

# **PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - REGIONAL NSW AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

**Wednesday 31 August 2022**

**Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area**

**DEPUTY PREMIER, REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES,  
AND POLICE**

**UNCORRECTED**

**The Committee met at 9:30.**

## **MEMBERS**

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

The Hon. Lou Amato

The Hon. Scott Barrett

Ms Abigail Boyd

Ms Cate Faehrmann

Ms Sue Higginson (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Courtney Houssos

The Hon. Tara Moriarty

The Hon. Adam Searle

The Hon. Mick Veitch

## **MEMBERS VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Mr Justin Field

## **PRESENT**

**The Hon. Paul Toole, Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police**



## **CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS**

**Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:**

**Budget Estimates secretariat  
Room 812  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000**



**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the initial public hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2022-2023. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. I welcome Deputy Premier Paul Toole and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Deputy Premier, Regional New South Wales and Police.

Before we commence, I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Today's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. The proceedings are also being recorded, and a transcript will be placed on the Committee's website once it becomes available. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. All witnesses in budget estimates have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018.

There may be some questions that a witness could answer only if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances, witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. If witnesses wish to hand up documents, they should do so through the Committee staff. Deputy Premier, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you. Finally, would everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Deputy Premier, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn, as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament.

**Mr PETER BODOR**, Assistant Commissioner, New South Wales Crime Commission, affirmed and examined

**Mr SCOTT WHYTE**, Assistant Commissioner, Police Prosecutions and Licensing Enforcement Command, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

**Mr DAVID HUDSON**, Deputy Commissioner, Investigations and Counter Terrorism, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

**Ms KAREN WEBB**, Commissioner, NSW Police Force, sworn and examined

**Ms REBECCA FOX**, Acting Secretary, Department of Regional NSW, affirmed and examined

**Ms GEORGINA BEATTIE**, Chief Executive Officer, Mining, Exploration and Geoscience, Department of Regional NSW, affirmed and examined

**Mr CHRIS HANGER**, Deputy Secretary, Regional Development and Programs, Department of Regional NSW, affirmed and examined

**Mr DAVID WITHERDIN**, Deputy Secretary, Commercial, Department of Regional NSW, and Chief Executive Officer, Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 11.00 a.m. We are joined by the Deputy Premier in the morning, and in the afternoon we will hear from departmental witnesses from 2.00 p.m. to 5.15 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 3.30 p.m. During these sessions, there will be questions from Opposition and crossbench members only. If required, an additional 15 minutes is allocated at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions for Government questions. Thank you for your attendance today. We'll begin with questions from the Opposition.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Welcome, Deputy Premier. I want to briefly touch on drones, and my questions are more for the Department of Regional NSW at this point. I guess it's a fleet or a squadron of drones, but how many drones do you have within the department?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There are different agencies that actually do have drones. Obviously, I've got to firstly say that the drones that we do use do help with the intel, especially around natural disasters. A lot of it has been also coordinated across with Fire and Rescue NSW. When we have seen Fire and Rescue NSW going into incidents, whether it's house fires or even flood-related activities, those drones have been critical in giving intel to know whether or not it's safe enough for emergency service personnel to be going into those areas. We also have a very strong fleet of drones through Transport. That's ensured that we've been able to have a look at roads as well.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** And DPI have got a lot as well.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, through DPI. We've been able to utilise some of the drones there through Transport in relation to actually seeing the impact on those roads and just to know whether or not it's safe enough to send crews within those areas—to determine whether or not the crews can go in. But it also helps us to assess the damage.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** They've got a very real role.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, it allows us to be able to assess the damage to a particular road or see the extent of the damage. We're able to also—instead of waiting before we can get in there, we know what kinds of materials are required. It actually helps with that preparation around looking—

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Where do we source the drones from, Deputy Premier? What's the process? I'm just interested in the process.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll ask Ms Fox if she has an answer to it; otherwise we'll come back this afternoon and provide a response to you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I'm probably going to explore it in a bit more detail this afternoon.

**REBECCA FOX:** Yes, we can do that. I'll have to take the question on notice, but we can get that information, no problem.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Thank you. Deputy Premier, cybersecurity is clearly a very big issue confronting all government agencies. Again, my questions are more to do with Regional NSW; my colleague will prosecute a few more of the issues for police. Can you walk us through what the Department of Regional NSW is

doing right now to ensure that the covenant of trust that the residents of New South Wales have with the Government isn't being breached when it comes to cybersecurity?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I think when you have a look at cybersecurity, it's a very timely question, because only this week I went out with Minister Dominello and we opened up a brand-new cybersecurity facility. As a part of this cybersecurity facility—the Government is investing over \$23.5 million into that facility—there are a number of analysts that work around the clock. They're looking at data and information that's coming in in real time—real-time data. They're seven days a week, 24 hours a day. What we are seeing is there are real threats when it comes to cybersecurity, real threats when it comes to information being taken from other agencies. There are real threats when it comes to, potentially, investigations underway, people's names and people's addresses being discovered—

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Bank accounts.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Bank accounts, all of that. What we've got is a facility now that is able to determine where these threats are not necessarily coming from, but able to determine the threats that are coming in. What we're able to do is to actually block them. We know that it's not only threats here in this country; it's also international threats. Unfortunately, some of those international threats may actually say that the address is in, for example, Canada, but it's clearly not in that country. While we have criminal networks and we have organised crime that are also getting sophisticated in this area around cybersecurity, so are police getting the resources to be able to combat this. Let's just look at police, for example. If you have a look at the police and what we do, every crime has some type of cyber activity related to it. We see that in police. Everyone's got a mobile phone.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** It's modern crime.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Everybody uses a computer. There are over 5,000 police cars that have got computers inside them. It is a real threat, and the worst thing we could do is actually see this information ending up in the hands of criminal networks.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, Deputy Premier, I appreciate that. I don't disagree with what you're saying, but my question was more to do with the Department of Regional NSW itself. There are people who engage with that department. Minister Dominello, to be fair, did talk a lot yesterday about the announcement earlier in the week, so I've already heard that spiel. I really want to focus on Regional NSW and what they're doing when it comes to cybersecurity.

**REBECCA FOX:** Sure, I can answer that. We certainly work in a whole-of-government cybersecurity system that is led by the Department of Customer Service, but we take our culture of cybersecurity very seriously. We have a cybersecurity policy. Our code of ethics and conduct has a "managing information" section. All staff are trained in that regard. We have mandatory training, regular forums, awareness raising, and in the last 12 months we've certainly made improvements to our cybersecurity infrastructure. We've increased security to 21 public-facing systems. We take it very seriously, and we're well engaged in whole-of-government—I'm going to call it community of practice; it's probably a little bit more rigorous than that. We take it seriously, and our staff report it to our audit and risk committee. We take it very seriously.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I will probably spend just a bit more time on that this afternoon as well. Minister, the freight linkages program—I will find the correct phrase so I don't get that wrong. It's the freight linkages priority registration of interest process. There were 47 applications, but that didn't proceed. Why did that program not proceed, Deputy Premier?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I might ask Ms Fox to actually provide some detail on that, Mr Veitch.

**REBECCA FOX:** I can do that. It was a freight program run under the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund. You're right; we opened a registration of interest for that program. There were 47 applications received. When the evaluations were done, none of those projects met the criteria for the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund and the guidelines. The view of the evaluation team was that the projects were very place based and specific projects to particular applicants, rather than meeting the transformational requirements of big-picture changes—transformational infrastructure—and that they wouldn't pass the Treasury guidelines and meet the legislative guidelines for the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** The legislation.

**REBECCA FOX:** Yes. So we awarded no projects under that program. We offered briefings to all 47 applicants. I think seven of those applicants took up the offer to have briefings. We also worked with those project applicants to find different funding sources for their projects. Three that we know of received funding out of other programs.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** That's where I was going, Deputy Premier. You had 47 applicants. Councils et cetera would've put in a lot of time and effort. They don't want to waste that. What's happened now—you've said that briefings were offered, some have been provided alternate funding sources or opportunities. But was that for all 47? Have some of them just—

**REBECCA FOX:** Not all 47, that we're aware of, have received different funding sources. But freight certainly remains a priority through all of our economic development programs and certainly a priority for the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund. We work in all of our special activation precincts. For example, we're looking at freight and logistics, and opportunities there as well.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I might explore that a bit more this afternoon too, if I could, Ms Fox. You mentioned special activation precincts. The Deputy Premier and I have had a conversation about this at previous estimates. Deputy Premier, local activation precincts have been raised with me only in recent days. I'm trying to get my head around what they are and how they fit with the special activation precincts. Can you maybe enlighten me?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes. There are two parts to that. The first component is in relation to our special activation precincts. You're obviously aware that we've got seven areas that have been identified as a part of that.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We've got about \$1 billion that has been earmarked—

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** In the budget.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I've been to the one at Moree, where we've actually launched the master plan. I've also been down to the Snowy Mountains, where we're talking about having year-round tourism activities occurring within that area.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Near Wagga and Parkes.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I've been to the Parkes one as well. But we've had Brightmark—a \$260 million investment that's going to occur at the SAP at Parkes. It's actually going to bring 100 jobs. I think when you look at it we're talking around 18,000 jobs being created through our special activation precincts. What we have on top of that are regional job precincts. There are four of them that have been identified for areas where we can actually work with those councils and those communities. It's about trying to ensure that we fast-track the opportunities for those investments where we're seeing jobs being created within those localities. Each of those areas, they're sort of like a mini-type version of the SAPs. But they don't get the investment and infrastructure that's being spent in actually developing the land there as well. Because with the SAPs, what we're doing is trying to ensure that we put the kerb and the guttering in, we put the roads in, we put the power in, so it's all ready to go. What we then see is businesses then wanting to relocate into those particular regions.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Minister Dominello would love to have an app for the SAPs. He has an app for everything, I found out yesterday.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** He gets quite excited about the opportunity for apps. That funding that's been set aside in the budget from the Snowy fund for the SAPs, if not expended in this financial year, will roll over to next financial year for those particular SAPs? That's the plan?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, they will continue. Obviously with our SAPs—I've just got it here. We've got Parkes. There's \$185 million for Parkes. Obviously, Moree—when I was up there announcing the master plan. There's \$194 million for that particular program.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Actually, Deputy Premier, rather than having those read out, could you on notice just provide the expenditure to date for each of the SAPs? That'll help us out.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, okay. Snowy Mountains was a good one too, when I went down there. It was another \$391 million, so significant investments. Let's not forget the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund sees 100 per cent of the funds being invested into regional New South Wales.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, to the bush.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** These are actually transformational projects, so it's not business as usual that government does.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Which is why the freight linkages project didn't get up.



**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's right. It's freight, it's digital connectivity, it's our SAPs and things around water security. So that's where that investment of the \$4.2 billion, which has been legislated through the Parliament, ensures that 100 per cent of those funds are invested back into regional New South Wales.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I have just one more round of questions on another topic before I hand over to my colleague Ms Moriarty. Yesterday Mr Dominello was talking about exploring the Digital Restart Fund. Can I just ask, has the Department of Regional NSW—not police but Regional NSW—picked up any funds out of the Digital Restart Fund? What are those funds for?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I might ask Ms Fox to answer that specifically, but we do have a number of programs that we are running through our digital connectivity partnership programs as well. There are a number of different programs that we are running, but in relation to that specific question I just have to ask Ms Fox.

**REBECCA FOX:** We certainly have picked up some funding through the Digital Restart Fund, but I'll have to take on notice exactly what that funding is and what projects it covers.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** What I really am getting to here is if you have funding from the Digital Restart Fund, and the Deputy Premier was talking about the digital connectivity, are there no crossovers or are you able to actually draw from both funds for projects to help get them over the line?

**REBECCA FOX:** The Regional Digital Connectivity fund is primarily outward facing, so it's about connectivity for customers and businesses and regional New South Wales citizens. The Digital Restart Fund is primarily about projects that we need in the department. Often they have an interface with our stakeholders and our citizens, but they're two different focuses for the funds.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Minister Dominello would like to have an app for that, I'm certain. That was yesterday's lesson for me.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** He wants an app for everything.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Good morning, everybody. I want to ask a couple of quick questions into relation to juvenile justice. I tried yesterday with the specific Minister and I got referred here. I want to ask some questions about youth crime rates, particularly in western Sydney. I want to get an idea about what your thinking is about how you're dealing with the increase in crime and particularly what I would refer to anecdotally as "postcode wars", youth gang involvement and knife crime in western New South Wales. It has increased and there have been a couple of murders. What resources are you putting into dealing with that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We've actually had a lot of media attention around what we have been doing. I'm very happy to actually highlight a number of the things that the NSW Police have been doing in this particular space. I'm not going to sit here today and say that youth crime is less or more important in one part of the State. I think youth crime needs to be dealt with with a multi-pronged attack looking right across New South Wales. I'm not going to be saying here that one particular area should be the only focus of the NSW Police Force because I find that incorrect. It needs to be multi-pronged. We need to be looking at different ways how we can ensure that our young people are protected and our young people are given opportunities to be able to be on the right path.

