions, I will permit broad questions about the minister's role as a member of the Cabinet in relation to issues of public concern in relation to former minister Ogilvie, if the minister chooses to answer them.

The scrutiny of the Women and Prevention of Family Violence portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to please introduce persons at the table names and positions for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, can I just make a brief comment in relation to the previous hearing, with your indulgence?

CHAIR - If the committee's happy to.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, in relation to the answer on TasInsure, I'm advised that DPAC wrote to Tasracing saying that there may have been a breach.

CHAIR - Thank you for the clarification.

Ms HOWLETT - This forms part of the DPAC submission to the Caretaker Select Committee. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you, the minister may make a short opening statement.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. To my right at the table, I have Courtney Hurworth, Chief Reform Leading Keeping Children Safe, through DPAC; Tegan Dwyer, Assistant Director of Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence; and also Luke Gaetani, my Chief of Staff.

Chair, I'd like to begin by acknowledging the deep history and culture of this island and pay my respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as past and present custodians of the land on which we meet today. In this portfolio, I acknowledge the profound and unequal impacts of

PUBLIC

family and sexual violence across our community. Women are disproportionately affected and Aboriginal women and children face particularly higher rates of violence, alongside additional barriers to accessing support. I recognise the leadership of Aboriginal communities in addressing these issues and reaffirm our commitment to supporting Aboriginal led, culturally safe responses. I also acknowledge the courage and resilience of victim survivors and those who have lost their lives to family violence and the lasting impacts of violence on individuals, families and communities.

As Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, this work brings together our commitment to advancing gender equality and preventing family violence. We know these priorities are intrinsically linked. Improving gender equity is central to safety, wellbeing and long-term prevention. Over the past year, we've made strong progress. We continue to support women's leadership and recognise their contributions, including the opening of nominations for the 2027 Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women and Inspiring Young Women's Award. We've also expanded community participation, doubling funding for International Women's Day events and supporting initiatives across the state. We are strengthening pathways into leadership through the enhanced Women's Leadership Scholarship Program, which will deliver 80 scholarships across 2026 and 2027, with a focus on women in traditionally male dominated industries.

Our Government continues to deliver Tasmania's third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027. 32 of 38 actions are complete, with the remainder underway. This work is supported by more than \$45 million in Australian Government funding alongside over \$140 million in state investment. Looking ahead, we've begun planning for the next phase, including a system wide evaluation of the past decade to inform future reform and strengthen outcomes.

Preventing family and sexual violence and advancing gender equality requires a coordinated whole of community effort. Together we remain committed to building a safer Tasmania for women and children. Thank you, Chair and I'll welcome the committee's questions.

Ms BROWN - Minister, did you initiate Supreme Court action against the Integrity Commission to prevent the completing investigation Loyetea? And has Cabinet approved taxpayer funded legal support for this action?

Ms HOWLETT - In this portfolio, these are complex matters, Chair, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I won't be making any further comments.

Ms BROWN - Minister, demand for family and sexual violence crisis and counselling services continues to increase. What additional funding, if any, has been allocated in the 2026-27 budget to NGO delivered specialist services and what, if any, additional funding has been provided to government specialist services and the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank you for your question, honourable member, and Tasmania has committed over 140 million over five years under our third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan alongside significant commonwealth investment. Funding in this area is delivered across prevention, frontline services, justice responses and does not sit with a single program or portfolio. Commonwealth funding through the Federation Funding Agreement on Family,

PUBLIC

Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses 2021-2030 supports key priorities such as services for victim-survivors, increasing sector workforce, early intervention, support for cohorts with additional vulnerabilities and perpetrator responses. Our focus is on ensuring investment is directed to where it will have the greatest impact across the system. Key funding investment in this area includes over 140 million over five years committed under the third action plan.

Ms BROWN - Minister, if I may, can you just highlight the additional funding in that?

Ms HOWLETT - So we recognise funding in this area is complex and allocated from different funding streams -

Ms BROWN - And the additional funding is?

Ms HOWLETT - And spans multiple parts of the system. Ms Hurworth, would you like to add some more comments to that?

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. The 900,000 per annum for Arch centres is new state government allocation in this budget. The other budget line items, the funding is at the same level as the previous year's budget and the other element that's not reflected in the budget is that there's \$14 million that's flowing into Tasmania through the federation funding agreement on 500 workers and that is not reflected in this budget because the agreement was signed after the budget was finalised.

Ms BROWN - Okay and so, of that - sorry. In last year's Estimates hearing, the government advised that a sexual violence and family violence service support review would take place and demand modelling, workforce analysis would inform the 2026-27 state budget decisions. What demand modelling, service review or workforce analysis informed the 2026-27 budget and what were the key findings?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, there's currently evaluation underway. Would you like to speak to that?

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. We regularly collect data on service wait times as well as other types of data, so client data for people accessing services and we engage regularly through our governance structure with frontline services as well as victim-survivors. We have commenced an evaluation of 10 years' worth of investment in family and sexual violence.

We've appointed the Equality Institute through a tender process to do that evaluation. They evaluated some components of the national plan, so they have a lot of experience in this area and they're looking at three different streams as part of their evaluation. So, they're looking at effectiveness over time, including effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability.

They're looking at the therapeutic service system and partially they're looking particularly at sexual violence because that's in response to a particular commission of inquiry recommendation around the sexual violence service system and reducing wait times for the sexual violence service system and reducing wait times for the sexual violence service system and they're looking at financial sustainability and investment and, in particular, total

PUBLIC

investment, broad allocation by strategic focus and what that investment has led to in terms of outcomes.

A key component of looking at the service system and determining wait times is modelling and looking at demand modelling. Demand modelling is very difficult to do in this area because reports to organisations or to the police are not an accurate measure of the amount of activity that's happening in the community. But they're also not the only disclosure point.

Part of our work is also going to be looking broader than the Family Violence Specialist Service System and looking at where people engage with services through, for example, their GPs, which we know is the primary place where people disclose sexual violence.

Ms BADGER - I'm sure we can all agree the challenge that housing presents for women and children who are escaping family and domestic violence. At the November 2025 budget Estimates, there were 43 properties that were reported under the Rapid Rehousing Program. The most recent dashboard figures, and they're from March 2026, indicate that there were 40 properties in the program. Minister, I'm just wondering if you could let us know what the status of the three properties that seem to no longer be reflected in the Rapid Rehousing Program figures are and what the current number of properties allocated to the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing Program as of 1 June this year.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. I understand how absolutely distressing it is for women and children when crisis accommodation is stretched and no one wants to see people turned away when they need safety. Housing, including crisis and transitional accommodation, sits within the minister for Housing, with Homes Tasmania leading the work on supply, capital investment and frontline housing support. From a family violence perspective, I have regular conversations with minister Vincent, and I know that this is the number one priority for him, and you can be reassured that work is underway in housing to expand crisis capacity and improve access for women and children experiencing violence. The minister for Housing is best placed to answer that.

Ms BADGER - The Rapid Rehousing which is specifically for women escaping family and domestic violence, it seems that there are three properties less than there were a year ago. That is vital. That's not an expansion. That's a decrease. And you as minister, don't know why there has been a decrease.

Ms HOWLETT - I am in regular conversations with minister Vincent. I'll ask Courtney if she would like to add anything to that. We know it's a significant issue and we know that we've got an incredible amount of work to do in relation to, not just housing, but everything in relation to the portfolio.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. I can't talk specifically about the three houses you've mentioned, but I can talk about why there're fluctuations in the number of houses that are part of that program. So, the Rapid Rehousing Program incentivises private landlords to lease their homes to people who are escaping family violence. So, because it's incentivising the private market, it means that private landlords can make decisions about when they want to keep their house in that program and when they don't. So, that means that the program does fluctuate in numbers quite frequently and sometimes those numbers go up and sometimes they go down.

PUBLIC

I can't speak specifically to why those three are not in the program, but I can talk to the policy setting around the program. I would also point out that Rapid Rehousing is only one program that's been run through the Housing portfolio and that there are a number of others, and Rapid Rehousing isn't always appropriate for every circumstance that someone who's experiencing family violence is in.

Ms BADGER - No, absolutely. Noting, of course, that there is no set plan at this point in time for the kind of women's rehousing and that sort of thing. What other incentives are you putting in place, be it for the private rental market such as that program? Definitely appreciate what you're saying, it's not a one-size-fits-all response, but what else are you doing as minister to help make that happen? It certainly falls under your portfolio area.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, certainly. Look, the former Bethlehem House site in Hobart has been repurposed to provide transitional accommodation for around 40 women at risk of homelessness, with a further 38 beds becoming available once construction of Amelia House on Argyle Street is complete. Through the Australian Government Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program, \$2.25 million in funding has been secured and that's towards seven dwellings in the north and the north-west for transitional accommodation for women and children escaping family violence. These initiatives, along with the rapid rehousing program, deliver more safe and affordable housing options for women in need across all regions of Tasmania.