When we talk about young people, we have a number of programs that are actually operating. We've got programs that are actually working through PCYCs, we've got our RISEUP programs and we have our youth action meetings that are taking place. They're also targeting young people who are at risk. In some cases we have 13- to 16-year-olds who potentially may be being led astray by criminal networks and organised crime. These are the people that some of these groups are actually targeting because they are vulnerable. They are susceptible. They see and believe that it's exciting to actually make money very quickly. We've also had a number of operations around targeting youth, even of an evening, just stopping youth to actually deal with weapons that they may have, things around knives, as well, that may be in their particular possession. There's a number of operations that we have in relation to that.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** That's good as a preamble. A lot of those programs, I'm aware of. I asked about them yesterday. I actually support them. I think it's great, the PCYC and all of the usual things that the police do to connect with young people. They're hit and miss in terms of results, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be fully supportive of them. But this is a specific issue that is—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. I back our police in.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** So do I. I'm asking about resources for a particular issue that is a growing concern in western Sydney. Nobody wants young people to be going down the paths of gang warfare.

Again I'm anecdotally calling it postcode wars. What additional resources are being put in by the Government to assist the police to better deal with it?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll give you a whole list of things that we are actually doing. Then I might actually ask the commissioner to even further point out because this has been an issue that we have been dealing on with a number of different forums, where we've actually brought in commanders to be able to address a number of issues. In May of this year, we announced the Sporting Partnership Industry program, which involves sporting clubs teaming up with PCYC clubs across New South Wales to engage with young people at risk of antisocial behaviour or criminal offending. We've also—

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** That's football players doing videos to show in schools? Is there anything more tangible that you're doing—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. If you ask the question, allow—

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Point of order: Chair, the member's asked—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's like you asked the question but you don't want me to answer your question. You asked me what specifically we're doing. This started in May.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** The Minister is speaking over you, Scott.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Minister, we've got a point of order.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** He's pretty much actually raising my point of order. The member asked a question about the resources that the Government had put into it. The Deputy Premier was listing those resources that the Government had put into it. Yet the member kept talking over him while he was going through that list.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I couldn't hear your point of order because the Minister was talking.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I let him finish.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I'm just trying to hear what the Minister has got to say, so can you all let the Minister speak?

**The CHAIR:** Order! Let's keep the exchanges flowing. We started off well. Let's try and keep going that way. I uphold the point of order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Thank you. This was a program that was actually announced in May of this year and was the Sporting Partnership Industry program. It was actually four locations that were chosen to be a part of that program. We've got Queanbeyan. We've got Northern Beaches. We've got Auburn and Penrith. It actually builds on our Fit For Life programs that are currently available at PCYCs. It also allows young people to have a sense of belonging. It actually connects them with mentors and ambassadors. We've had people like Sonny Bill Williams. We've had a number of different sporting organisations and sporting stars working with young people because we all know, at the end of the day, that kids want to feel loved, kids want to actually have a purpose. Having some of their idols and their stars there actually makes a big difference to these young people.

We've also had our RISEUP program. Our RISEUP program is also offering mentoring and vocational training for young people, from 15 to 18 years of age. We're also partnering with employers across New South Wales so that we can actually create meaningful jobs for them, create opportunities where they can actually go and get a job, where they've actually embraced that positive change in their lives. Often we do see, unfortunately, there are youth gangs. They may start up by young people committing minor offences. It might be things like property damage. It might be things like shoplifting. It might even be drug possession. This behaviour can often escalate to more serious and violent offending matters, including those around assault and robberies. While police continue to work to empower young people to make the right decisions, we know this is a big job, and we know this is a matter that we're continuing to work on.

I've got a whole list of other things that I'm very keen to talk about. We've got our Youth Action meetings. They bring together members of the community. We bring community members together. We bring police. We bring government organisations together. They actually provide targeted support to what the specific needs of those local areas might be. We've actually trialled that in places like Coffs Harbour. We've actually had huge success. It's actually shown that recidivism has actually dropped by about 60 per cent of those young people that have actually been involved in that particular program.

We've also got Youth Command. I'm sure the commissioner, when you come back to the question, will be able to go into this further. We've got a crime prevention command. We've got multicultural liaison officers as part of a program. Police liaise with schools to support early intervention initiatives in addition to implementing programs aimed at youth who come in contact with the justice system. Specialised police will often present in

schools on various topics, including anti-violence, knife crime, respectful relationships and much more. Police also conduct targeted operations, as I said before, where they do walk our streets and actually target young people as well from time to time. Happy to keep going into the list of programs that we have.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm actually out of time. But I just will ask one question that you might take on notice. Have you got or have you done any reconnaissance or research into the numbers of people who are involved in this particular problem? You can take that on notice because I am out of time. But I do want to get the question on the record.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We'll actually come back this afternoon. If we can have the answer, we'll provide it this afternoon, if you're rushing off and not waiting for the answer.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** You can give it if you like, but I'll have to wait for 20 minutes until it's my time again. That's fine.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. It's the rules of the Committee. It's now my turn, Deputy Premier. Can I please take you to the *Strategic Statement on Coal Exploration and Mining in NSW*, which was released back in June 2020. One of the goals of that was to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions directly associated with coalmining in New South Wales. Deputy Premier, I'm just really trying to get a view on how you think you're tracking with that, given that, very recently, the department of planning found that there's no clear methodology to assess the relative scale of emissions in a consistent manner, there's no performance criteria or limits provided nor a clear time frame for reduced emissions and there is no clear guidance on how to assess potential mitigation or abatement measures and there's no clear guidance on whether to offset or how to calculate those offsets. How do you think we're tracking in terms of that strategic framework and that goal?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There's a couple of things. First of all, let me just point out that we actually do have a future of coal statement. That actually sets out where the Government may release a limited number of areas for coal exploration under our—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Can I just interrupt you? That's the document I'm referring to.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's exactly what I'm talking about. Obviously, around coal exploration, you may not be aware but, even previously, at the previous two budget estimates, I also indicated a number of areas of land that have been ruled out for future exploration for coal. They were around Ganguddy-Kelgoola—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Deputy Premier, can I please just bring you to the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** They were also around Hawkins and Rumker. In relation to—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Deputy Premier, please.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If you let me finish, I'm going to get your—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** No. Can I just bring you to my question. I understand about the release part of the framework. I'm asking you about the other part, which does not relate to exploration but which relates to mining and the commitment within that to reduce emissions associated with mining, not release, and how you are tracking in actually achieving that part of the framework, please.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll go to Ms Beattie in a moment. But I'll also point out that we've actually partnered with South32 to tackle emission reductions in the Illawarra. But I might actually ask Ms Beattie to provide some additional information in this area.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. The future of coal statement, as you refer, has a commitment in there around emissions. That is a whole-of-government commitment. So there are different parts of government working on different parts of that in relation to emissions. We have net zero targets that the Government is working on in terms of this portfolio. The area that we're focused on is reducing fugitive emissions from coalmining and also looking at our Coal Innovation program.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. What have you achieved in the last two years, since the release of that, in terms of reducing fugitive emissions?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Through the Coal Innovation program, we have a couple of projects that we're working on.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** I'm very aware of the projects and that inordinate amount of money. Have they actually achieved any fugitive emissions reduction? It's a pretty simple question.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** They're very early stages. So the fugitive emissions—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** So perhaps not yet—is that the answer?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Probably not yet I would say. But—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. That's—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If you just let Ms Beattie—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you, I've got the answer.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** She's trying to provide the answer to you.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you, I've got the answer—we haven't achieved any fugitive emissions reductions yet.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, I'll point out that's your words.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** No, no, that's not what actually I—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Ms Beattie did not say that.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Okay.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** And I want to put on the record that you are actually putting words in her mouth that she did not say.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** So perhaps not yet means what, sorry?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** So the project that I'm referring to, the ventilation air methane project, that itself is at very early stages. And on that specific project, \$15 million has been allocated on a demonstration project for a commercial trial of that technology. So that project is what I was referring to, that it is only in its very early days. In terms of broader emissions reductions, I have to check the latest results on that. But I was just referring to that specific project, which is the focus of this department.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. I don't think I was that far off. I don't think we have achieved anything yet. I understand we've got some possibly good things in the pipeline, but not yet in terms of those fugitives.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** That would be up to individual sites. So each project would be working on its own plans to reduce emissions. There's a lot of effort going into that. But I don't have that—that is a matter for their individual projects.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. Perhaps, Deputy Premier, if you are willing and able to take on board that that was a major commitment in that release framework and that many of us across New South Wales are relying on you to reduce the emissions, as promised in that framework, from current and continuing coal projects, and we haven't made a whole lot of progress by the you sounds of it, thank you.

Sticking on that Strategic Release Framework, you mentioned, Deputy Premier, that out of those seven areas identified for release that four have been withdrawn and ruled out, which I think provides some relief to people across the State. In relation to the three remaining areas that seem to be on track, they seem to be on track to be released without applying the Strategic Release Framework and the conducting of a preliminary regional issues assessment. Do you acknowledge that this would be a massive departure from that promise, if they are released? I'm referring to the Gorman North and those other areas that you were referring to.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This is actually striking the balance between allowing and understanding that coal is going to continue for a number of decades. I need to put it on the record that a lot of towns and a lot of communities continue to rely on coal-related activities in their local areas. It employs a lot of people. There are a lot of people that actually receive an income from coal-related activities and it also continues to support those economies. In relation to that—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Can we just talk about the framework?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** This is your framework.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** In relation to that—

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Point of order: It's happened a lot—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** I've asked a question.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** It's happened a lot that Ms Higginson's speaking over the answers.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** She asks the question and then answers herself.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I think the responder should have the opportunity to respond.

**The CHAIR:** Order! One at a time.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Can I just ask the Deputy Premier to answer my question, is that okay?

**The CHAIR:** No, you can't. I'm the one that runs this meeting, not you. The Deputy Premier can answer the question in any way he likes. He should not be interfered with in answering that question. He can talk as long as he likes. We saw a demonstration of that from the Treasurer the other day. You'll get your question in if we just give each other an opportunity. I uphold the point of order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I was saying, there may be people who think we can turn off coal overnight and there may be people who think that—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Can I take a point of order?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, no, I'm about to answer your question.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You can't ask a question and answer it yourself, which is what you've been doing.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you, Deputy Premier, I'm just taking a point of order. The point of order is to relevance. I'm not asking about the future of coal. I've asked about the Deputy Premier's own Strategic Release Framework and I'm asking why we're not applying that in relation to the three release areas that we're releasing at the moment.

**The CHAIR:** I'll uphold the point of order and remind the Minister that he must be directly relevant at all times.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There are no plans to release areas for greenfield exploration. There you go.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** No, I'm talking about the ones that are being released. So in relation to Gorman North, perhaps, Deputy Premier, we should be handing over to Ms Beattie. I think she does know what I'm talking about. We're actually talking about the proactive release that is taking place, Gorman North, and that we're releasing them without applying the preliminary regional issues assessment framework that was promised to those communities and all of New South Wales in how we will release these areas for further exploration.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** I'm happy to answer that one. The future of coal statement refers to the Strategic Release Framework and the document identified a number of areas. As the Deputy Premier said, we've removed four of those. Of the remaining areas, if the Government wanted to pursue releasing those for greenfield coal exploration, they would have to go through that Strategic Release Framework. At this point in time, the Government is not considering release of any of those areas.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** So not Whitehaven's Gorman North, that is being released via the operational allocation as opposed to the framework?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** So they're two different processes. The Strategic Release Framework refers to the areas identified in the future of coal statement, which are large areas that were identified as potential for future exploration for greenfield sites. So that's for new standalone coalmines.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** So you're saying Gorman North isn't part of that?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** The Gorman North area is an area that's identified in the future of coal statement.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** So why is it not having the criteria applied to it, that's the question?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** There's two separate frameworks here. There's the Strategic Release Framework, which is large areas for greenfield coal exploration and there's the Operational Allocation Framework which is a separate framework that applies to areas adjacent to existing mines and there's set criteria that applies to that separate framework, which is very limited. So it's limited in area that the company can apply for and it's limited in terms of the criteria around why they might apply for that area. So they're both coal exploration. But they're two different pathways used for two different purposes.



**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Would you think it's fair enough that some people feel a bit misled that the Strategic Release Framework criteria isn't applying to the Gorman North and those areas closer to existing mines, even though they were identified in the future of coal strategy as potential release areas?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Well, the future of coal strategy also confirmed the Government's position to the Operational Allocation Framework. There are two separate pathways and the future of coal statement acknowledges those separate pathways. In the case of Gorman North and with the operational allocation applications that the department has received adjacent to the Narrabri mine, they are proceeding through the operational allocation pathway. But given there was that overlap with the Gorman North area, the department actually, as part of that process, we have to do a market interest test. We actually did a test over the whole Gorman North to test the market. But as a result of that, there was limited market interest. So that is still being assessed under the operational allocation pathway.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** If I might just add, the main point here is it's a much smaller area. Under the operational allocation pathway it's only—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** And it's a much less thorough process.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** I wouldn't say that at all actually.

**The CHAIR:** Your 10 minutes is up. It's now my time. Just to continue, a couple of questions, Deputy Premier, in relation to coal. You recently heard that the South32 mine was not going to continue the application for their processes of extending the life and I think also the supply of their coking coalmine down on the South Coast. What is the New South Wales Government going to do about guaranteeing coking coal and therefore underwriting the future of steel production in New South Wales if South32 is not going to proceed?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Thank you, Mr Borsak. South32, as you rightly know, has made the decision not to invest in the Dendrobium mine extension project. That's a commercial decision that is being made by the company themselves. Obviously, they've weighed up the alternatives and made a commercial decision to instead focus on optimising operations within the existing mine lease area on activities that will take them out to at least 2028. But they were able to consider it as one of the options because the Government deemed it State significant infrastructure, and we stand by that decision. We also know that Dendrobium is a critical source of coking coal, as you said, for the Port Kembla steelworks. However, I understand that between the Dendrobium and Appin mines, it will still be well positioned to supply BlueScope.

**The CHAIR:** For how long?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** My understanding is to 2030.

**The CHAIR:** Only to 2030?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll double-check that for you this afternoon. But that was my understanding.

**The CHAIR:** So is it the Government's intention to cease steel production at Port Kembla after 2030?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Obviously the decision has only just recently been made. Obviously we'll continue those discussions in relation to the future of that area because obviously there are many people involved and steel is going to be quite an important commodity here in this State as we go forward as well.

**The CHAIR:** Just turning to the Firearms Registry and customer service, I've got a hand-up there for you, which you might just—Minister, last week in budget estimates the Treasurer said:

I think that we should always be looking to do what we can to make sure all of our government agencies are working in the best interests of their stakeholders ...

Do you agree with that statement from the Treasurer?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I think governments—we don't always agree, but I'll agree on that one, that we should always be looking at making improvements, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Is this also the view of the Premier and Cabinet—that you know of?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We're always trying to improve the lives of people in this State in the decisions that we make, yes.

**The CHAIR:** So does the comment that government agencies should be working in the best interests of stakeholders also apply to the New South Wales Firearms Registry?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Absolutely. As you're aware, I think at the last budget estimates sitting, which was only back in May—it was only a few months ago because ours was delayed because of the floods. But I also announced that we were doing a review into the Firearms Registry. That was being led by former assistant commissioner Geoff McKechnie. That work is still underway. Now, Mr McKechnie has come to me and did ask for an extension. I have allowed him to be given a two-month extension because he wants to continue to engage with a number of additional stakeholders, obviously continuing to talk with dealers, continuing to talk to those that actually—various stakeholders in relation to their use with the Firearms Registry.

I note that there are a number of changes that have already been made, a number of changes that have already been put in place. I'm sure that, when Mr McKechnie comes back with the review—if there are further things that we can do to improve the systems and the way in which information is communicated out there to firearm owners across the State, then I think that is something that we all need to be looking at. I know that that's something that we'll actually be looking at doing.

**The CHAIR:** You say you've given him a few extra months. He's been going three months already. What is the date that you expect now to get a report from him?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's the end of October, so the end of October was how long he's got to actually come back.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, because what I was going to—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'd rather a report done properly than a report rushed so that a report has the outcomes and the recommendations that are going to do exactly what your first question was—about putting customers and the people of the State first. This will ensure that he has been given significant time to be able to undertake that work. He did actually approach me. I've had a couple of meetings with him in relation to some of the early findings, some of the matters that he has found already. I think you asked me at our last budget estimates meeting, had I been to the Firearms Registry as well? The answer is yes. I think it's also very difficult in their current location when they're situated on different floors. They're not working as one particular cohesive unit in that area. It makes it difficult as well when there are gaps. I know that there's been a lot of hours lost because of flooding and also fires within that part of the world. I know that when they move into their new facility they'll all be on the one floor. That's going to certainly improve operations as well within the Firearms Registry.

**The CHAIR:** Look, as you know, and I'll recite—the firearms owners, licence applicants, firearms dealers, gun clubs, primary producers, shooting range operators, paintball operators, vertebrate pest controllers. In fact, everyone in the firearms industry or who uses a firearm as tool of trade has faced lengthy and continual delays, poor customer service and dysfunctional computer systems, including Gun Safe, the IPOS system—for those that don't know, that's the Integrated Policing Operating System—all things used by the Firearms Registry. When you talk about the moving to new premises, is that move completed yet? Maybe the commissioner can answer that.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If I go to the commissioner—and it might be one for Mr Whyte. Before we do go there, I just say that, no, they haven't actually moved at this point. The work is still being undertaken at that new premises to accommodate their move.

**The CHAIR:** Where are the new premises?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It will be in the same electorate that it's in, in the Tweed electorate—just moving to a new location within that area. I'll ask the commissioner if she'd like to just provide some extra words—and then Mr Whyte maybe.

**KAREN WEBB:** Certainly. The new premises is in the North Coast, so it doesn't dislocate the employees that are attached to that area. It's to bring all of the units so that they work together. Work has been undertaken, as the Minister said, in terms of improving the systems and Gun Safe et cetera. The work that had been done on that project has been requested by Mr McKechnie for his review and will be tabled and provided to him so he has the benefit of the work that's already been done by New South Wales police and the registry to improve their customer service. So it has come a long way. But I'll hand to Mr Hudson or Mr Whyte to talk specifically about any current issues. Certainly, most of the things that do take time are those where extra time needs to be taken for specialist checks or background checks and other things to make sure that the appropriate people are getting licences. As I said at last estimates, it's a privilege.

**The CHAIR:** Is the new site flood-proof?

**KAREN WEBB:** It's on sand, so I'm hoping so.

**The CHAIR:** It's on sand.

**KAREN WEBB:** It's in a different area.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If it floods there, we're in big trouble.

**The CHAIR:** Where actually is it located? What's the address? That's what I'm getting at.

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll give that to Mr Whyte.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Mr Chair, we call it a discreet location so we don't make it public where the location is.

**The CHAIR:** Doesn't that cut against—when the Firearms Registry was first formed, you actually used to take customers to the door. Now what you're telling me here and now is that suddenly the Firearms Registry is a secret location. Why does it need to be secret? I thought it was a customer service. We're busy talking about it being a customer service. Now no-one actually wants to mention the address. Why is it discreet? Why is it—what? Is it going to get blown up, is it, or what?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** It's a discreet location with respect to—I suppose that we've evolved over the years in circumstances of safety of the staff. However, could I just touch on the customer service, because it's an absolute—

**The CHAIR:** Hang on, Mr Whyte. I'm not really satisfied with that. At what stage have any of the customers threatened any of the staff at the registry? I've never heard of such a thing, honestly.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** That would be historic to me but I can take it on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Can you take it on notice?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** Is there one single case why this needs to be made secret? We're busy talking about customer service and then this is not a customer-facing organisation or service. How does that work? I don't understand. Can someone explain that to me?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Look, sir, the location is referred to as a discreet location. But customer service—can I just touch on that for you. Customer service is an absolute priority of the Firearms Registry. Obviously, community safety is our number one priority but customer service is something that we're working extensively on and there's been dramatic improvements over several years by my predecessors in this area. For context we should understand that there's in excess of 250,000 licence holders with in excess of a million firearms registered in New South Wales. The Firearms Registry does about 50,000 transactions per month with their staff there. They've made enormous savings around backlog, certainly reduced the licence waiting time. PTAs have reduced significantly.

There are other areas that need work and we certainly are working on those backlogs. We're utilising dedicated teams to reduce those areas of permits and suspension reviews, which are probably the only areas of any concern at the moment. Obviously because of all our work, as I said at the last estimates, more processing requires more internal review and adjudication. That was at about a significant number. We've more than halved that number. We're on track, as I said at the last meeting, to be at zero by the end of the year. I actually would like to acknowledge the work of the people in the Firearms Registry, who've lost over 4,000 hours this year with relation to floods and COVID. They've worked in some pretty extreme conditions. People have lost their own houses a couple of times but still come to work.

Talking about customer service, I think it's also important that we acknowledge, now that we've been working for some time with the firearms consultative committee, which is a touching point for members of industry that reach in early when there is an issue—we try to address every customer issue that we can prior to it escalating. We've also taken on "about industry" days. We've run two of those where we've got all dealers and industry people in, spoken to them about our options, our Gun Safe platform moving forward. We've attended rural shows with the rural crime investigators, so we're talking to landholders and farmers and people about their firearms out there. We've proactively gone out with people who were affected by floods and live on the land that needed assistance around safe storage. We've done that.

There's ongoing business improvement at the Firearms Registry. I saw it myself. I was there last week. They're identifying areas where the bureaucracy is slowing things down, and we're working towards it. The systems like Gun Safe are the way to move forward. That's underpinned by a case management system through BluePortal that we're using now, which means that we're not getting those errors that we saw historically from the Firearms Registry. I will say to you this: We have surveyed the dealers and, as you well know, the vast majority



of significant firearms dealers other than the smaller ones are on the platform. They are telling us it's saving them hundreds of hours by using Gun Safe.

**The CHAIR:** I have actually heard the opposite. Anyway, you'd expect me to say that, wouldn't you? And I expect you to say what you're saying.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** When I was recently at Safari Firearms looking at their interaction with the system, it was going down every five minutes. It would go out for three or four minutes and then come back again. I mean, it's not working properly. Recent changes that have been built into the system, or modifications, have taken you away from your original specification. It's not operating to spec. Just another question. You mentioned the consultative committee as if the police take any notice of it. Can you take on notice for me, please, when was the last time that the NSW Police Force actually accepted a consultative committee recommendation and put it to the Minister's office and it was actually accepted?

I'm talking about going back five years or go back even further. The consultative committee does good work. Recommendations are made. They go to the police and not one single one of them ever gets implemented. They always get knocked back. So the whole thing is an exercise in wankatoria. That's the reality, as far as I'm concerned. It's no use consulting, it's no use listening to people and then doing nothing about it, if you're not prepared to change. The same goes for the Minister.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Good morning, everyone. I wanted to start out by asking about the Mark43 contract. When was that contract terminated?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Sorry, which one?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Mark43.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I would have to take it on notice, to find out when it actually was instigated for you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I think there might be a note coming. Perhaps someone else might be able to provide some information?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I can ask, otherwise we can provide it this afternoon.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is there anyone else who can tell me when it was—

**KAREN WEBB:** It was recently, but I will get the specific date for you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Great. Thanks very much, Commissioner.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We'll come back to you. If we can get it now, we'll get it. If not, we'll come back this afternoon with it.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, are you aware how much money the New South Wales Government has lost as a result of this termination?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm not aware, but we can potentially come back this afternoon with the information.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is there anything you can tell me about the contract, Deputy Premier?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said, we can actually have that information for you this afternoon.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** No, I'm asking if you can tell me anything about the Mark43 contract.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Not at this point. I said I would provide it this afternoon to you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Deputy Premier, did John Barilaro ever mention to you his interest in the New York trade commissioner job?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** He never mentioned anything to you?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No. I had no conversations with Mr Barilaro in relation to him going for the trade position.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. And when did you find out that he was interested in applying for the role?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Well, that's on the public record. I think I received a phone call from the former Minister in relation to an independent process had been undertaken through a recruitment process indicating that Mr Barilaro had come out as the preferred candidate.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, when you are talking about the former Minister, you are talking about Mr Ayres?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Mr Ayres, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** He called you to tell you that Mr Barilaro had applied?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No. It was the first that I'd heard that he applied, but I got a phone call to actually be told that an independent recruitment process had been undertaken and Mr Barilaro had come out on top for this particular role. That was the first I even knew that he'd applied for the position.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When did that phone call occur?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's on the public record. It was the end of April.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** End of April? Perhaps you could—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's on the public record already.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Did the Premier ever speak to you about that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Did Minister Bronnie Taylor ever raise the issue with you?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So the first you found out about it was when Mr Ayres, the former trade Minister, called you. I assume that this was before it came to Cabinet. Is that correct?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The first I found out was then. I was advised that Mr Barilaro was the successful candidate after an independent recruitment process had been undertaken with the former Minister for trade, and that he had come out on top. That was the first I even heard that he'd applied, and that was the first I'd even heard that he'd been given—was going to be appointed to the role.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So he didn't call you? Obviously, we've heard previously that he was phoning around a number of senior Liberal members. But he didn't call you as the Deputy Premier, the Leader of the National Party, to say he was interested?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, he didn't. I know that's also been at the public hearing and the inquiry that was held here at Parliament. He even stated that as well.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. There's been some discussion about the National Party conference that he attended in Port Macquarie on the weekend prior to the—sorry, after the announcement came out. Were you contacted prior to that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** About the conference? I was in attendance as the leader.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** No, I wasn't asking you about that. I was asking whether Mr Barilaro contacted you in between you being told that he was the successful candidate via Mr Ayres and in between the announcement.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No. I saw Mr Barilaro at the conference because he was there, on the day of the conference, on the day that he was being appointed.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Did you discuss the appointment with him then, at the conference?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I did not discuss the appointment but I might have indicated to him congratulations, because it was in the media that day.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** He hadn't contacted you prior to that, though?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No. No contact prior.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But when you saw him at the conference you said, "Congratulations. You're off to New York"?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, I didn't say it like that. To be quite honest, I did not say it like that. It was in the media that day and I saw him at the conference.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you remember what you said to him?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I was very busy all day at the conference, so it was a very quick conversation anyway.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I appreciate that. I'm just wondering if you can recall what the words were?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Look, I'm not going to pre-empt what I might have said, what I didn't say. It might have been "Well done", but it would have been very brief.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I just want to get the time line right here. You were contacted prior to the Cabinet discussion by Mr Ayres to say, "There's been an independent process. Mr Barilaro has been appointed." And then it goes to Cabinet and then the appointment is announced?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The appointment never came to Cabinet. Let's get that on record. I said to you I was contacted at the end of April by the former trade Minister that an independent recruitment process had been undertaken and that Mr Barilaro had come out on top for this particular role.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That was about eight weeks before the announcement was made?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Did you express any concerns when Mr Ayres first called you, saying that this might not be appropriate—or you thought it was appropriate? What was your reflection to Mr Ayres at the time?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I asked him what the recruitment process involved because I wanted to make sure that the recruitment process was an independent and transparent process. And I was advised that it was an independent process that had been undertaken.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But did you express any concerns to Mr Ayres during that initial conversation?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** My concerns to him were about the recruitment process—about ensuring that it had been an independent recruitment process because, obviously, I knew that there would probably be questions around it. But I also want to make sure that processes are followed appropriately and that processes are followed accordingly and that it was an independent process that had been undertaken. And I was informed that it was.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Did you have any other conversations with Mr Ayres before the announcement?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Did you have any conversations with the Premier prior to the announcement?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You asked me that. I said no.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, do you think it was appropriate to appoint John Barilaro to the New York trade job?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I don't look at who it is. As long as the recruitment process is done independently and the process has been done correctly, that's what I look at. Obviously, there's been a number of reviews that have been undertaken. We've had the Head review that actually highlighted a number of issues which have certainly come out through that process, which could question how independently it had been undertaken.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But you never actually took a step back and said, "Look, actually, I think it's inappropriate. This guy is the former leader of the National Party, he's the former Deputy Premier and he created this role. I don't think it's a good look for him to be appointed."