Ms BURNET - Minister, I just wanted to go to the preventive health strategy and sexual violence prevention and, of course, modelling is important for the government to undertake on long-term health, justice and social cost-savings associated with the investment in prevention, early intervention of sexual violence and child sexual abuse. But can you identify the funding in the 2026-27 budget that contributes to implementation of Tasmania's preventive health strategy? Specifically in relation to family violence and sexual violence prevention, please, and those primary rather than tertiary responses?

Ms HOWLETT - Well, prevention is absolutely the key. As far as in relation to health, I would have to take that on notice and receive that information from the Health minister, but we recognise that funding in this area is complex, allocated from various different funding streams and spans multiple parts of the system.

The complexity brings its own challenges in meeting increasing demand across the sector and responding to emerging national and local focus areas. Our focus is how we continue to invest to meet the needs of victim/survivors and hold perpetrators to account and improve system and legislative response to family and sexual violence. Ms Hurworth, would you like to add any more to that?

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister, it is really complicated to ascertain the amount of overall government investment in prevention because so many things that we do could be preventative and because family violence is has a gender basis that could flow through to a whole lot of activity around those sorts of dynamics. A case in point is to Respectful Relationships Education in the Department of Education.

For example, we fund through the minister's action plan a component of that. We fund two FTE to coach teachers directly in schools on how they implement the Respectful Relationship Education package. We also fund a partnership with Our Watch and an Our Watch

PUBLIC

senior advisor who also works with the Department of Education on RRE, but then the Department of Education itself funds significant elements of RRE, and it also provides funding to SAS, for example, to do consent education, to Family Planning Tasmania to do respectful relationships education. The Department of Health funds Child Health and Parenting Service (CHaPS). CHaPS also looks at respectful relationships.

Ms BURNET - Okay. I see the predicament and I won't take up the anymore of the committee's time. I suppose you've pointed out how complex it is to actually measure what is really occurring. But thank you.

Prof RAZAY - Honourable minister, violence against women remains unacceptably high in our state, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021-22 showing an estimated 95,600 Tasmanian women, that's 43 per cent, have experienced violence since the age of 15. As you have said, prevention must be a priority in breaking the cycle of violence. What services are available for education in the wider community for prevention and especially at an early age at schools?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Professor. That's a really good question and, as Ms Hurworth just spoke, we have the Respectful Relationships, which is rolled out in primary school - all levels. Would you like to add more about the Respectful Relationships?

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, Minister. Respectful Relationships Education is a whole-of-school approach to healthy relationships. It directly addresses gender dynamics in relationships. Tasmania developed its own Respectful Relationships curriculum, which has recently been reviewed by Our Watch, which developed the first national Respectful Relationships curriculum in Victoria.

It's fair to say that RRE has been on a bit of a journey in Tasmania and that it's now an expectation of the department that all schools implement it as a whole-of-school curriculum. There are some processes around how we evaluate that, rather than just count how many schools are doing it, that Our Watch has encouraged us to look into, which we will.

I would also make the point that, in terms of programs around healthy relationships, through the minister's action plan, we also fund programs for specific diverse communities and cohorts - particularly multicultural communities and people on temporary visas, around their rights and healthy relationships, and people's rights in terms of being safe from violence as well.

We try to look at it through a range of different lenses and different life stages. Then there's also the curriculum for very young people around bodies and boundaries, so most schools now run age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate curriculums around understanding behaviour that could be classed as grooming and unhealthy behaviours and bodies and boundaries.

Those have been significant changes in programs over the last few years. Then of course Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) and Laurel House also run age-appropriate consent and relationships education, more in the high school years.

Prof RAZAY - I totally agree with that. Education is so essential in raising awareness of what they say, what they do is inappropriate.

PUBLIC

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Chair. I especially want to just agree and well, especially want to thank you for that last answer to my colleague's question, and I'd be grateful if it was possible that the committee could have some of that information, if that would be possible.

Minister, the rates of reporting family violence continue to increase. I wonder if you or your team would provide a view as to what is occurring. Is it an existing trend with better surveillance and better reporting, or is it a growing trend? I realise that may be difficult to assess. Regardless of that answer, we have a social scourge to be stamped out. What areas of government investment, including in partnership with the Commonwealth government, are helping us to achieve that outcome to stamp out family and sexual violence?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, for your question. I certainly hope it's not a growing trend. Every woman has a right to feel safe, respected in their homes, in their communities, and also in their workplace. The Tasmanian government has committed over \$140 million over five years under our third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan, alongside Commonwealth investment as well. This funding supports a comprehensive response across prevention, frontline services, justice responses, ensuring that we're addressing family and sexual violence at every point in the system. We're also benefiting from the \$40 million in Commonwealth funding through the federation funding agreement, which supports key priorities such as workforce expansion, early intervention, perpetrator responses and services for victim/survivors.

State and Commonwealth funding in this area is delivered across multiple agencies, reflecting the cross-system nature of family and sexual violence responses. This includes the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Justice, Tasmania Police, Department of Health, Department for Education, Children and Young People and the Department of State Growth.

The structure ensures a joined-up, whole-of-government response, and our investment is focused on areas that have the greatest impact across the system, including the three Arch centres, the Safe at Home programs, workforce expansions including the continuation of the 500 Workers program initiative through to 2030 and perpetrator behavioural change, which I think is vitally important.

Funding in this area is inherently complex, spanning multiple portfolios, programs and various funding streams across both the state and the Commonwealth. While this complexity presents challenges, it reflects the breadth of the system and response that is required. And our priorities are ensuring victim/survivors are supported, and we must hold perpetrators to account and strengthen systems and legislative responses as well, and we're focusing on delivering investment where it makes the greatest difference across the system.

Ms Hurworth, would you like to add anything to that?

CHAIR - I've got about seven seconds, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - Especially that first part, if that was possible. I'm happy to come back to it later if that's what we need to do.

CHAIR - Ms Brown.

PUBLIC

Ms BROWN - Thank you, Chair. Minister, Anglicare has identified the north-west of our state as a family and domestic violence hotspot. Can you give some insight on how the funding is rolled out across the state, given that there is a hotspot within Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and I thank you for that question. Unfortunately, there is a hotspot on the north-west coast and we're seeing more and more victims. I had a meeting with Chris from Anglicare this week and we had some discussions around this, and I can certainly provide you with some figures on the north-west coast. But we realise that we need to take action on the north-west coast, and I know that you and I are both pleased that the Arch centre opened on the north-west coast earlier this year. The Arch centres are working incredibly well, having that full wraparound approach, but there is a lot more work that needs to be done on the north-west coast, and some of these actions include specific implementations in the north-west.

- Action 5 is to establish the family and sexual violence liaison service, which will be in the north-west coast.
- Action 22 will continue to strengthen specialist police prosecution, with four additional prosecutors, including one in the north-west.
- Action 23 will continue to ensure forensic medical examinations for adult victim/survivors of family and sexual violence is a statewide service, including the North West Regional Hospital, which is really, really important
- Action 34 will continue the Safe Choice local support coordinator role in the north and the north-west to ensure statewide service delivery for women and people experiencing disability, also who experience family violence and
- Action 37 continues to support Aboriginal families through the Aboriginal family safety workers in child and family learning centres, and that includes Burnie as well.

Ms BROWN - Thank you for that information.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, and, as I stated, the new Arch centre opened in February on the north-west coast.

Ms BROWN - Just on the topic of the Rapid Rehousing Program: minister, are you aware that your government has rolled that program into another program, so then it's a combined program with the private initiative program?

Ms HOWLETT - That is something that the minister, Mr Vincent, and I are in communication about and will continue to have conversations about.

Ms BROWN - You are aware that that has happened?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Ms BROWN - So, have you made any advocacy or representation to have that unpicked?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - I haven't made any representation to have that unpicked, but it's a deep concern, housing, for Mr Vincent and for myself, and that is something that we will continue to have conversations about. I can certainly give you that assurance.

Ms BROWN - Thank you. Minister, children need to be taught how to recognise family and sexual violence and when something's not right in the household. Beyond what's happening in schools, are there any other initiatives that are happening, from the government's perspective, to teach children when something is not safe - a relationship is unsafe?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. That's a really important point that you raised, and primary prevention is about stopping violence before it occurs by addressing underlying drivers, including gender inequity and harmful attitudes at a whole-community level. It's a core pillar of both our state and the national approach to ending violence against women and children. Key initiatives include respectful relationships, education in schools and programs that promote equity in workplaces and communities. There's also a focus on perpetrators, including early intervention and behavioural change, and we recognise that raising awareness alone does not lead to behavioural change, which is why our focus is on evidence-based prevention.