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said to you, the questions I asked were around the recruitment process. Again, I was informed that it was an independent process that had been undertaken. That's where I would have confidence in the process to be driven from and that the process would've been independently done.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Given what we know now about the process—what we've uncovered through the Head review and through the parliamentary inquiry—do you think it was appropriate that Mr Barilaro was appointed?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The Head review indicates that there have been a number of anomalies that were highlighted. Obviously, that has raised concerns as to the process.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Premier. I might move on to the question—sorry, did I see a note that got passed up on Mark43?

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't have the figures yet. That will come to me.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** No worries. Why don't we move on to a different issue? I just wanted to ask about the status of your crackdown on unexplained wealth. You've said publicly that you are going to introduce new laws. Why don't you just support the NSW Labor bill?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I just point out to you that, first of all, your bill is one-dimensional. Your bill is just throwing up a one-page bill, and it does absolutely nothing to address the use of encrypted devices. Our bill goes a lot further. Our bill has actually been done in consultation with police, not someone just coming up with a one-page bill to talk about a one-dimensional action around it. What we're putting up is one that is looking at prohibition orders. We're looking at encryption devices—the first type of this legislation here in the world. We know that organised crime and criminal networks are using encryption devices. They're using them for firearms, they're using them for drugs and they're using them, in some cases, even to commit murders.

We are going a lot further than what your bill is, and I look forward to the Labor Party backing in the New South Wales police, who have been asking for these changes to be made to be able to tackle organised crime and to be able to deal with these criminal networks. They are going to need this bill introduced into the Parliament, and I don't want to see it being slowed down. I'll see whether the Labor Party supports it, because it is a bill that is going to give our police the powers that they need. You look at money laundering—we know that when we're talking about drugs and when we're talking about organised crime, it is off the back of money and off the back of drugs. If we—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Minister, these are crocodile tears. The review of the Crime Commission Act was finished in December 2020. It recommended laws of this nature then. Your Government made an announcement—a press release—in 2021 saying that it was going to act, and act quickly. You did nothing. You've re-announced this year, and you've done nothing. On the last sitting day of the last session, on the Thursday, you made another big announcement. You haven't even produced this legislation for us to see. If you're really serious about getting cross-party cooperation, you would have shown the Opposition and you would have shown other parties. You would've acted sooner. Why have you delayed so long in acting on this?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** First of all, I look forward to your support when the bill does come—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** No. Why have you taken so long to act on this important issue?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I look forward to your support now, when this—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** We haven't seen the legislation, Deputy Premier.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's the bill that actually—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Why have you not acted? Why are you putting the brakes—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's the bill that has actually—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** —on this reform?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —been asked for by police to support them to deal with these—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** And you haven't acted.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —organised criminal activities.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** The police have been asking for this for years, and you've done nothing.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Your bill is weak.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You just put out press releases.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Point of order—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When will you act, Deputy Premier?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Your bill does nothing to deal with unexplained wealth, encrypted devices or money laundering.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We're going to see it when we return to Parliament.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** The first sitting day?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** When we return to Parliament.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You haven't even given notice.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Because we've actually been doing—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You've been doing press releases.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We've been doing all of the consultation—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You've been doing announcements. You've been big-noting yourself—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —that is required to actually—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** —but you haven't actually produced the goods.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —put this bill through. Because when you're talking about encrypted devices, this is the first time that this is being done.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** This is your one-trick pony.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We want to make sure that it doesn't actually capture—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I understand the importance of encrypted devices, but what else?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —unintended consequences around banks and all of that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Why have you taken so long to act?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I tell you what, I look forward to your support—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Well, tell us.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —and your backing when this bill comes through—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Point of order: He is not being directly relevant—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —because this has clearly come from the police—

**The CHAIR:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —to actually back them in.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** —to the question of why they have not acted earlier.

**The CHAIR:** I remind the Minister that he does need to be directly relevant. At least try to answer the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Being the Minister for seven months, it is one of the things where I have actually sat down with police. They've told me that to get on top of organised crime and criminal networks, this is the legislation that they need. This is the legislation that they've been looking for.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Well, Deputy Premier, during your delay, 16 people have been shot in the streets of Sydney.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This is the legislation—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Why did you not act earlier?

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This is the legislation that I'm driving, and I'm backing our police in.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Why did you not act earlier?

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm backing them in. Will you?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You've put the brakes on for two years.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We'll see whether you back them in or not.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, when will you introduce the legislation?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We've said, "In the spring session," even when we announced it. I know that Mr Hudson was there, present on the day, when we spoke about the bill and the changes that are going to made. We always—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am asking you for a date. You've just launched an attack on the Labor Party.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Well, when we return to Parliament. So in September.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The Labor Party is the only one that currently has anything on the table.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Your bill is weak. Our bill goes a lot further.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. You don't need to provide the assessment again.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Well, hang on. Our bill goes a lot further—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I'm just asking you a really simple question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Our bill goes a lot further than yours—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Great. Excellent. When are you going to produce it?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —and we'll see whether or not you're backing it. We look forward to The Greens backing it too.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Where is the bill?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When are you going to produce it?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** When we return to Parliament.

**The CHAIR:** What guarantees of privacy are going to be in that bill? Or is this just another "help yourself to whatever you want"?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, when we talk about prohibition—

**The CHAIR:** Privacy.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Privacy. These are some of the matters that are being addressed right now, Mr Borsak. Obviously, we're not going after someone who we believe—these are people who are really at the top of the list. These are people who are on the radar of police right now. These are people who have got track records, they're involved in gangs, they're involved in criminal activity and they've already got a strong record. We know that to have a law around encrypted devices is going to be critical. People don't carry encrypted devices because they're using it as a telephone. These are devices that are off the communications network. These are devices that aren't your normal WhatsApp messaging that people use. These are specifically used to actually target individuals, they're actually used to deal drugs, they're used to smuggle firearms and they're used to commit murders. It will be an offence—

**The CHAIR:** To the—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, it's our time.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** It's our time.

**The CHAIR:** I'll give you some of my time.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, you go.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It'll be an offence—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Is the bill final? Have you absolutely finalised the bill? It's ready to go? You've given that commitment?



**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It will be ready by the time we return, Mr Searle.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** "Will be ready".

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I look forward—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You made the announcement on 23 June—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** —and you didn't even have a bill. It's just another headline. It's another press release.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I announced what we're doing. The headline can be that you're backing it in 100 per cent, if you wish.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** We haven't seen what you're proposing.

**The CHAIR:** To my point, Deputy Premier, what guarantee is there going to be that any of the politicians in this place won't have their encrypted devices looked at by the police?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You wouldn't have an encrypted device. We're not talking about your normal things like WhatsApp. These are completely different devices that are actually off the network, and that's the piece of legislation that's—

**The CHAIR:** How will you deal with that in the legislation?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's the bit now that is actually being dealt with. We don't want to capture—encrypted devices are used by organisations like banks as well, so we've got to make sure that we—

**The CHAIR:** That's right. And political parties.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's right. We've got to make sure that we don't capture them. That's part of the complex nature of actually putting this legislation together, so that we don't capture that. But we're targeting those organisations and targeting those criminals that are involved in unsavoury activities across this State.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That's all right. I think we're going to share a bit of time. We're going to have a very collaborative approach here today. Deputy Premier, we saw a remarkable verdict yesterday on Chris Dawson. Do you support "no body, no parole" laws in New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There's a couple of things: It was a horrible story, when you watched that yesterday, but it also goes to remind me and many people across the community that people like our police don't give up. I know it's 40 years, and that's a hell of a long time. Whilst there is a presumption of innocence in some cases, I've got remarkable stories of where police have actually followed up cases—just recently, there was a case where there was a murder about 20 years ago in Lismore—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, I have the utmost respect for our Police Force. I'm interested in asking you whether you support "no body, no parole" laws in New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's a matter for the AG. I'll make this point: I'm very strong about ensuring that I back our police in because there's a lot of work that they do in relation to evidence and providing information. I certainly back our police in, and that's a matter that we can continue to have a conversation with the AG.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I too back our police. I think that they play an incredibly important role in our State and they are certainly the people who are running into emergencies when everyone else is running away. But, Deputy Premier, I'm interested in your views on no body, no parole laws.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said, if I start sharing my views on everything about what should happen, it's probably going to be blocked out here as to what should happen to some people in relation to activities in criminal events like this.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But do you have any plans to introduce these?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said, this is a matter where we can continue with the AG.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have you started those discussions? This is obviously a very high-profile case; it's been in the media for quite some time.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It only happened yesterday, as you're aware. Like, yesterday it was in the media yesterday as well. Obviously I think for the family that have actually been traumatised by this whole affair and to

know that it's gone on and there are still many unanswered questions, for an event like that to have gone on for 40 years is completely distressing and heartbreaking for those that have been involved in it.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, but it is has been a high-profile case that has been running in the media for quite some time. You haven't had a discussion with the Attorney General about the possibility of this?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have many discussions with the Attorney General.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** About no body, no parole laws?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** About many factors.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** My time's expired.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Good morning, Minister.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Good morning.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** And to all of you—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Who's chairing the other one?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I've left it un-chaired. No, it's fine. I just wanted to get started in relation to the actions that have been taken against peaceful protestors. Firstly, you made a number of quite extreme comments about peaceful climate activists over the last few months, particularly around the time of the Colo camp raid. Will you now apologise for inciting acts of vigilante violence against peaceful climate activists that has resulted in threats of violence, verbal assault, and has seen peaceful citizens being violently rammed by an accelerating vehicle?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The answer is, no, I am not going to apologise, and I'll say that over and over again. The way in which you tell me that these protestors done it in a peaceful manner is a load of hogwash at the end of the day because these people actually have no regard for people's lives. The activities we saw at Colo were reflective of Blockade Australia's contempt on people's lives. We saw on the Hunter rail line where they would put cars that had been disused onto that line. These people were not a part of a peaceful protest. They are economic vandals. They impacted on people's daily activities. People could have potentially seen not only a freight train derail but a passenger train derail, and you're telling me that they're peaceful protestors.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Correct.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Far from it. So you're saying it's okay for—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** No, the questions are from me to you.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, you did, you said they're peaceful, and they are not peaceful. They are not peaceful. They are putting cars on railway tracks—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You have said that already.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —and what they are doing is actually potentially seeing a train derail with passengers and to see people's lives being killed.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Speaking of derail, I see you're trying to derail my line of questioning.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, you're actually talking about Blockade Australia. I'll tell you what they are.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** If you could perhaps respond to my questions.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Then they string themselves to poles. They glue themselves to the road.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Minister, this is estimates. I ask you questions; you respond in a direct way.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm answering your question. You just don't like my answer. You asked it. You told me they were peaceful protestors. They are nothing but economic vandals. They are environmental vandals.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So you don't apologise for inciting violence against peaceful protestors?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** What do you think about that when they're environment vandals? They're walking down the streets of Sydney and they're throwing garbage bins out.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** The biggest environmental vandal here is your Government, Minister.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** They're throwing garbage bins on the street.