I believe there's a campaign that is being rolled out as well. I'll allow Ms Hurworth to talk about the campaign.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister, I think you're talking about Tell Someone. Tell Someone is the community awareness program that's raising awareness of knowledge around child sexual abuse and grooming. Tell Someone, though, is not only focused on raising the awareness and knowledge of children. I think one of the most important pieces of feedback that we consistently receive is that the onus shouldn't be placed on children to take action or be responsive to violent and unsafe scenarios, that it's actually about changing the behaviour of adults.

And so, that program looks at helping children to understand when things don't feel right, but it also focuses on the behaviour of adults, including perpetrators. Tasmania will be the first jurisdiction that runs a program that specifically addresses potential perpetration and interrupting behaviour before someone perpetrates.

Ms BROWN - Is there any funding or EFT allocated to ensure that children are seen as victim/survivors in their own right?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, and that falls under minister Jo Palmer.

Courtney, would you like to speak to that?

Ms HURWORTH - Tasmania recognises children as victim/survivors in their own right not in this plan, but for the first time in the previous plan. That was around 2019. The Commonwealth recognised it in the plan that they launched two years ago following that. I'm not sure how to answer the question 'is there any funding?'

Ms BROWN - Is there any additional funding for plans for children in their own right?

Ms HURWORTH - So, the government has allocated \$600 million to its child sexual abuse prevention strategy, and that goes to a whole range of actions and that includes children

PUBLIC

as victim/survivors, but more broadly children's rights in general and so, over multiple years of investment and that investment has increased to \$600 million.

Ms BADGER - Minister, you've spoken a couple of times about the \$900,000 that's been invested into the Arch centres. I'm just seeking some clarity on that funding. If you could tell us whether that's wholly from the Tasmanian government or in part from the federal government and, in particular, what extent does that \$900,000 for therapeutic services in Arch centres fund additional service capacity in terms of FTEs and those sorts of statistics by comparison, being reliant on other existing services to sort of take up the role of additional people coming into the Arch centres?

Ms HOWLETT - Yeah, thank you and look, for the first time the funding has been bought into the state Budget and that 900,000 allocated in 26-27, 27-28 ensures funding for those three Arch centres and this ensures the continuity of the service and demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment of how important the Arch centres are and the model to our state and bringing this funding into the state Budget provides certainty and sustainability for these important sectors.

It also allows Commonwealth funding to be redirected to other priority initiatives supporting the broader system. The funding supports the delivery of specialist therapeutic sexual assault services within the Arch centres and complements broader operational funding. It ensures that victim/survivors receive a coordinated trauma-informed support in one place and the Tasmanian government has committed 45 million across 22-23, 27-28 for the capital and operational costs of the three Arch centres, including the ongoing operational funding of 7.84 million in 26-27.

The Arch centres are a flagship reform and they deliver an integrated survivor-centred response. I'm very thankful and grateful of the feedback that I have had from women who have been to the Arch centres.

Ms BADGER - Thanks. Just want to go back to clarifying, as part of the original question was quite a specific clarity on that funding, so the exact level of specialist therapeutic capacity, including FTEs that funding would enable to happen within the centres.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just seek that information because there would be information from police and justice.

Ms BADGER - Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - So, the 900,000 funds the number of FTEs that we have previously funded.

Ms BADGER - Okay, so no additional FTEs.

Ms HOWLETT - No, it's a core funding that they have had.

Ms BADGER - Thank you for that.

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like to add anything more, Ms Hurworth?

PUBLIC

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister. I think you've covered it. We did the initial funding through the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence. At the time, the parameters for that allowed us to pilot innovative programs. We piloted those innovative programs, and they've been found to be successful, so that funding for those therapeutic services has been brought into state appropriation.

Ms BADGER - So, minister - right, so per centre, you could say there's \$300,000 per centre.

Ms HOWLETT - \$300,000 per centre. That's right.

Ms BADGER - So, that's one FTE for counselling, one FTE for admin. So, there's no real lift in these services despite demand going up. No lift in funding to be able to facilitate the demand that is increasing. So, how are the centres going to cope? All of that's going to be reliant on the wonderful people at SASS and Laurel House to take that up?

Ms HOWLETT - The people at SASS and Laurel House and the people in the Arch centres do an incredible job and we know that we have waitlists -

Ms BADGER - Yeah, they need support, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - And we know that more support is required and I have lobbied and sent many letters to the federal government requesting federal funding and I will continue to do so. I will continue to advocate.

Ms BADGER - Thank you. That's appreciated, your acknowledgement of that, minister.

Mr GEORGE - Thank you, minister, and I appreciate your opening remarks and would like to echo them. There's been a restructure in DPAC which impacts the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence program, which is being moved across to Justice as I understand it. The move was halted a year or two back because of concerns from the organisations working in that sector. So, can you tell me what's changed now, whether the move is going to go ahead or has gone ahead and are those same organisations on board with the decision now and, most importantly, how do you believe that this will improve the outcomes for victim-survivors of family and sexual violence?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, thank you very much, Mr George, and that is an important question and the machinery of government has created some changes and has moved from DPAC and I'll allow Courtney to speak to the machinery of government changes.

Ms HURWORTH - So, through you, minister, there were a number of parts to your question. So, I think I'll start with what's changed from a year or two years ago and move from there. So, the Department of Justice, in response to the commission of inquiry, did a major restructure of its victim support and policy functions over the last two years and they have created a division in group in the Department of Justice that has a therapeutic focus rather than a criminal justice focus. That brings together a number of therapeutic functions, so the landscape for the Department of Justice has changed.

Myself and the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Kristy Bourne, met with members of the Family and Sexual Violence Alliance - I think it was the day after the Machinery of

PUBLIC

Government changes were announced and, in that forum, Kristy gave an overview of the work that they had been doing to nuance their services and I don't want to speak on behalf of the sector, but my impression was that there was a general agreement that justice had evolved significantly from two years ago.

In terms of benefits, the policy advice that we provided to inform the decision was that amalgamating these services into the Department of Justice at this point in time is useful because the National Cabinet has a priority around family violence, that those priorities have been tasked, and a number of very significant elements of that work program have been tasked to the Attorney-General and so, there is synergy for that department to be able to provide services, both to the Attorney-General and the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and the team that does that work in DPAC, so that manages those funding agreements, and that's one of the biggest concerns of the sector, will be transitioning.

There will be continuity of relationships and knowledge but the final part of your question was, what has been the response of the sector? I have met with the CEO of SASS. She put forward a submission providing us with some feedback on how the transition could be done in a way that benefits the sector and, ultimately, victim/survivors and I'm also meeting with the Alliance who have also put forward a submission with feedback next week and, essentially, the position is we're not opposing it. We have some feedback that we think would be incredibly useful, which we agree, and we've reviewed the feedback and please work with us to really maximise this opportunity and that's exactly what we're doing.

Mr GEORGE - Very briefly, I think there's partly a sense that, by moving it out of DPAC, that's seen as a big powerful agency, to Justice means that there will be a diminution of thrust for these policies. It's perhaps more of a comment, but I -

Ms HOWLETT - Not while I'm here. I'm pretty passionate about this, I can assure you.

Prof RAZAY - There is a strong connection between domestic and family violence and the cost-of-living crisis, and we recognise that it's pretty complex. But so many women are stuck in a violent relationship because they can't leave; it will affect their payments, they will have difficulty in finding places to live, and it will condemn them to homelessness. Do we have any specific strategy to address those vulnerable people when they are in such a difficult situation and stuck with their family, especially when they have children?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really good question, Prof Razay. We know that pressures of cost of living are certainly adding - and I've had in the last three or four weeks, I've been dealing with quite a few women in this situation and hearing their stories and it's absolutely heartbreaking. We know that some groups experience higher rates of family and sexual violence and face additional barriers to accessing support. This also includes Aboriginal communities, children and young people, LGBTQIA+ people, older people as well, culturally and logistically diverse communities, temporary visa card holders, and people with a disability. We're committed to ensuring that our responses are inclusive and we're working through that right now, but you're right, it certainly is an issue. Whether it be interest rates, the increasing cost of food, fuel, et cetera, it certainly is incredibly important what you've raised.

Mr FERGUSON - I wonder, minister, if I could get a two-part question in here. The first part is to allow your team to respond to my earlier question. I'd be grateful for a brief answer if that's appropriate. Secondly, if you could speak about the Tasmanian Honour Roll of

PUBLIC

Women. I think you announced that nominations are open today. Well, one of the joys of my job is going to that function each year. It's normally in my electorate actually, which is great. I hope that continues.

Ms HOWLETT - Well, I can't guarantee that. Lyons sounds like a good idea.

Mr FERGUSON - Launceston is very geographically central for travel purposes. I genuinely love it. A lot of people get a lot of joy at those events. I'd invite you to let us know how we can promote nominations now that they're open. Can I ask that two-part question?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I think the first part of your question was in relation to trend.

Ms HURWORTH - Through you, minister, I'll try to keep it brief, but you have asked a question that is one of my areas of passion. I'll manage myself. What is causing increases in family and sexual violence? I sit on the board as the Tasmanian government representative of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS). ANROWS does a lot of research into the causation of family and sexual violence. There are really three things, greater awareness and greater visibility, for sexual violence that in particular is leading to disclosures of historical sexual abuse and the majority of disclosures of child sexual abuse in Tasmania over the last few years have been cases that happened more than 10 years ago.

The third area that we're seeing is the area that is perhaps - if you think about greater awareness in a way being a good thing - the area that the ministry is particularly concerned about is some of the online content around young men and boys. The Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing runs surveys about attitudes and for a long period of time we saw some really positive changes about attitudes, particularly regarding things to do with consent and what consent is and how someone gives consent. In the most recent rounds of those surveys, we're starting to see some really significant changes, particularly in the 15 to 25 age group of men and boys. A lot of research is around social media and how social media algorithms are directed to men and boys, and so that is an area that the minister has asked us to prioritise and look into through our evaluation and into the next action plan.

Ms BROWN - Minister, it's acknowledged that Safe Homes, Safe Family supports children affected by family violence. Can you rule out any cuts to respectful relationships and consent, education programs, services or staff as part of the Department of Education, Children and Young People's (DECYP) \$228 million saving target?

Ms HOWLETT - Look, I'm sorry, honourable member, I can't comment on DECYP funding; that falls under minister Palmer.

Mrs GREENE - Minister, victim/survivors of sexual assault have a very narrow window for forensic evidence collection, yet access depends on having properly trained clinicians available when and where they are needed. How many clinicians in Tasmania are currently trained and available to conduct sexual assault forensic examinations, and how many children and adult victim/survivors have had to travel out of the region, I'm talking here, particularly the north-west coast for a forensic medical examination in the last 12 months, and how does that compare to the year before?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and I may need to take some of those numbers on notice as that falls under the minister for Health, but I'm advised that sexual assault

PUBLIC

and forensic examinations teams operate at the Launceston General Hospital, providing a 24 hour per day, seven day per week service for patients presenting with an alleged sexual assault and/or family domestic violence incident.

The Sexual Assault Medical Service operates at the North West Regional Hospital and a number of appropriately trained staff also undertake an on-call arrangement to provide this service after hours if required. If a trained clinician is not available, patients are referred to the LGH. The Royal Hobart Hospital operates a 24 hour per day, seven days a week SAMS with afterhours patients managed through an on-call roster.

I'm further advised that all services provide forensic examinations and protocols for investigative purposes, organised contraception and other medications as required, and advice on medical follow-ups. These services are delivered by clinicians including nurses and midwives who have undertaken additional specialised training in forensic examinations. This training, as you know, it's highly specialised and necessary to ensure that care provided is sensitive to the needs of the person following an incident of sexual assault or family violence, while also ensuring that the evidence requirements are met.

The department is actively pursuing options to reach an agreement with other jurisdictions who offer this specialised training to provide the opportunity for more staff to undertake the training. Anyone who presents to our hospitals to seek treatment will always be provided with the care and the support that they need.

But in relation to the figures that you have requested, I'm not sure in this committee. I don't know that I have the ability to take that on notice as it's a matter for the Health minister, but I'm sure if you write to her, she will be able to provide those numbers to you.

Mrs GREENE - Minister, at the moment, one in every five roles in the Family Violence Counselling Support Service is sitting vacant. That's as of 30 April, the most recent figures that I had available to me. That is the only service that receives referrals directly from Tasmania Police. We know that year on year, the Family Violence Counselling Support Service has seen an increase in referrals, yet their FTE has not increased. How can you be confident that victim/survivors aren't being impacted by these workforce shortages? And what are you doing to advocate to the Minister for Health to ensure that that service is adequately funded?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I thank the honourable member for her question. Unfortunately, as you well know, we have a national workforce shortage and capacity is a key issue across both governments and as well as the community sector. It's a national challenge with demand for trauma-informed specialists outpacing supply and our challenge is recruitment and retaining those specialist practitioners and also across, you know, regional workforce shortages as well. We know that there is a significant increased demand for services and we are working with the Australian Government and the sector to strengthen workforce capability.

Mrs GREENE - Child safety services have workforce incentives, is that something you've considered?

Ms HOWLETT - Including through the national 500 Workers Initiative and training and capability of development and building a sustainable workforce across the whole system is critical to long-term effectiveness. We know we can do better and I know that recruitment is a priority for the Health minister.

PUBLIC

Ms BADGER - Minister, multiple members have asked about the need for more housing for women and children escaping family and domestic violence. The examples that you've provided are things that are already underway or have happened in the past, so much more needs to be done so incredibly quickly. Will you commit to making a plan for ensuring that there is adequate housing and that we're working towards it at a pace that is adequate so that women and children can escape and do not have to any longer face the choice between staying in a violent relationship or being homeless?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. That is a really important question and, as I stated, I consistently have conversations with minister Vincent and planning for significant capital works program is currently underway to better meet the needs for women and children who are escaping violence, sexual abuse and homelessness.

Ms BADGER - Sorry to interrupt you, minister, just in the interest of time, can I ask on that plan specifically? Is that part of a plan for more housing for women and children specifically? We've got a gender budget. We know that this is an enormous issue. It's a hole that does need to be filled. Is that specifically part of that?

Ms HOWLETT - It is a plan that I'm working with minister Vincent and last week's budget included funding for additional support workers and crisis accommodation services at Jireh House and McCombe House following the expansion of their facilities under the Safe Place Program. But I can assure you I'm in constant conversations with Minister Vincent and it is an absolute priority.

Ms BADGER - Will you commit to making a specific plan for women and children escaping family and domestic violence so that they have somewhere to go to?

Ms HOWLETT - I will continue conversations.

Ms BADGER - Conversations aren't cutting it, minister, I'm sorry, we need a plan.

Ms HOWLETT - You're right we do. We need a whole-of-government plan and I will commit to developing a plan with minister Vincent.

CHAIR - Mr George, I don't know how far you're going to get.

Mr GEORGE - No, thank you. I do have a quick one which you may be able to answer. You may have covered this, I'm not sure. Is there additional funding allocated to support the Family and Sexual Violence Team as it moves from Department of Premier and Cabinet to Justice?

Ms HOWLETT - Funding in the Justice portfolio. Thank you.

CHAIR - The time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events.

The committee suspended from 7.21 p.m. to 7.28 p.m.

PUBLIC

Tourism, Hospitality and Events

CHAIR - If we go to questions, I want to remind members of the order of the House establishing estimates committees, which provides questions that must be relevant to the portfolio and outputs of a particular session. However, as with other sessions, I will permit broad questions about the minister's role as a member of the Cabinet in relation to issues of public concern in relation to former minister Ogilvie, if the minister chooses to answer them.

The scrutiny of the Tourism, Hospitality and Events portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to now introduce persons at the table, names and positions, please for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. To my far right at the table is deputy secretary for Creativity, Industries, Sport and Visitor Economy, Brett Stewart; next to me I have Tourism Tasmania, Chief Executive Officer, Sarah Kingston Clark; and to my left is my Chief of Staff, Luke Gaetani.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the estimates of the Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events is one hour. Would the minister like to make a short opening statement?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the members of the committee for your time. Tasmania's tourism industry is world-class and world-renowned. That supports one in six Tasmanian jobs with visitors injecting \$3.7 billion into our economy each year, helping fund our hospitals, schools and roads. Tasmania welcomed a record 1.38 million visitors in 2025, which is a 5.8 per cent increase year on year. Recent modelling undertaken by Treasury indicates that there is a return on \$5.91 in government revenue for every \$1.00 invested by government in tourism. Guided by our 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy, the 2026-2027 budget continues to provide support to sustainability to grow the sector through destination marketing as well as by strategically investing in events, infrastructure, and workforce capability.

This budget includes \$82 million for tourism marketing over the next four years. Our highly successful offseason and Come Down For Air campaign, help bring visitors around the world to our wonderful state. Since Come Down for Air first launched in 2019, awareness of Tasmania as a holiday destination has risen by 12 percentage points. The budget also includes ongoing support for hospitality Tasmania and the hard-working hospitality businesses across the state.