**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** They're throwing crates, pulling signs down—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I raised a point of order.

**The CHAIR:** A point of order has been taken.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** The point of order is that this is estimates.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Thank you for reminding me.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** This is our opportunity to hold you accountable for your actions, Minister—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** And I'm making the point.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** —and it is my right as a member of this Committee to ask questions and bring you back.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's my right to answer it by not referring to them as "peaceful" because I don't think they are.

**The CHAIR:** Continue.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I'll continue. Minister, was it you that ordered the surveillance at that camp?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** First of all, let me just point out two things. First, it is a police operation and I don't get involved in police operational matters. However, you do know that we did make some changes to the legislation, which I was actually a part of with the Minister for Transport in relation to bringing in two years' jail and up to \$22,000 in fines for those people that are going to be blocking our roads and our rail network and the activities that they undertook.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So back to the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's a police operation.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Are you aware, Minister, that there was a deliberate attempt to spy on these peaceful protestors at their camp in order to try and create some sort of ancillary offence to the new protest laws—aiding and abetting and that sort of thing?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said, it's a police operation, and I might actually ask in a moment the police commissioner to also speak in relation to it. But also, when we're talking about community safety and when we're talking about police taking actions that are required, I back them in. I back them in 100 per cent because this was not a peaceful protest. These were not people playing circus tricks on somebody's property.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** They were hanging out drinking tea, Minister.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** These were people that had an intention to actually clearly cause damage and economic vandalism across this State.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Drinking tea.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** And you're backing them in.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** For sitting around drinking tea.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Let's put it on the record that you're backing in economic vandals and environmental vandals.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Again, the only environmental vandal here is your Government, Minister.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No. Hang on. No, sorry.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Do you believe, Minister, that excessive use of force was used yesterday on peaceful university students at Doltone House—sprayed in the face with capsicum spray?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll back our police in because there are measures that they have to undertake from time to time, whether it's searching an individual because they are concerned that they may be carrying an item or a weapon. And why are they doing this? Also to keep the community safe, and it's also about community safety.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Have you seen the video footage of that capsicum spray event?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have not seen that particular incident, but I'll tell you—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So, regardless, you back in the police regardless of anything.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I back the police in—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So there's never—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —because you don't seem to back in the police when they actually do the work that they are doing to protect the community from people that are actually putting people's lives at risk.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So you're saying that there is no case where the New South Wales police might use excessive force. You back them in regardless.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, there is a process available for people who wish to complain about the police as well. There is a process available for any member of the public if they wish to as well, which would be investigated, and there is a process available there for those individuals.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Over 10 people have been stopped and searched around Sydney this week under the excuse of an RBT, to then be asked if they're involved in protest activity, which was a targeted event. Are you aware of that? What's your view on that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Do you know what, you can actually apply to have a protest if you want to do it legally. You can actually apply to have a protest.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We could have a debate about the nature of protest and State-sanctioned protests and how we are now more draconian than Russia, but the question was, do you think it's fair for 10 people in just one week—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I think it's fair that our police keep our community safe and continue to be supported in the actions that they undertake, and that's what I'll continue to do.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Minister, I want to ask you about the marked increase in drink spiking at licensed venues since we came out of COVID. Are you concerned about that and what have you been doing to address it?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I am concerned about that, but I might also ask the commissioner just to respond in relation to that one because I know there was an incident up north recently as well.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** With respect, I will be coming back this afternoon to ask lots of questions of you, Commissioner. Minister, are you also aware of an increasing prevalence of needle spiking in New South Wales where young women are being spiked with needles in clubs by men?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Whether it's a spike or not, I think it's actually appalling any of these activities occur, whether it's one or whether it's an increase, and it's unacceptable.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Absolutely, I agree. Were you aware of it already?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I was aware of some spiking of drinks, yes, in a particular area.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is it something you've discussed with the Police Force?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It will be something with police but it will also be with publicans as well and obviously through liquor accords doing work in those areas as well so we have a whole-of-community education program to be delivered.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Why are police delaying the co-location pilot of DV specialist workers in police stations under the WDV CAS co-location project, given that funding was delayed but has now been provided?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** First of all, let me just point out to you that it was only a month or two ago that I actually announced, with the commissioner, an additional 550 police to be rolled out. As part of that 550 additional police, one of our focuses was actually on specialist squads but it also had a focus on domestic violence—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sorry, my question was in relation to the WDV CAS co-location.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —and it had a focus on supporting those that may have been involved in supporting those that were victims of crime.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** With respect, it doesn't sound like you understand what the WDV CAS co-location project is.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Well, we can actually provide more information to you this afternoon. The commissioner will definitely do that.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I'm sure. I'll come back to you. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I've just got a couple of hand-ups for you. One relates to the results of an order for papers, an SO 52, and the other one is excerpts from the Coroner's report in relation to the Edwards inquest. The first is the briefing for the commissioner, document 11, returned from an order for papers, as I just mentioned. The second document is excerpts from the New South Wales Coroner's inquest report into the deaths of John, Jack and Jennifer Edwards. The briefing for the commissioner was prepared by the Firearms Registry—and I believe it was by Georgina Gold—in July 2018, for the then New South Wales commissioner, Mr Fuller. It refers to firearms licence applications for Mr John Edwards.

The briefing states that the applications were reviewed by the probity team at the Firearms Registry who conducted the criminal names index, national names index, intelligence holding and a thorough review of the COPS profile—and I underlined that—to identify if there was any legislative impediment to Edwards obtaining either licence. I then refer you to paragraph 436 of the Coroner's report that states:

I am satisfied that Registry staff did have access to adequate information, because it is not disputed that they could have reviewed the COPS holdings in relation to John, which revealed an "obvious" pattern of domestic violence incidents. However, those COPS holdings were not reviewed. I am satisfied that the "unduly narrow" process followed by Registry staff in adjudicating the Commissioner's Permits led to a failure to review and take into account that information. This was a significant failure, and was inconsistent with the terms of the Act.

The other paragraphs 440, 441, 447, 448 and 530 also affirm that the police holdings on Edwards were not reviewed by the Firearms Registry. Do you acknowledge there is a contradiction between the briefing to the commissioner and paragraph 436 of the Coroner's report?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I've only just received it from Mr Larson, so how about we provide a comment back—we'll take it on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Well, it's pretty straightforward. I mean, there it is in black and white.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I know that through the Edwards case there was the coronial inquest—

**The CHAIR:** It's in black and white and the excerpts are in front of you, Minister. The statements can't both be right, can they? Both statements can't be right. I mean, someone has got to be lying. Someone either lied to the Coroner or they lied to the commissioner. What happened?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Okay. I might just ask Mr Hudson if he has any information to share.

**DAVID HUDSON:** Thank you, sir. I didn't have the Firearms Registry at that time, but my recollection from the inquest was that Edwards had multiple records under the central names index. I would assume—and I'm only assuming—that Georgina Gold's report is tailored to the checking of one record under Edwards' profile. There were a number of others, where domestic violence offences were disclosed, and that was a failure in the system. We have since addressed that through the decision-making tool. But my recollection—the conflict in those two pieces of advice, I imagine, goes back to having multiple records on the Computerised Operational Policing System.

**The CHAIR:** The Coroner actually does say—it was in part of the quote—that the investigation of Mr Edwards at the time was "unduly narrow". So are you saying that he was in COPS under multiple aliases, or was it always "Edwards" and the review simply wasn't wide enough?

**DAVID HUDSON:** My recollection is, without the records in front of me, that the review was not wide enough. I think that was questioned at the coronial, from memory.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, can you commit to a public independent investigation into this contradiction between these statements, and once and for all let's put this to bed properly? Someone, somewhere, has to be punished for what went on. I have not seen anyone publicly blamed. I have seen no-one punished, other than a continual process of tightening of firearms laws in New South Wales and law-abiding citizens who own firearms being subjected to these controls. Yet no-one within the registry or elsewhere in relation to firearms matters has been held to account for what's been going on or what did happen. How does that work?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll just make the point that you've just tabled a significant number of documents, and I want to review these in more detail before determining what is to take place next.

**The CHAIR:** Will you take on notice to come back to me in relation to that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, we can do that.

**The CHAIR:** You will? Thank you. Should we get a result from that, would you be prepared to refer the Edwards case officer to the Director of Public Prosecutions?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** First of all, I don't want to pre-empt anything. First of all, I need to review the documents that you've provided. Once I've done that, then I'll actually determine what actions may be appropriate to be taken.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Another hand-up I've got for you is an email to Inspector Bousfield on 23 June 2022—hand-up 5. Deputy Premier, the *Firearms Registry Decision Making Guidelines* which were published in August 2019 were scheduled to be reviewed in August 2020. Did that review ever take place?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'd have to ask Mr Hudson or Mr Whyte.

**The CHAIR:** Maybe Mr Whyte knows?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** It's my understanding it has been done, sir.

**The CHAIR:** It has been done. Okay, thank you. Was the error on page 21 of the guidelines regarding *Ward v Commissioner of Police* [2000], which my office brought to the attention of the assistant commissioner's office on 23 June 2022, ever corrected?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm aware of the Ward case. I'm not aware of what the error is; I haven't seen it.

**The CHAIR:** If you have a look at the email, that's where we outline what the problem is. The guidelines do need to be fixed. Can you come back to me and inform me whether they have or they have not—and if they have not, why?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Yes, I'll take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Regarding mandatory participation for pistol licence holders, Minister, are you aware of the global shortage of centre-fire pistol ammunition and that this is affecting pistol licence holders from completing their mandatory participation requirements?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll get Mr Whyte to answer that, Mr Borsak.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Yes, it's something that's come to our notice, sir. In line with all the other firearms regulators around the country, as yet there's been no blanket suspension of mandatory shoots in relation to availability of the ammunition or the circumstances. However, we are looking at that on a case-by-case basis and, obviously, we will work with those people that are impacted by that, like we did with those people that were impacted by floods and other issues beyond their control, about lengthening or loosening the time frames around mandatory shoots.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, when you say case by case, you're talking about individual licensees or clubs?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** It would be something that I would probably suggest be more on a club's proposal that they come to us about.

**The CHAIR:** Would you accept a proposal from a club to consider?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Certainly, if there are genuine grounds and genuine reasons that they can't access it—certainly would.

**The CHAIR:** What we're talking about is a shortage of ammunition and, as you're aware, they have to attend six times at least every year.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Absolutely aware of that, and that obviously is an issue we are canvassing at the moment through the firearms consultative committee.

**The CHAIR:** Would you allow centre-fire attendance obligations to be completed with rimfire or air pistols rather than centre-fire?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Sir, my considerations would be put to the commissioner for acceptance. But all of that, on a genuine reason basis, we would have a look at, for sure.

**The CHAIR:** You would be prepared to take submissions from pistol clubs along those lines?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks very much.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Minister, in 2019 the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission did a report into the management of the Child Protection Register under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act and found there had been over 700 errors in its administration, including wrongfully putting people on the register,

subjecting them to intrusive searches by police. But, equally concerning, people should have been on the registry that weren't—sex offenders left to roam in the community, reoffending on at least one occasion. Despite the clear charter for reform set out in that report, no legislation was brought forward. A supplementary LECC report in 2021 stated:

... unless the problems with the statutory framework set out in the *Operation Tusket Final Report* are adequately addressed ... it is inevitable that errors will continue to [be] made in the administration of the Register ...

Several years have gone by now, and the Attorney General told estimates in March and again last week that the ball was in your court and that it was a matter for police to bring forward legislation. In fact, he had refused to act on the LECC recommendation to refer the matter to the Law Reform Commission because it was best left in the hands of police. Why hasn't your Government acted to fix the register?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Thank you for the question, and there's a couple of factors that I'd like to raise in relation to your particular question. Obviously you are right that Operation Tusket was undertaken, and the commission's investigation was done into the New South Wales Child Protection Register. You are right: It did identify a number of problems with the register. It also identified that there had been a number of incorrect decisions that had been made previously by the NSW Police Force.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** At least 700 in that first report; we don't know how many more have occurred since.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I also want to point out there were 11 recommendations. The 11 recommendations were aimed at remedying the problems that have been identified in that particular area, and obviously around some of the errors that have been found to have occurred in the past through that particular supplementary report that you referred to. I do want to put on the record, though, that the supplementary report also concluded that the NSW Police Force has either fully implemented or is in the process of implementing all of the recommendations that can be implemented by the NSW Police Force.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** The administrative ones, yes. In particular, it recognised the work of Deputy Commissioner Hudson.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Let me finish. These included making sure that the Child Protection Register has adequate resources, including dedicated legal support, upgrades to electronic systems and sending out further letters to persons affected by errors in the register. Despite this, I do note that there are some other improvements that need to be made. I understand that it is quite complex, and I also will continue to work very closely with the AG to ensure that this is resolved.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You've been the Minister now for 10 months.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Eight months.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Well, who's counting? What work have you done to bring forward legislation to fix the clearly identified problems that have been on the public record since 2019?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Since becoming the Minister, I've escalated this as a priority. The Act is actually being reviewed. We are also working closely with the Department of Communities and Justice to consider these complex issues, which actually involves quite a number of stakeholders. As I said, we want to resolve it as quickly and practically as possible.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** On Monday of last week, I think you said at a press conference that you would speak to the Attorney General about this matter. Have you had a conversation with him?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Can you refer to the press conference? I'm unaware of that press conference, but could you refer me to where it was and what I actually said?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I wasn't there; I was here in budget estimates with the Attorney General.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Oh, here we go.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** But you said you would have a conversation with him. Have you had a conversation with him?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm not sure what press conference you're referring to.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Okay, forget the press conference. Did you have a conversation with the Attorney General in the last week about fixing the child offenders register?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This is a matter that's already been escalated to not only the Attorney General, where I'm wanting to have it resolved, but also working with the Department of Communities and Justice as well.



**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You mentioned a review of the Act. Has the review been completed?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The review is continuing because obviously, as you are aware, it is complex, it does involve a number of factors and it does include a comprehensive amount of work around it. We are continuing to work through that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Who's conducting the review?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Police will have the lead on that, but there are other agencies involved.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What are the terms of reference? Can you table them?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll point out that we can provide that information to you a bit later as to what we're looking at, but they're actually not terms of reference. It is actually following the recommendations that have been put forward by the commission in relation to the child offenders register list, and that is what we are considering. There don't need to be terms of reference, because there are factors that were highlighted that we are working through.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Okay, so no terms of reference?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As you're aware, the register is a confidential database.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I know what it is.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is; that's right.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I'm just talking about the terms of reference for reviewing the Act.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. I think if you go and read the commission's recommendations—where there were 11 recommendations that were put forward—as you can see, systems have been put in place to ensure that police measures have been improved, and data reporting. That information has been changed.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Deputy Premier, I acknowledge that the Police Force and Deputy Commissioner Hudson have done a lot of work to address the recommendations made by the LECC, but it is clear from both reports that there are legislative defects. With all the resources available to the Police Force, the police service, and the New South Wales Government, why has it taken three years and you still have not brought legislation to Parliament to address those clearly identified problems? When will you actually bring legislation?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said to you, the Act is being reviewed, and I've made this a high priority of mine since I became the police Minister.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When will the review be completed?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We'll do it properly and, as I said, it is complex and actually—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When did it commence?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Are you going to let me finish?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I'm asking the questions, and you've answered that question. I'm asking now: When did it commence?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This is a review of the Act and, as you are aware, it does cut across other authorities as well. We'll continue to do that, and I certainly look forward to resolving it as quickly as possible, as well, with the other agencies and authorities and the AG.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When did the review commence?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's been undergoing now for a little while. It has been going for a number of months now.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Can the commissioner shed any light, or Deputy Commissioner Hudson? Do we know when the review commenced? I'm happy for it to be taken on notice.

**DAVID HUDSON:** It's shortly after the report was tabled, or the supplementary report.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** The supplementary report in 2021 or 2022?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I think initial consultation with other agencies commenced after the first report and then escalated after the supplementary report and after a number of meetings we held with the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Minister, can you give a commitment to this inquiry that legislation will be presented to Parliament to fix these defects before the end of this Parliament?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** What I can give you is the commitment that I've already said—that it is a high priority of mine, and I'll be certainly looking to try and ensure that it goes to Cabinet as quickly as possible to be able to do exactly that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** So no commitment.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's your words.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Indeed, but you haven't contradicted them by giving me a time frame.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's your words.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** We've got five sitting weeks left; it's taken three years.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, that's your words.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** More delay. You didn't fix unexplained wealth laws, and now there's delay on this.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Actually, we are fixing unexplained wealth laws—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Well, we'll see.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —and I look forward to you backing it in.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Let's come to the special commission.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I look forward to that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Let's come to the ice inquiry. The Attorney-General said he had spent hundreds of hours working to get progress on the recommendations. The commissioner, Dan Howard, SC, is distraught by the fact that no-one in the Government has met with him to discuss the contents of the report. The inquiry took 14 months, but it's now been 30 months since that report was provided. Since you've been police Minister, have you spoken with or made arrangements to speak with Dr Howard?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Why not?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I haven't spoken with Mr Howard in relation to this, but I also will tell you right now that ice is an absolute scourge on our society. I make the point that it's horrific and it can actually be a very highly addictive drug. I can tell you that the NSW Police Force are actually doing everything they can to actually prevent people from using it. For anyone to think that it's even safe to try ice just once is completely mistaken. I think when you see the efforts of our police—you've only got to see the media in the last week or so, where there's been over 1.8 tonnes of ice that has actually been discovered, which was actually sitting in marble slate slabs and also in a Bentley.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Deputy Premier, Dr Howard—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** So it's about trying to make sure that we deal with ice and it doesn't actually end up out there on our streets. That's exactly what our police are doing to ensure that that does not happen.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Sure, but Dr Howard was tasked with and did a comprehensive review and made many recommendations.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** He had 109 recommendations, yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Five of them were instantly rejected by the Government. You were pretty quick off the mark there. Have you read the inquiry report?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have read it, yes. There are a number of recommendations that actually apply to NSW Health. There's a number of recommendations that apply, obviously, to the Attorney, and there's also a number that apply to police as well.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** How many are your responsibility to develop responses for the Government on?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Just off the top of my head now, it might be around about—there are a number that cross over, but there are a number that are specific to us. Obviously there are discussions around a diversion

scheme. If there's a diversion scheme, then I'm quite strong that it would actually need to be strongly resourced. We also know that some of our relevance for police has been around the use of drug detection dogs, around music festivals and other measures to detect illicit drug supply as well. Also in the report there were recommendations around strip searches, and the New South Wales police issue operational guidelines around that. They're some of the recommendations that have been identified as part of the report that actually do completely reflect on police activities.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** How many have you developed responses for and provided to DPC?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We've provided a response to those ones that are relevant to police.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When were those responses provided?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** They've been provided—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Can you take that on notice?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We can take it on notice. But, as I said, we've provided a response to those questions. The report was actually commissioned by the Premier at the time as well.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Sure, and I accept that. It was commissioned to deflect or defuse a pretty hot issue at the time.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on, we need to be very careful—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** The issue is now you've had the report for 30 months—two and a half years. When will you respond?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** When you look at ice in some of those communities, let's not forget—where I've travelled around the State, where I've seen ice being used in those communities, I've seen families turned upside down, I've seen communities turned upside down. I've seen people that have had cars stolen because people have been on ice. I've seen people who have actually had their houses broken into. I've seen people stealing from their own family members because of the impacts of ice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Deputy Premier, none of that is in dispute—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What is in dispute is the fact that you haven't acted.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's also about making sure—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Two and a half years on, the Government has not produced a response. Can you tell us when you will?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —support and resources are there to continue to support those communities. If you ask me, too, what action has been taken, we have actually taken action in this space already. We've got a \$7.5 million boost to drug and treatment services in Dubbo. That's going to establish a purpose-built facility for withdrawal management and residential rehabilitation. There's an investment of \$27.9 million—and that's also going to take place over four years—that's going to go towards the expansion of the Drug Court in Dubbo, which is already in Sydney, Parramatta and Toronto. It also has proven to be more effective at driving down crime, and intensive rehab, and it provides more bang for your buck when dealing with those members of the community who have actually come in contact with ice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** It's not in dispute, the terrible scourge of ice. In fact, many people came forward in the inquiry to tell their horrific stories. But Dr Howard just cannot believe it's taken two and a half years for your Government to produce a response. You've had his report, his blueprint, and you've heard the evidence. With respect, the issues are terrible but not new. When will your Government produce a response to the ice inquiry? The Premier said it will be "soon". What is "soon"?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm keen to move forward and I'm certainly—I'm keen to move forward on this. As I've said, if there was a simple solution in relation to this particular matter, it would've been done overnight. But it is complex and it is a matter that does require a fairly significant, well-thought-out response in relation to it. But, as I said, there are parts of it that we have already undertaken, as police.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Just to be clear, all those parts of the recommendations made by Dr Howard that fall within your ministerial responsibility, you have produced your piece of work in response to those? You've done the responses and you've sent them off to whoever is coordinating the Government response. Is that correct?



**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said to you, it's about trying to ensure that we—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** No, that's my question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Well, hang on.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Have you sent off all of your material? That's my question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You can't ask the question and give the answer to yourself.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** No, I'm asking you the question. You're not answering.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm the one doing the answering; you're asking the questions. Remember that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Yes, I have asked you the question. Please respond.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The answer is our police know the best form of action is for police to actually stop ice from getting into our communities As I said—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** With respect, that's not the answer.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said to you—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** In terms of the legislative responses that are your responsibility—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —I'd like to see it resolved as quickly as possible.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Have you done the work?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said to you—

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** Is this the first point of order since I went out?

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes, it is. I was just waiting for you to come back.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We waited for you.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Chair, I'm very polite.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** It's just about giving the Deputy Premier the chance to answer the questions.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** If only he would.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Otherwise, the constant talking over will see us descend into places we don't want to go.

**The CHAIR:** I uphold the point of order.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Deputy Premier, my very clear question is: Have you done all the work required within Government to respond to those parts of the ice report that are your ministerial responsibility to respond to? Yes or no?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have put forward my responses from a police perspective, yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Do you know when the Government response will be finalised?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You said that the Premier said "soon", so I'll be guided by what the Premier said.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Is "soon" before the election?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I don't know. You have to—the Premier has said "soon" and obviously—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What do you know, as Minister for Police? You must know when there'll be a Government response.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. I know that there was also talk about limiting strip searches. That was part of it. Obviously, police are guided by a legislative framework. There are guidelines around ensuring that people's privacy is maintained. But again I make the point that there are strip searches that are undertaken for legitimate reasons to ensure that people in some cases are not carrying weapons, not carrying knives, not carrying guns, not carrying drugs as well. Those measures will continue to be enforced. That is something that the New

South Wales police continue to do today, whether or not the inquiry recommendation is there or not. So we will continue in that manner.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** That's a very confused response.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If you're confused, I'm sorry you don't understand.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Are you saying that therefore you're going to reject the recommendations of the ice inquiry?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Pardon? Say your question again.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I didn't mention strip searches; you did.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You asked me about recommendations from the ice inquiry—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I was just asking about when you would complete the recommendations.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —so I'm just talking about a particular recommendation, as there were 109 recommendations, as I said to you, that were part of the ice inquiry.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** You've had two and a half years and you haven't done any legislative responses. Will the Government be bringing forward legislation to implement any recommendations to the ice inquiry in the remaining five or six sitting weeks this year, to your knowledge?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** My understanding would be yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you have a time frame for that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** He said, "before the end of the year", so I said, "yes".

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But you said on the unexplained wealth that it would be in September.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Sorry, hang on. That's because I am in charge of that one as well. I've got the carriage of that particular bill coming to the Parliament. This one's being led by the AG and, obviously, Health. Therefore, I'll have input into it, and I'll certainly be ensuring that police matters are put forward in relation to the ice inquiry.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Has the legislation been drafted?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's still a matter in Cabinet.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** It's still an active discussion in Cabinet?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's a matter of a discussion in Cabinet, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But you are anticipating that there will be a legislative response before the end of the year, is that correct?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's in Cabinet, and I can't pre-empt what Cabinet discussions are going to entail.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I think our time's about to run out, Deputy Premier. I just wanted to ask you—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I've just got an answer to your Mark43 as well.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That would be great.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is actually a police operation. It's actually a live issue as well. But I might just get the police commissioner just to respond to that, since you asked that previously.

**KAREN WEBB:** Termination was issued and served on 8 July. As to the other questions, it'd be inappropriate for me to comment because there's court proceedings afoot.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** On 8 July this year?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Who initiated the court proceedings? Was it police? Or was it the company that terminated?

**KAREN WEBB:** It's probably better that I don't say at this stage because I think there's proceedings on both sides. It's live.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Good morning, Minister. I just wanted to turn to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's report on strip searches in 2020. Are you aware of that report and the recommendations contained therein?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm aware of some of the report, yes.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Have the recommendations in that report been implemented by the New South Wales police?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There is a very strong framework and a set of guidelines around police when strip searches are conducted. I need to make the point that police do not search people just for the sake of it or just for fun. Searches can actually uncover very serious offences. They could be, potentially, putting the safety of someone else in jeopardy. They could also go at the heart of hurting our community. The majority of these searches, as I've already said through a number of questions today, are for weapons, they're for drugs and they're for other illegal items. Let's not forget that strip searches are designed to ensure the safety of people, the community, our police and the safety of the person as well that they are actually searching. So—

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Minister, in relation to the serious issues that were raised during the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's inquiry into strip searches, has there been any action on any of the recommendations? You've come here today, you're talking about the importance of strip-searching. That's your view. But the LECC found that, in fact, what is—they were particularly concerned by the apparent lack of knowledge of some police officers about requirements for a lawful strip search. What's happened in that regard? The LECC found that some of your officers do not understand the law as it pertains to strip searches. What's been done in that regard?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Before I hand over to the commissioner as well, I just want to say that there's actually a strong test in place. As I said, searches are only conducted where police reasonably suspect the search is necessary and where they believe there is a seriousness or an urgency of the circumstances that they are being confronted with—

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** But that's not what the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission has found, Minister, and that is the question I am asking you this morning—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. I want to be clear. I will continue to again and again—

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission has found that some of your police officers don't understand the law in relation to strip searches. What are you doing about that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I don't think some of The Greens understand the law about what a legal and an illegal protest is as well. So I think that's actually a bit of a problem as well for The Greens, because they don't understand the difference there.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Answer my question, Minister, about the very serious issues raised by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll now go to the commissioner as well.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Hopefully the commissioner can answer that question. Thank you.