The government continues to support hospitality Tasmania through initiatives including through Hospitality 2030, Great Customer Experience, Clubs Tasmania and industry well-being programs.

We're also investing \$2.55 million to support industry-led workforce training through the Tasmanian Hospitality and Tourism Training Academy.

Chair, the Budget continues to back Tasmania as the year-round destination. Major event supported through the budget include Dark Mofo, Festivale, Taste of Summer, the Unconformity, Eco Festival, Supercars and many more. We're also investing \$10 million in a new convention centre in Launceston to support future growth in the business events sector.

PUBLIC

The new convention centre is expected to generate significant additional visitor nights and support hotels, hospitality, retail and tourism operators.

Chair, I welcome questions from the committee.

Ms DOW - Thank you, minister, and thank you to the team at the table. Minister, given Cabinet approved former minister Madeleine Ogilvie's taxpayer funded legal fees after she initiated Supreme Court action, did you and Ms Ogilvie both use the same legal assistance guidelines and did Cabinet apply the same process to both matters?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for her question. These are complex matters, particularly given confidentiality requirements, and I won't be commenting any further.

Ms DOW - Minister, there's \$1.5 billion worth of cuts across this budget. There's \$13 million of cuts across the Tourism Tasmania budget, across the forward Estimates. What other efficiencies or cuts will be found across the tourism portfolio?

Ms HOWLETT - In relation to that question, I will ask the CEO, Sarah Kingston Clark to speak to that but we have a considerable amount invested into our tourism sector and into our visitor economy as we know how critically important it is to the state. Thank you, Sarah.

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - Through you, minister, obviously we're focused on driving demand and a sustainable visitor economy and the budget supports that for the future years. We need to play our part from an efficiency perspective and tourism does a very good job from budget management and we're a very competitive and commercially-driven organisation and so, we have already prepared our efficiency savings for next year.

They're focused in four key areas, one being an agency transformation, which we have already started. We're restructuring our teams to align with what is needed for the future of tourism, which is a change in AI and technology and the way people are planning and booking their holidays, as well as a focus on international markets where we will see growth and so, we need to change the structure of the team to get there. Technology and digital services, where we are in-housing some of our tech and reducing the cost of external providers, which will have some efficiency savings.

We're also reducing some of our grant funding. We have grant funding through to visitor information centres, which has been an ongoing thing over the last few years and also to regional tourism organisations and there's also some direct marketing savings where we're looking to use AI and technology to reduce the cost of production.

Ms DOW - Minister, regional tourism organisations are already pretty underfunded and really have the potential to do a lot more when it comes to tourism and the promotion of our regions right now and yet, you're cutting their funding. Why are you doing that?

Ms HOWLETT - Look, I thank you for your question. RTOs play a critical role in supporting our tourism, hospitality businesses right across the state. The economic benefits provided by visitors interregional economies flows through to many other businesses as we know in regional towns including retail, food, transport and construction and Tourism Tasmania has a strong focus on supporting our regions through their marketing programs and

PUBLIC

support to regional tourism organisations. Marketing our region program directs investment into activity that promotes Tasmanian regions and supports regional operators-

Ms DOW - Chair, I'll just bring the minister back to the question, which is, why are you cutting funding to regional tourism?

Ms HOWLETT - Funding is being provided at the amount of the previous grant deed, not including the additional payment provided to enable the RTOs to find efficiencies. The funding will provide a total of \$1 376 545 dollars excluding GST for all RTOs. The approach to funding regional tourism services beyond 2026-27 is currently in discussion with the RTOs to ensure the model is efficient and focused on maximum outcomes for industry and we also need to make sure that we remove any duplication with other tourism network partners and providers as well. Sarah, would you like to add to that?

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - Yes. Through you, minister, as the minister mentioned, we had an efficiency payment, which is opposite to the payment that you would think as a negative but it was actually to encourage efficiencies across the four regional tourism organisations that have very similar processes and expenses in place across the board and that was encouraging them to work together and so, that was only ever for a three-year period and so, we have extended the base funding for an additional year to then focus on what is the best value that we can provide across the whole state to the industry and the value that is created there and so, we're doing a project in collaboration with the regional tourism organisations to ensure we have the best structure moving forward.

Ms DOW - Just to be clear, they are getting less funding because that efficiency payment has been cut in this year's budget?

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - Yes, they made a commitment to find efficiencies in that three-year period, so we allowed that payment for that time and that now has ceased and those efficiencies should be in play. So, it should be in line with what they have expected.

CHAIR - Ms Badger.

Ms BADGER - So, minister, Scott Roth was awarded a nearly a \$100,000 contract to be a brand ambassador for Tasmania. That is without a tender process. Do you see an issue with that and are you able to provide this committee with a breakdown of any complimentary tickets that you have received to JackJumpers games and the total value of those gifts?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. I thank the honourable member for her question. I think that everyone would agree that there is no better ambassador for our state than Scott Roth and his passion and his advocacy, his profile, leadership and enthusiasm makes him ideally suited to the role and through speaking engagements, mentoring, awareness raising activities he will help strengthen and promote the Tasmanian brand.

The contract includes clear deliverables, reporting requirements and performance expectations. A report will be prepared following each engagement to capture outcomes, observations and participant feedback. Payments are linked into the delivery of agreed activities, ensuring there is accountability and value for money.

PUBLIC

The contract was appropriately disclosed on the Tasmanian Government tender website. Authorisation to engage commenced in November 2025 with contract execution approved in March 2026 and I'll ask the department to make some further comment on that.

Ms BADGER - I don't know how much the department can help with the original question, minister, which was if you're able to provide a committee with the breakdown of complimentary tickets to JackJumpers games and that total expense.

Ms HOWLETT - My gift disclosure is in the public. It's disclosed in line with all ministers' requirements.

Ms BADGER - Still on the original question. I'll just make sure that is definitely up to date because we have seen, you know, some other ministers have to come back in and corrected the record. So, if that needs to happen, I trust that will happen in this hearing.

Ms HOWLETT - I trust my disclosure is up to date, but I'll check and take that on notice if it's -

Ms BADGER - My second question is also around influencers. Tourism Tasmania identified around \$100,000 for content creator influencers. How do you - where do you send these people? How do you track what the return for Tasmania actually is? And, similar to the Scott Roth situation, how do you choose and identify who those content creators might be that receive public funds? What is the public transparent process for people to apply to get that?

Ms HOWLETT - Yeah, thank you for your question. Influencers provide a really important role as do the families that we host right around the state and I'll ask Sarah to provide details of how those influencers are chosen and where Tourism Tasmania chooses to promote which region and where they go to. Thank you, Sarah.

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - Yes, as the minister said, influencers are a great way to reach new audiences and reach audiences that we would otherwise need to pay a lot of money for and so we're quite targeted at the influencers that we would partner with and quite specific at the results that we contract them for.

As you mentioned, it was around \$100,000, it's actually about \$85,000 that we spent in the last financial year across six key influencers, which I have their details on if you would like them.

Ms BADGER - If you could go through it and just for clarity, I heard the word 'chosen' there, so it's not something that people could apply for? You handpick them and then, how does the transparency about - you know, that's great that you've got that information back but how do Tasmanians, its public funds going to influencers, see the value for money?

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - Yeah. It's a combination of - I guess, people would apply in, we get marketing proposals every day that we put through a marketing proposal matrix and we obviously are happy to share how that all works. I think there's actually public information on our website about that and then we will look at a campaign and say, well, an extra element of this campaign would be backed by having an influencer to support that, so we've invested in the following influencers in the last financial year: Sophie Ellis-Bextor, who is from the UK and Australian market - so we target by markets - HoneyTrek in the US market, Leslie and Lisa

PUBLIC

Tay in the Singapore market, Liz Meow in the Australian market, Blaze Lopes in the Australian market, and Nathan Sawyer in the Australian market, is who we've worked with.

Ms BADGER - Are their contracts online, like Scott Roth?

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - They would be listed in our contracts register, yes. There's no way we would necessarily put them, but of course if we're asked for that information, we're more than happy to share that.

Prof RAZAY - The departure of Hawthorn club after 25 years which attracted more than \$25 million for northern economy, and yesterday the closure of James Boags brewery after 145 years, will have major impact on northern economy, especially the winter one. This makes promoting major events in the north is so crucial.

My question is will the government consider establishing a dedicated northern Tasmania major event fund or guaranteed northern allocation within the existing event attraction fund, and supported by published three-year pipeline, and annual reporting on visitor and economic outcome for the north?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much and I thank you for that really important question. The Hawthorn - we have had a wonderful 25-year sponsorship with Hawthorn. We have been - they have been very good to us and we've also been very good to them, but now we have our own team that we all need to get behind, and I know that there will be increased games in Launceston as well as better - when I say better content, we will have clubs with greater membership, so Launceston will in fact have more games.