**KAREN WEBB:** Thank you. As you point out, the LECC made 25 recommendations, with 22 of those directed to the NSW Police Force. Three were to Parliament. Those directed to police were largely about the changes needed for our SOPs, standard operating procedures, training guidance and documents et cetera, as well as compliance audits on searches, especially where they relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. So we've made a number of changes and improved the information available to officers and the education around that and the recording and the auditing of those.

In light of the work that we had done, the former Minister resolved to defer any amendment to LEPPRA, pending the results of the work and to be evaluated subsequent to our increase in safeguards. We also have the sponsorship of a police powers committee, under a deputy commissioner, that reviews these types of matter and the use of different powers, including this part of LEPPRA and other parts of LEPPRA, to ensure that we actually improve in the education and the tools available to officers so they understand their laws and refresh where they need to be.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Thank you. Minister, what's being done about the fact that amongst those that were stripsearched—there was an article about the 4½ thousand strip searches that have been carried out in New South Wales during the pandemic and that 18 per cent of those were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

people. What's being done to make sure that you're very confident that your officers aren't racially profiling people who they choose to stripsearch?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As it's a police operation, I will still go to the commissioner for a response.

**KAREN WEBB:** Similar to my previous answer. The LEpra requires that we meet certain obligations about forming a reasonable suspicion et cetera. Those things are the things that are—the additional education and the supervisors et cetera audit and check the events that officers put in to make sure that they're complying with those. If there's certainly complaints—that officers haven't used their powers appropriately—then there's certain avenues to raise those issues. But certainly the law is not set to racially profile anyone and the intent and the suspicion that the officers use is applied in the circumstances.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Minister, tomorrow's the first day of spring and we'll be coming into—

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Hear, hear!

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Hear, hear! Exactly. We will be coming into music festival season pretty soon. What are you doing to ensure that music festivals this summer—of course, we'll also have World Pride coming to Sydney in February and March. What are you doing to ensure that the police presence is not heavy-handed and that LECC's recommendations around strip searches, particularly that they are not necessary at music festivals simply because of an association or perceived association with drug use—what are you doing to ensure that the police presence is not over the top at these music festivals and World Pride?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** First of all let me point out that if there is a music festival that needs to take place, obviously, they as the organisers will need to actually comply, like any major event that takes place. They will need to actually ensure that they have a plan talking about, potentially, the number of participants, where it's going to be located. It might also then be working as to how many police will obviously be a part of that particular event. It will vary from event to another. But I'll make no apology for ensuring that a police presence is there for music festivals or other major events that are held around this State because at the end of the day a lot of these events are for young people, a lot of these events are for families. People want to go there, they want to attend, they want to feel safe. Obviously we'll continue to work with organisers in ensuring that there is a safe plan put in place to ensure that that occurs.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Have you accepted recommendation 10 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's report into strip searches? It states:

The Person Search Manual and other NSWPF policies regarding strip searches should explicitly prohibit police from touching a person's breasts, genitals or buttocks during a strip search.

Have you at least accepted that recommendation and made that policy?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Again it's a police operation and I'll go to our commissioner for a response.

**KAREN WEBB:** The standard operating procedures have been made more explicit around what's possible and not possible, to exclude those things.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** So that is excluded. So all police now know that that is off limits; they are not allowed to do that; that is against the law.

**KAREN WEBB:** Exactly.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Is that what you're saying?

**KAREN WEBB:** The SOPs, the training, other tools, supervision et cetera, to make it clear, those things are off limits.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** One of the other recommendations from LECC specifically was around record keeping of every strip search that police felt they needed to do. Has that been implemented?

**KAREN WEBB:** That's part of the improvement to the standard operating procedures, an increase in supervision at particularly events and dance festivals etcetera, where there's a dedicated supervisor to ensure that those things are done.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** For example, these 4,500 strip searches that were carried out in New South Wales during the pandemic, are there records on every single one of those in terms of why they were necessary?

**KAREN WEBB:** There would be because it requires a COP's entry, which creates the record and the justification of why it was undertaken. In what year are you referring, so I can refer to that? Was it 2019-20?

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** This was strip searches between July 2020 and May 2022, much of it during lockdown—well, during those lockdown periods.

**KAREN WEBB:** The numbers have gone down, of course, from where they were in 2017-2018 et cetera, so they are lower numbers.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** But, 4,500. Gosh!

**KAREN WEBB:** This is a community of eight million people.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Field. Do you want to turn your camera on?

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** I will, Chair. Thank you, Deputy Premier. Can I just confirm that you can hear me okay?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, just.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Loud and clear.

**The CHAIR:** Loud and clear.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** He wants you to turn your microphone off.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Yes, otherwise I'm sure most of this will make Facebook later Minister, so speak clearly. Deputy Premier, thank you for tolerating me from Webex today. I'm interested in your response with regards to the unexplained wealth in the legislation that you're proposing. If you're so concerned about money laundering and organised crime in New South Wales, do you support moving to cashless gaming in New South Wales poker machines in pubs and clubs?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That will be another part of the Act that's actually not within my privy at the end of the day. But what I will point out is I am very concerned about unexplained wealth. I'm very concerned about those criminal networks that are actually in the sale of drugs, and a lot of it is by drugs and money. I want to ensure that we take away that wealth from those individuals. That's why we're going to be introducing some very strong legislation around onus of proof for those individuals that may be found to have cash on them in any way to ensure that they have the ways of explaining it to us as to how it's been legally acquired. There's going to be some very strong terms.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Deputy Premier, I'm happy to wait until we see the legislation, which I know we haven't seen.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You can't ask me about casinos when it's a completely different bill then.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Let's be clear. You'd be aware, no doubt, that there was a joint investigation involving New South Wales police and also the Crime Commission, Liquor & Gaming NSW last year. In particular, it was related to the COVID reopening of New South Wales clubs and pubs and anti-money laundering investigations conducted at that time. Are you aware of that investigation?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I am aware of that investigation that took place, yes.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** It found just in the period between October and November 2021 that approximately \$5.5 million in suspected money laundering occurred at 178 venues—that's clubs and pubs in New South Wales. That's a pretty extraordinary level of money laundering going on. Have you been briefed on the findings of that investigation?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Not briefed, but I have actually had information in relation to it. I do want to point out, Mr Field, that when we are talking about pubs and clubs—and I have had this conversation with you in my previous role—that there are a lot of great pubs and clubs out there that are actually critical to our communities. When you have a look at what pubs and clubs have done, if you look at those times of disasters and natural disasters that have occurred in those areas, where do people go to? They go to the pub and club. These are venues that actually provide sponsors—

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Including organised criminals laundering money.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. Some of these are pretty important because it might be the only organisation in a community that actually allows for large gatherings. It might be the evacuation centre in some of those communities. So when you're talking about pubs and clubs as a whole, I think it's actually a little bit offensive to a lot of the good organisations out there that are working tirelessly and providing support back into their local communities. Now, your question is—

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** It sounds to me, Deputy Premier, that what you're saying is that if financial viability of clubs and pubs relies on money laundering that should be allowed to continue? Is that what you're saying?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It sounds like that is the quote given from Justin Field today, so I'm going to publish that this afternoon as your quote that you have now provided. That was not what I was saying. I want to make that very clear to you. I'm really offended that you're actually making that statement yourself. I'd also point out that the—

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** There were 178 instances identified just in that investigation. I understand they were referred to police. Have there been any arrests related to those instances?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The other thing is, too, you asked me about money laundering, so obviously there is an inquiry underway as well, right now, into money laundering that is being undertaken by the Crime Commission and I'm certainly not going to pre-empt the outcomes of that.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Sorry, there were 178 venues identified. I understand they were reported to police. There were referrals to the police. Have there been any arrests associated with that investigation and those referrals?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's a police operation and, again, I will go to the Commissioner of Police to respond.

**KAREN WEBB:** I will take that on notice, Mr Field.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Thank you very much. Deputy Premier, I'd like to ask you now about your position on the Warragamba Dam raising proposal. What is the National Party's position on that proposal?

**The CHAIR:** More dams.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, we want more dams. We haven't built a dam in this State for over 30 years. I'm a strong believer that we need to build more dams. Obviously there's been a lot of commentary in relation to Warragamba Dam about raising the wall there, around flood mitigation. But I also know that, importantly, there are dams like Dungowan Dam that I'd like to see invested in as well.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Let's keep it focused on the one I asked about.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. And also Wyangala Dam. These are important dam projects that are about providing water security into those communities. At the end of the day, we have to build more dams in this State. As the National Party leader and as a National Party policy, we believe in that and we'll continue to back that in.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Your predecessor, with regards to Warragamba Dam, said there are options and the other alternative would be to leave the water levels at a lower level and maybe consider desalination mark 2. There are other solutions. He seemed to be not as supportive as you. Has the National Party position changed?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm not really sure what your question is, but let me just point out again—

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Has the National Party position on Warragamba Dam changed?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on, you've just said there were options. We know that the report that was being done in relation to Warragamba Dam was actually looking at various options. Raising Warragamba Dam wall is probably the best way to protect those residents in western Sydney from floods. I certainly know that that is an important topic for those communities. For someone who's been out to those communities and has actually seen those areas that have not only been flooded on one occasion but on several occasions, we need to be thinking about a number of factors in relation to the future development of areas, but we also need to be looking at ways in which we can protect those residents that actually live within the western Sydney area itself.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Are you saying it's the best way? That's not what the flood inquiry report said, though.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I said we need to look at the best way to protect the residents in western Sydney. That's what I said. So, just to be clear and clarify that with you.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Thank you. I want to ask you now about the program for redundancies at Blue Ridge Hardwoods on the south coast. I've asked you about this on notice recently. You've come back to me to say it's not a matter for you, it's a matter for the Minister for Agriculture. But in the March 2021 budget estimates, questions about the Blue Ridge Hardwoods payments were made on notice—which agency is responsible for implementing the program and the clear answer was the Department of Regional NSW. It described how much



money had been paid at that date. Can you advise how many \$150,000 payments have been made to former Blue Ridge Hardwoods workers at this point?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** First of all, let me just point out to you that, whilst you may have looked at the budget estimates in May 2021, there's actually been a change of Acts. That occurred at the end of this year in relation to ministerial responsibilities and portfolios that have been given. So obviously in relation to that matter, it may have been an area that sat under the previous Deputy Premier, but it now sits with the responsibility of another Minister in relation to that. Obviously for me, jobs in the regions is something important to me. Whilst it may not necessarily sit in my portfolio, redundancies but also employment and securing of employment in those communities is important.

But also, when you have a look at the timber industry in some of those communities, they could be the lifeblood of those areas. There are many people that are employed within those areas, within those regions and we want to make sure that, if they are going to be retrained or they are going to go into other fields of employment, we are giving them an opportunity through Regional NSW, in assisting in some of those packages of support, to be able to do so. But, as I do point out, I know this is something that is being driven and something that is made aware to the Minister responsible as well.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Deputy Premier, I understand that. But I've asked this question of Agriculture as well in the more recent budget estimates.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I am just letting you know.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** They say it's a responsibility for the Department of Regional NSW. We go round and round in circles. Blue Ridge Hardwoods has reopened as South Coast Timber. I understand at least 51 individuals were paid \$150,000 redundancies. There are 30 individuals now working at the reopened site—or I think it just transitioned. Were any of the workers that were paid redundancies re-employed at South Coast Timber?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I don't know the 131 workers that you're talking about. We'd have to take it on notice.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Were there any restrictions on the redundancy payments that prevented workers from being re-employed at the site?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm sure there would have been guidelines around that, but I'm happy to provide that to you.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** So you will take that on notice about the guidelines?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes and, if so, we'll provide it this afternoon. We might be able to give—we can get it this afternoon and if it's from the other Minister's department we'll provide it this afternoon to you as well.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, today the National Cabinet is considering a decrease in the COVID isolation requirements from seven days to five days. Are you able to tell us over the last month how many infringement notices were issued for people breaching their COVID isolation?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** First of all, obviously the National Cabinet today is having that conversation and we have State leaders from right across this country that are coming together to discuss that, having a national rule around it. Because it's operational, I will go to the police commissioner to see if she has that information here today.

**KAREN WEBB:** No, I don't have the statistics in front of me.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are you able to give it to us for the month for the last, say, four months—just the number of notices that have been issued?