Iconic events play an absolutely critical role in attracting visitors to our state, and a diverse range of events as well such as Festivale and Junction Arts Festival. They showcase the vibrance and diversity of the northern events calendar. Through the Tasmanian government's 10 million 2024 Election commitment to boost events to drive the visitor economy, we've secured ongoing support of these two iconic events until 2027 with nearly 3.5 million in funding. Additionally, \$150,000 has been provided to support the delivery of Launceston's BeerFest to 2026 and a total of \$300,000 to deliver one round of the Australian Rally Championships in Tasmania each year from 2025 to 2027. In the north-west coast, a total of \$875 was invested into the events sector in the past financial year, supporting a total of 18 events as well.

The northern economy is critical. I'll pass over to the deputy secretary to provide some more information, but noting the closure of Boags and the Premier's commitment to invest that million dollars into what could be possibly events in northern Tasmania was a welcomed news today. Deputy secretary?

Mr STEWART - Thanks, minister. Through you, we don't take a region by region approach to the strategy around events in Tasmania. We take a statewide approach quite deliberately. One of the key parameters that we apply when we're assessing events is not just bringing people to the state, but getting them out into the regions - a really important element of our criteria when we're assessing events for funding.

Just in terms of the focus on the north though, because this may be of interest, for the period of this financial year up until 31 March, the amount of expenditure for events in the

PUBLIC

north was \$9,815,480, and that was actually the highest of any region in the state, including the south. So again, I don't want to be playing regions off against each other - that's not how we operate in Events Tasmania - but just to illustrate that the proportion of expenditure in the north has been really significant.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr GEORGE - Minister, today the government called for expressions of interest for commercial operators to express their interest in running the Hastings Thermal Springs precinct. These springs are, of course, a much-loved destination for Tasmanians, particularly those of the Huon Valley. Now, while I'm all for improving visitor experiences and increasing tourism and the jobs that come with it, I'm also cautious about developers being given concessions that may attract cashed-up tourism but make it for everyday Tasmanians to continue their untrammelled enjoyment of the natural heritage, and with the dangers of over-commercialising an area so close to World Heritage. Given this government's predilection for selling off heritage, can you explain the intent of this move, and give reassurance that ordinary Tasmanians will be able to continue to use the precinct at little cost and without impacting on the amenities of the area?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member, and I too love Hastings Caves, and particularly the pool. I have very fond memories down there. This is actually a question for the Minister for Parks, but we know that Tasmania's natural landscape, national parks and wilderness areas are drawcards for travellers. We particularly need to get people out into our regions and down to the Huon area.

One thing I can say is I'm particularly excited about the Next Iconic Walk, which will build on the success of the Overland Track and the Three Capes as well. We need people to go out and explore our regions. As I said, that is a matter for the Minister for Parks, but I'll certainly have a conversation with him about making sure that it is affordable for families to continue to enjoy and to visit.

Mr GEORGE - And not over-commercialised, I hope, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll take that on board.

Mr FERGUSON - Minister, thank you for your work in this portfolio, and I also extend that to your teams. Teams in Tourism Tasmania are very highly regarded, as are the teams in State Growth, Events Tasmania and Business Events Tasmania, who we fund.

I want to follow up on my colleague in Bass's question. He could have taken the words out of my mouth - he may have looked over my shoulder. I was also going to reference some of the changing economy in northern Tasmania around Boags, a terrible decision which I am so disappointed in and I can't support. Of course, some of the events landscape is actually very positive, and I'd like to think that we can capitalise on that.

I'd like to go to the question of business events more generally and conferences. I know that the government and you are really supporting high-value business events to come to our state, and I invite you to respond on the conference centre and what strategy will sit around that, which is all about attracting higher volume - that is in number of people - to come to northern Tasmania. Maybe one for Brett.

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, thank you, and I'll pass you over to Brett in a moment. But we do know how critically important business events are to our state. We know that they spend more money. We know that they stay longer. We know that they get out into their regions and we do know that they come back.

Before I hand you over to Brett, I just want to say how absolutely delighted I am about the new route from Launceston to Canberra that is operating four times a year - Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and that will also increase capacity - 14,000 seats annually - to Launceston as well and make it accessible for the north-west coast and Launceston people to get to our capital.

Mr GEORGE - I think you said, 'four times a year'.

Ms HOWLETT - A week. No, sorry. Correct the record, if I did. It's been a long day.

Mr STEWART - Thanks minister and through you: the importance of business events has been highlighted consistently, particularly in relation to the material and the dialogue that Business Events Tasmania have put out into the public domain. We know from really solid evidence that Business Events Tasmania captures that those travellers who come here for business events, they bring their families, they stay longer, they spend more and - really importantly - they get out into the regions. The investment in bringing people to the state for business events is really important. The department undertook a demand study for business events and convention in Launceston. The results of that were really positive in terms of we know that the demand is there and that obviously fed into the decision to fund, in this budget, \$10 million for the new convention centre.

In relation to Launceston specifically, with the advent of the Tasmania Devils and the professional sporting economy, the upgrades to the UTAS Stadium, to the Silverdome, that the strategy around bringing business events is to bring people here for a number of different reasons so that they stay longer and spend more. That is a there's an exciting strategy for Launceston and we've engaged with Errol Stewart and his team around terms around the convention centre and we look forward to continuing that work.

Ms DOW - Minister, do you support Eric Abetz's short-stay tax which will adversely impact regional visitor economies?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I do support the 5 per cent levy, yes.

Ms DOW - Why is that?

Ms HOWLETT - Because helping Tasmanians into homeownership is a key priority, which is why we've introduced a 5 per cent levy. Five per cent is very reasonable and it's a relatively modest levy compared to recent measures introduced by other jurisdictions and other levels of government. Similar measures are being introduced across Australia, including a recently announced 7.5 per cent levy in Victoria. There's active consideration of a levy in New South Wales right now. The Tasmanian government supports the right of Tasmanians to use their homes to generate income through both short- and long-term rentals.

Evidence from Europe and North America show that levies of this kind do not reduce demand for short-stay accommodation. In Tasmania's case, around 83 per cent of the levy

PUBLIC

would be paid by interstate and overseas visitors, while 100 per cent of the revenue will go directly towards supporting first-home buyers and this will help more Tasmanians transition from renting into homeownership, the great Australian dream, and giving them the opportunity to build equity.

Ms DOW - Minister, when your government forgot to build a berth at Devonport, you introduced the *Spirit* Preparedness Fund. How many of those grants have been - obviously they've been finalised and allocated - but will those projects be completed in time for the *Spirits'* arrival, whenever that might be?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much for your question and the Tasmanian government, we recognise the delay to the operational launch of the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels. It's concerning for the tourism and the hospitality sector and, I must admit, next week I look forward to getting on board the *Spirit* and having a look at the wonderful artwork that will be on display as part of Dark Mofo. I encourage everyone around the table to go and look at the incredible installation that will be there but we will continue to support the state's tourism industry while working with stakeholders to ensure businesses and the economy can continue growing, so that when the new vessels arrive, their benefits can be and will be felt immediately. This includes through a comprehensive tourism and hospitality support package that's been delivered. I'll throw to the deputy secretary to answer those questions more specifically.

Mr STEWART - Thanks, Minister, and through you. The *Spirit* Preparedness Fund was part of the *Spirits* package. Under that program, 17 out of a total of 72 applications were awarded funding. Under the council program - so that program was sort of split into two - under the council program, seven applications were received and four were successful in receiving funding. That has been completed and all funding agreements have been prepared. In terms of exactly how much money has been awarded, I'd probably have to take that one on notice. I may be able to provide the answer during the session though, because I know people will be working on it.

In terms of how many of those projects will be ready before the *Spirits* start operating this October. We would probably have to seek information from each and every one of the people running those projects, or have a look at the timing on the deeds. I'd suspect it's probably not that many will be completed, but many of them will be underway.

Ms DOW - Some of those things, through you, Minister, are around infrastructure, particularly the local government ones. Are they going to be in place for when?

Mr STEWART - Again, we'd need to go and talk to those councils and relook at their schedules and see when - which we're happy to do. We can try and provide that information, but I think we'd have to take that on notice. Sorry, through you, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - I think Sarah wants to add something.

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - I'll just add there, Tourism Tasmania has led the development of the Caravan and Motorhome Plan which was released by the Premier in March 2025. The plan was developed by ERA Planning in collaboration with state growth and NRE. The plan has a number of funding elements to it, which is to councils as well. The Central Coast Council was traffic management planning, which was \$10,000; Launceston had a dump point which was \$55,000; Huon Valley, a dump point in Dover, \$55,000; West Tamar dump point

PUBLIC

as well - sounds very exciting but it's important - \$55,000; Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council dump point as well, \$55,000; Circular Head in Smithton \$30,000; and Arthur River \$30,000 as well.

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, that's been allocated and those projects are in progress or some of them are completed?

Ms HOWLETT - I believe those add up to a total of \$290,000 for the ones that you have just spoken about.

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - Yes, they're the council ones and they have been allocated.

Ms HOWLETT - And then there was \$4,935,000 been allocated to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and projects are scheduled to be completed in 2026-27 as well.

Ms BADGER - Minister, your government's invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into the Islander Way project over on Flinders Island. It's an internationally acclaimed project that is celebrated for what it can achieve. Given the awards, the recognition that it has received right around the world and other destinations wanting to replicate it, have you gone to visit and have a look at what they've been able to achieve over their, minister? And what's the plan moving forward? How do you then use that blueprint for other places in Tassie such as, you know, Bruny Island, for example?

Ms HOWLETT - I haven't been to Flinders recently, but I would love to when time allows. The Islander Way is a significant regenerative tourism project on Flinders developed by the local community with Brand Tasmania. It's recognised as the first major tourism project of its kind in Australia, showcasing Tasmania's national leadership in sustainability and, of course, with it being community-led. The Tasmanian government we proudly supported this work and we provided the Flinders Island Council with a one-off grant of \$300,000 to develop pilot projects and a framework that promotes tourism aligned with the wellbeing of the islands people, place and environment.

At the 2024 election, our government committed a further \$600,000 over three years to attract this framework through initiatives aligned with the 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy. The project was developed to ensure tourism contributes to a flourishing community, place and environment, responding to concerns about overtourism and long-term sustainability of the island's social and ecological wellbeing. These initiatives include a positive impact development program to support existing businesses, new micro-entrepreneurs and community groups, a visitor contribution platform enabling visitors to contribute time, skills, materials and funds directly into local projects, and the Furneaux Futures Forum, which also supports community led events and festivals reflecting Flinders Island's unique identity while strengthening the Tasmanian brand and it's well underway led by the Furneaux Collective with support from the Flinders Island Council and also the Flinders Island business community as well. Would you like to add any more to that?

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - I can simply add that -

Ms BADGER - In the interests of time, noting that we've only got an hour, I might just circle back to the original question, which is then how is this blueprint empowered and spread

PUBLIC

across the state because as the minister's just so thoroughly outlined, it is terrific what's been able to be achieved and certainly in a changing climate, the sort of resilience that this project can help communities build is invaluable.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Sarah. I'll let you -

Ms KINGSTON CLARK -Through you, minister. Obviously, the framework has been built for Flinders Island and they're still working through how they would actually roll that out and engage with that and we have been engaging with them on how we obviously can support that. But it's a blueprint for Flinders Island. It doesn't necessarily work everywhere. It's very much unique to that area, but one of my team were over at the Furneaux Futures conference as well, so engaging with them.

Ms BADGER - Interesting. So, my second question is, the 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy states that it's number one key direction is that Tasmania, 'will be a leading destination for climate-conscious travel as it should be'. Now given, however, that the 2024 to 2025 climate act review report stated that Tasmania is likely to lose its net zero status before 2030, do you anticipate that the number one key strategic direction of the Visitor Economy Strategy is under threat and what are you doing as minister to help mitigate, you know, things like emissions and help protect those one in six Tasmanians that you know are employed or impacted and part of the tourism industry?

Ms BADGER - What I can tell you is through travelling various places around the world. Tasmania is not just the envy of the nation, it's the envy of the world and people come here for our walks, our parks, our amazing produce, our wine, our distillers and we are unique and we are the best place in the world and I will pass you over to Sarah to speak more to that.

Ms KINGSTON CLARK -Thank you, minister. I'd just like to talk to some of the actions that have been completed in the last six months as attributing to key direction one, reducing emissions. So, the government have partnered with the Tourism Industry Council.

Ms BADGER - I'm really sorry, just in the interest of time, we might just keep it sort of moving forward and what the plans are into the future because obviously that's already sort of part of the review.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I just announce one key initiative today? Thank you.

Ms BADGER - Wow, breaking.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Sarah. Pleased to announce a new initiative that will help tourism businesses empower Tasmania's electric vehicle future and the 250,000 electric vehicle destination charging grants program will make it easier for EV drivers to explore every corner of our state and we know that Tasmania is renowned for its incredible road trips, stunning regional experiences and world class hospitality and we know that with the rising cost of fuel, more people are switching to EVs, particularly following the cost of fuel increase.

And we know that EV chargers can put a business on the map for drivers and by supporting eligible tourism businesses and visitor destinations to install EV chargers. We're helping improve accessibility and convenience for travellers exploring our state and the electric vehicle destination charging program supports small to medium tourism businesses to install

PUBLIC

destination chargers for visitors staying overnight and grants of up to 2500 per charger will be available. Applications for round one of the program open on 3 July 2026 and close on 31 August 2026. So, that is good news.

Mr Di FALCO - Well done, Ms Badger's stealing my questions as well.

CHAIR - Mr Di Falco. Time for you to get on board.

Mr Di FALCO - Thank you, Chair. Minister, what has been the response from your industry on the announcement of the 4.75 per cent minimum wage increase? We are now entering the quietest months of the year for tourism. What measures is your government implementing to ease those challenges?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member. I thank you for that question. There's no doubt that it's difficult for the hospitality and tourism sector, any business, to absorb those costs. I know a lot of businesses are finding it difficult to add that additional cost to their product, whether that be a cup of coffee or a schnitzel or a boat cruise. I think it's important that businesses do add on this cost as it's really hard for them to absorb those additional costs in wage increases. I know Hospitality Tasmania are supporting their businesses through this and it's something that we need to help our businesses with and we can't expect them to absorb the costs. It's not just the cost of wage increase, it's the cost of getting goods delivered to the door, fuel increase costs, et cetera. There's a whole burden - additional burdens - on businesses right across our state that are being felt very hard at the moment.

Prof RAZAY - Thank you very much. Just a clarification, honourable minister, through you to a question to the deputy secretary. You mentioned that Launceston, or Northern Tasmania, has the highest investment in major events until 2031, is that correct?

Mr STEWART - Through you, minister, it's difficult to answer that question because we only have certain events under contract for certain periods - typically between one and three years. Sometimes we'll have a longer agreement. Most of our current agreements expire well before 2031. What I can give you though is when we're assessing approaches from events, whether they be existing ones or new ones, that's done through an independent body with input from Sarah at Tourism Tasmania and Jessica at Brand Tasmania. There really is a strong focus on making sure that we get that regional dispersal and we get a proportional level of investment across the state.

Prof RAZAY - The year 2031 is very critical for Northern Tasmania because that is when Tasmania Devils games will be reduced from six to four. That means we are going to lose two footy games then and, importantly, we have to plan how we can replace that. That's how I feel about major events and we have to plan it in advance.

Mr STEWART - Through you, minister, the commitment the government has made is for six AFL games - a minimum of six from 2028 onwards. Once the Macquarie Point stadium comes online, it will be important to reconsider content in Launceston. I can't speak for them and they're not necessarily part of this portfolio, but I know that James Avery and his team at Stadiums Tasmania, who have taken on UTAS Stadium and are working through the upgrades there, have a really strong focus on making sure that content is secured into Launceston. Not just AFL games, but a mix of content to maximise the utility of that stadium and really build on that economy that comes with that visitation and those events.

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Can I just add something, deputy secretary? As far as Launceston and the North West Coast region is concerned, we were incredibly lucky to have the National Rowing Championships two years in a row. It's not just elite sporting events, it's other sporting events as well. I know accommodation was booked out from Launceston all the way through to Burnie, Sheffield, in all regional areas. That played a vital part in the tourism and hospitality sector and in our accommodation sector. It's not just major events. Also down south, we had international hockey being played as well down south and it was incredible to see international teams on the field at Cornelian Bay. As I said, it's those school sporting championships as well, and I would love to try and get the Nationals back at Barrington again.

Ms BADGER - You might have to fix the power issues for next time, so it doesn't get delayed. But yes, we should get it back.

Ms HOWLETT - It was wonderful, the broadcasting that they had set up. I was able to sneak out of the Chamber and watch a friend of mine row.

Ms BADGER - I missed my sister's race; I couldn't get a park.

Ms HOWLETT - Oh, it was online.

Mr FERGUSON - Should have caught a free bus. Minister, I just want to give a quick shout out to the Australian Musical Theatre Festival, which was a couple of weekends ago, which was tremendous as well and visitation followed that event as well.

Minister, I'd like to take you to some feedback that I listened to at a recent event in a northern tourism gathering - I think a number of our people at the table may have been aware of that and present - from accommodation providers and restaurateurs through to different regional tourism operators who were in attendance. Many of those businesses in my area in the north of the state were describing their continuing challenge around attracting and retaining staff. You've been wonderful, by the way, in working with our federal Immigration minister. I know you haven't quite got an outcome yet but thank you for raising that and advocating for our state. I'd like you to outline, please, how the government is able to support industry-led training and workforce development to help build the workforce that we need for our growing visitor economy.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much for that important question. Skill shortage is obviously critically important, and as we know, it employs one in six Tasmanians injecting \$3.7 billion into our economy each year. The 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy recognises that creating more employment opportunities for Tasmanians - meaningful lifelong valuable career - is an absolute priority and the key direction 7 under the strategy outlines a commitment to attract skilled workforce, creating jobs for Tasmanians that meet industry needs.

At the 2024 election, \$1.3 million over two years was committed to the Tasmanian Hospitality and Tourism Academy. This is a purpose built training organisation and it's led by tourism and hospitality industry leaders. It's unique, it's a connection that ensures our training programs are deeply rooted in the needs and standards of the Tasmanian hospitality and tourism sectors. The academy provides industry designed hands-on training that prepares students for real-world success. It champions a focus on the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in Tasmania's vibrant tourism industry sector. The academy's commitment to excellence, backed

PUBLIC

by industry leaders, makes the organisation a trusted partner for those seeking to be part of our hospitality and tourism industry sector.

At the 2025 election, we reaffirmed our funding commitment, and we provide an additional grant of \$500,000 until 30 June 2026 to expand the organisations training capacity and capabilities to meet the needs of the industry. I was fortunate enough to be there, I think it was on Monday, if not, it was Friday, and had a chat to students participating in the course and there was a facilitator there from MONA talking about the customer experience. It was wonderful. I applaud any member to go down to Salamanca and pop into to the training and have a have a look at the great programs that are being delivered.

Ms DOW - Minister, the Aviation Attraction Fund is meant to build aviation capacity right around the state and was announced in response to the ferry fiasco. But Rex is cutting services to Devonport, King Island and Burnie and meanwhile the government has supported additional capacity in the capital cities with increases to Hobart to Brisbane and I believe some flights out of Launceston. How much funding from this fund has been allocated to new routes for Devonport, Burnie, King Island or other regional airports across Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - Right. So, thank you for the question and aviation is a highly competitive industry, with airlines regularly reviewing schedules and allocating resources onto routes that achieve a strong commercial return and the government, through Tourism Tasmania and the Department of State Growth, works hard to ensure Tasmania gets its fair share of flights and seat capacity. Generating demand through tourism marketing is critical to support air access to the state to benefit Tasmanians, our trade, businesses and, of course, the visitor economy and Tourism Tasmania works with industry and our aviation travel partners to drive visitation to the state, with a strong focus on shoulder periods and regional dispersal.

Ms DOW - It's about the aviation fund, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. So, as a government, we continue to engage with Qantas, Jetstar, Rex, Sharp and Virgin Australia on the continuing challenges being faced by airlines and escalating fuel costs to ensure protection of Tasmanian flights and routes as much as possible and it's important that we continue to stay across this and will work and continue to work with our partners to monitor the situation.

Regional and remote airlines operate in small markets with high operating costs and extremely thin margins and maintaining that commercial viability for regional aviation access is vital to Tasmanian businesses and communities, particularly King Island and Flinders Island and I'll allow Sarah to speak more to that.

Ms DOW - In the interest of time, minister, I'm pretty satisfied with the answer that you've given. It's pretty clear that there hasn't been any increase across those regional airports. I just want to move on.

I met recently with Mick Turnbull, who has a proposal around a bikepacking route around Tasmania and I believe that he's contacted you a number of times but hasn't been able to meet with you. I know that Ms Badger, I think, also met with him about his proposal and he has reached out to the Infrastructure minister as well because there's a number of infrastructure projects or upgrades that would be associated with this project. Minister, will you meet with him and discuss his proposal?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, absolutely. So, Mr Turnbull submitted a proposal to Tourism Tasmania in early-2025 seeking financial support to develop and promote the Tassie Trail Verse. It's a 984 kilometre, self-supported bike packing route from Launceston to Hobart. I will make a commitment to meet with him and I understand he has also written to the minister for Infrastructure and I understand that significant investment is required to develop it into an officially safe and navigable trail. Sarah, would you like to add any more to that?

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - Thanks minister. Through you, we obviously have limited funds for response marketing proposals and the proposal was declined in part due to lack of infrastructure and safety concerns along the proposed route but we definitely have engaged with him.

Ms DOW - Which is the point of meeting with the minister, I think, and the Infrastructure minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Happy to meet with him, with the minister for Infrastructure.

Ms DOW - Minister, you've obviously got a massive proposal on the table for the machinery of government changes that are going to happen, Tourism will be involved in that and Hospitality coming into another large government department: What consultation are you undergoing and how are you working across industry and the tourism sector to work through these changes and what consultation will there be ongoing? What are the timeframes?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a good question. Look, I've met with the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT) and the chair, and so has Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, and we will continue to meet and hear their concerns.

Ms DOW - And what are the timeframes for that?

Ms HOWLETT - Look, I believe the change - I'll pass to Brett, it's later on in the year. Thank you, deputy secretary.

Mr STEWART - Thanks, minister, and through you. A timeline has recently been developed around not just the establishment of the tourism events creative industries entity. I don't think there's been a decision just yet as to what sort of entity it will be. So, we're not using the word department.

Ms DOW - I think that's the point, isn't it? We don't really know what it's going to be.

Mr STEWART - That timeline included the establishment of the entity on 3 December 2026.

Ms BADGER - Minister, I wanted to touch on Bruny Island. It's incredibly unique in terms of the visitor situation there. Certainly, being so close to Hobart and its spectacular destination, it's ever-increasing in the number of people who are wanting to get there, as are the challenges. Investment on Bruny however is falling behind the visitation number that it is seeing.

Although they're national parks and not an island, we see other places with masterplans that are developed to help disperse visitation, how to mitigate things like seasonality and better

PUBLIC

education and awareness for people going to these places. What are you doing as Tourism minister to help assist in a similar way to Bruny Island? Will you look at and advocate with your colleagues for a similar master plan style to help manage visitation to Bruny Island moving forward?

Ms HOWLETT - Very happy to work with Tourism Tasmania on a strategy there. I guess the most recent concerns I've had raised with me is the ferry timetable and also the vehicles waiting to get on to the island and certainty on timetables for workers working in the tourism and hospitality sector. I've been having those discussions with minister Vincent and I've also met with some other key stakeholders in relation to that.

Ms BADGER - Will you work towards a master plan for that area? So, there's a clear vision and community have buy-in to what that vision would look like into the future as well.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll take some guidance from Tourism Tas, from the CEO on that.

Ms KINGSTON CLARK - We work closely with operators from a demand visitation perspective, from an infrastructure perspective that sits with state growth.

Ms BADGER - The question's pretty simply around a master plan, yes or no, for the future if that's something that's on the cards, just in the interest of time.

Ms HOWLETT - Yeah, look, we're currently investing in data to better understand the visitation patterns to assess the sustainable levels and the options for management. Our 10-year Visitor Economy Infrastructure Plan is currently in development; that will support future growth that benefits locals and visitors alike. The government works to ensure that we showcase the diversity of our tourism experiences and encourage regional dispersal, which is essential to ensure the positive contribution is shared across our state to benefit all Tasmanians.

Ms BADGER - Thank you, minister. My second question is around: you met recently with the University of Tasmania looking at some of the tourism marketing courses that they're going to be offering. Of course, we've seen UTAS have a dramatic reduction in the academic social science space of tourism. Who are you working with to sort of fill that void so that we have got the academic base, and we don't just see tourism in Tasmania reliant purely on marketing, but we can run things like the Island Away program.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, certainly. Look, I had a meeting, I think it was a fortnight ago - forgive me for not getting my dates correct - with the University of Tasmania and that was in the in the business sector, and we'll continue to have those conversations around how we can look at what's lacking as far as courses through the university.

Mr GEORGE - Very quick, Chair, thank you. Minister, what work has been done by your department on the impact on revenue and visitor numbers as a result of the oil crisis and the decision of many Tasmanians and mainlanders to remain closer to home?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. A working group has been established, and I'll defer to Brett in a moment, but -

CHAIR - The time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Environment at 9.00 a.m. tomorrow. Please stop the broadcast.

PUBLIC

The committee adjourned at 8.28 p.m.