**KAREN WEBB:** If I can get it before the end of today, I will.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That would be fantastic.

**KAREN WEBB:** Otherwise I'll provide it on notice

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That would be great. Thank you, commissioner. Can you just give us a sense of how many resources—obviously, during the lockdowns last year there would have been a lot of police resources that were focused on that. How many police resources at the moment have been focused on that?

**KAREN WEBB:** Currently?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, on breaching of COVID isolation.

**KAREN WEBB:** There's no dedicated resource. It'd be just in the duties that officers undertake in their normal course of duties.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is it just mainly responding to complaints?

**KAREN WEBB:** It would be. That was the case last year and there was an increased number of complaints, including to Crime Stoppers, but in the current environment there are very few, as I understand it.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I understand. Minister, at the last election the Liberals and The Nationals promised to deliver 1,500 extra police. Is that correct?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That is correct. We backed the blue as part of the campaign, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many police have been recruited since the last election?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We've actually announced the rollout now of the whole 1,500. It was only in July the commissioner and myself announced the rollout of the additional—well, the remaining 550 police officers. This was actually putting a focus on specialist squads, so raptor squads. It was also putting a focus on domestic violence. It was also about more support for those who are victims of crime. As part of this, we also had rural crime investigators as part of that 550. We're seeing officers that are going to be deployed in metro and regional areas. I know that, having travelled around the State and speaking to superintendents at each of those locations, some of them are already in the process of advertising to be able to bring specialists into their local area where they see that there's actually a demand or a need. If they've got a gap, they're now going out to advertise for what may be required in there. It could be an inspector. It could be a detective. It could be someone in domestic violence. So there's a whole range—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, can we just break down those numbers? There were reports in May that there were 950 new police. These 550 that have been announced, they will be specialist police? They are not new police on the ground?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, sorry. What we actually said was part of the 550, there are some specialist squads that they are going to belong to as well. This has been done in very close association not only with the NSW Police Force—I will put on the record that we've worked very closely with the Police Association as to determining where these numbers go and determining exactly what these positions are. They have been fully—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, we're going to get to where they go in a minute.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The Police Association have been fully supportive—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I obviously support you working closely with the Police Association—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The Police Association have been fully supportive of where they have gone.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But I just am trying to get a clear understanding of what are the raw numbers. How many new police have been recruited since the last election, Deputy Premier?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I think the commissioner has got some numbers there, but we made a commitment of 1,500. That commitment is honoured. As part of that rollout next year, we'll be up over 18,000 men and women in blue who are actually part of the NSW Police Force. Now, if you're looking at a—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, if you don't have a raw figure for me, I'm happy to go to the commissioner.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, sorry—well, hang on. I'm actually answering your question.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Well, no. I'm asking you how many new—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** At any point in time it changes—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —police have been recruited?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —when there are people who are retiring. There are people who leave. It is always going to fluctuate.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, I'm asking you how many new police have been recruited?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I told you, we have—well, new is 1,500. But then, also, I've been able to go down to Goulburn. We've had the attestation ceremonies each year. Let me just point out that two weeks ago the



commissioner and Mr Hudson—and Mr Whyte, I think, was there as well—and we were able to see the next class—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And I understand that there were 154.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —of 154.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Out of that 154, almost half of them were actually going out into the regions—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —so as they started their career as well

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, I'm going to ask you about the breakdown of those shortly. But I'm interested to know: How many new police have been recruited since the election in March 2019?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You're asking me about our election commitment of the 1,500?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** No.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** We're asking how many have you actually recruited?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I'm asking you how many new police. If you don't know the answer, just say, "I don't know."

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, I actually am telling you about our commitment that has been given. Obviously as part of it we can provide that with the commissioner—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You can filibuster all you like, Deputy Premier. I'm asking for a raw figure. How many new police?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Well, I can provide that. I'll get the commissioner to provide that to you as well.

**KAREN WEBB:** Since 2018—I've got them by year but we've recruited 4½ thousand probationary constables. That's to make up for the new positions created and attrition.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you give us the breakdown by year? So 2018?

**KAREN WEBB:** So 2018 was 737; 2019 was 1,006; 2020 was 1,000; 2021 was 1,216; and January to August this year, 749 to date.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** They are new police who have completed their training at Goulburn?

**KAREN WEBB:** New probationary constables, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So they've completed their training?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So 1,006 in 2019?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And 1,000 in 2020?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And 1,216 in 2021?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And 749 in 2022 so far?

**KAREN WEBB:** That's correct.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Of the \$95.9 million that's allocated for the recruitment of those 550 additional police, how is that money going to be spent?

**KAREN WEBB:** That money only came online from 1 July this year. So the 550 will be recruited during this financial year.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many tranches are you going to be recruiting them over?

**KAREN WEBB:** Five.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And they will be separate, training at the Goulburn academy?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Great. On 27 June 2022 there were 17,667 sworn operational officers. Can you tell us how many are there today?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will get that for you. Sorry, what date are you saying?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** On 27 June—the figures I've got here—there were 17,667. Can you tell us how many at today's date of 31 August?

**KAREN WEBB:** I've only got them up until the end of July, which is 17,525. But it's obviously a sore tooth and it moves from time to time, day to day.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** How many were there in about March of 2019? How many fully sworn officers?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will have to see if I can get that before the end of today or on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** If you could provide it before the end of today, that would be very helpful for us. Thank you. Deputy Premier, of the police that have been recruited this year—the 749—where have they been sent to?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Well, we probably can, if you want me to go through them all now. I'm sure someone's got a spreadsheet. I'm happy to go through every one of them for you. We can do a breakdown. It might be of regions, but we can do that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes. If you've got them now, that would be useful.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If you think that's the best way of spending police resources, to actually do this, then that's your prerogative.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, Deputy Premier, I do think it's very important that we know where the new police are going.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on. I put that out every time, when there's even an attestation. There is a release that comes out indicating exactly where those police officers are going to different commands across the State. This information has already been made publicly available. The point I also make is—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, in the interests of time, perhaps you can just give us the breakdown of the 154 that just graduated.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We can do that because we've already got that for you. We can provide that pretty well straightaway.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Thank you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And you can provide us with the other ones on notice if that's okay.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You asked for the 154.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I asked for 154 and you suggested that the others you'd prefer to take on notice. I'm comfortable with that.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We can provide the 154. We'll give you the answer this afternoon for the 154.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent. And you'll take the other one on notice?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If you think that's the best way of spending police resources.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, I get to ask the questions here, and you get to provide the answers.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'm just saying that if you think that's the best way for police, to be sitting down doing paperwork for that question, that's fine.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You said that you just issue media releases, so it should be just as simple as pressing print on the computer.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We've got it all there, but we can—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Has each police district received an officer to monitor the Child Protection Register?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's operational. I'll have to ask you to speak to the commissioner.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, that's correct.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thanks very much. Has each police district received a specialist elder abuse officer?

**KAREN WEBB:** No. We have 12 elder abuse officers at the moment, and I have commissioned a review of those positions. I have had a meeting subsequently, last week, with the commissioner for elder abuse and people with disabilities to discuss the needs around that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The Ageing and Disability Commissioner?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Which police districts don't currently have an elder abuse officer?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice. There's 12 out of the 58 that do.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You said you were doing a review. What's the time frame for the review?

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't know that I've got an actual date, but certainly I don't expect it to take long.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. If you can just tell us on notice what the plans are, then, for that review? How many people are currently on the recruitment waiting list?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will have to take that on notice, but I can say that we're undertaking a recruitment campaign at the moment. We know from the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency that all the jurisdictions are suffering some recruitment issues at the moment. Some of their research indicates that, obviously, there's a competitive labour market at the moment. Any recruitment lag that we've got in New South Wales at the moment is not unique to New South Wales alone.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You just gave me the figures for the new police that have been recruited. Do you have a similar time frame for police who have left through retirement or resignation?

**KAREN WEBB:** That can change week to week, our attrition rate and other things. But, of course, we've got normal attrition through the organisation, plus the funded Optional Disengagement Scheme that has seen an increase in disengagement for this period of time.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Commissioner, do you have those figures—I'm really just interested in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022—for the officers who have left the force?

**KAREN WEBB:** Not by year—I don't have that. Sorry, 2019 was 3.6 per cent and 2020—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you have a total—

**KAREN WEBB:** Actual? Not a hard number, no. I can get those to you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** All right. Why don't you give me the percentages now, and then maybe this afternoon we can get the raw numbers.

**KAREN WEBB:** Sure. The year 2020 was 4 per cent, 2021 was 4.4 per cent and 2022 was 6.8 per cent—or 5.7 per cent if optional disengagement is excluded from those numbers.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thank you very much. Do you have, in the last four years, the number of people who have received an acceptance offer to the academy but not taken it up?

**KAREN WEBB:** I have to take that one on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure. If you can again give us the breakdown for the years 2019 to 2022, that would be great.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, I will provide that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you ask for reasons if they don't accept the offer?

**KAREN WEBB:** Not every applicant, but we have gone back to some percentage to just canvass why they've not followed through. Not that it's a recent phenomenon, but there's been quite a percentage that don't follow through. They do the first component of an online program but don't necessarily transition into the next component. There's some various reasons for that. But it's not a qualitative or in-depth research piece of paper on that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you do any analysis of those, or can you provide us with some more information on notice?

**KAREN WEBB:** We may be able to. As I said, it's not an empirical piece of data.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** It's been reported that the training costs about \$17,000. Is that accurate?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'm informed it's about that amount of money, and most applicants do get or can apply for a scholarship to assist them in their studies. It's a similar scheme to any other higher education scheme, like a HECS debt or something like that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What proportion of people can get those scholarships?

**KAREN WEBB:** I understand that all that make an application get those.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have you got a percentage figure or a raw figure?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, sure. If you can, again, give us for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 what the raw number is or the percentage. Is it true that New South Wales is the only Australian jurisdiction that police officers face that kind of up-front cost?

**KAREN WEBB:** I can't confirm or deny that, really, because I think each jurisdiction has different recruitment models. I couldn't compare us to another jurisdiction in terms of how we recruit. Certainly, one of the recommendations out of the royal commission back in 1996 or 1997 was that we needed to increase the professionalism of police officers. It was very strongly encouraged that we went to an academic blend as a mitigator for some of those corruption issues that happened back in the late 1990s—or discovered in the 1990s.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you tell me how prospective applicants are told about the scholarship that they can apply for?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'd have to take all that detail on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Of course, that's fine. Obviously, a \$17,000 up-front fee is a pretty large disincentive, so I'm just interested how that's being communicated. Was it true that a prospective training class was cancelled earlier this year?

**KAREN WEBB:** I think I spoke about this at last estimates. Traditionally we'd have three classes per annum. The executive approved a six-class model to smooth out the training regime to make it easier on the impost of officers already in the force. We supplement the training officers with officers from the field. We did that to smooth out that impost on commands, sending officers down to help in the training. Then we moved back to a five-course model, simply—you know, sore tooth—to meet the demand for the additional officers but also to reduce the impact on the field.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** There was 154 that graduated this time. How many graduated from the previous one?

**KAREN WEBB:** I think it was in the two hundreds, but I don't have the exact number.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is it usually in the two hundreds?

**KAREN WEBB:** We aim for, say, 250 in a class. There will be attrition throughout the training for various reasons—for not meeting academic standard or professional qualification et cetera. There'd be various reasons. We aim for a class of 200.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Deputy Premier, just before our time with you runs out, will the Government commit to fully funding additional sworn positions in the NSW Police Force who are responsible for local emergency management service delivery, at a minimum, in line with the recommendations made by the New South Wales independent flood inquiry?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** They won't be part of the 1,500, I'll make that clear. They're not part of the 1,500, so they would have—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** No, this is post-election.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, they would not be a part of the 1,500. They would have to be resourced differently. Obviously, there's work around responding to that report. I know that the commissioner has a very strong involvement in relation to talking with other agencies. As one of the recommendations, it does speak around having a fifth deputy commissioner of police. Obviously, with that does come resourcing. There would be the need for additional officers to be employed in that space.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** And you can't give the commitment here today that you will guarantee that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Sorry, I'll actually say there will be additional resources in that space to be able to assist police taking up that function.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** How many?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That's still to be determined. That's where the commissioner is working with other agencies to look at how the operation is going to work and how the fifth deputy is going to work. Obviously, it's a permanent position, so that work is still being undertaken to determine exactly what numbers are required to actually fulfil and undertake that particular role.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When will that work be finalised, do you think?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The commissioner is—

**KAREN WEBB:** DPC is leading the project, so we will work with DPC on that piece of work.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** This year? Next year?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have made the point that we will need it done sooner rather than later. It will take some time to stand it up properly as well, but we need to set some very clear expectations and time frames around how that's going to work. We still need to make sure, if there are emergency or natural disasters that we see between now and even the end of the year, that we still ensure that mechanisms are in place to be able to deal with that as well. There is a significant amount of work that needs to be undertaken.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, our time is about to expire. I just want one last question—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have got the 154 for you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent. I just want to ask one last question before my time expires. The Government stopped publishing data about the authorised strength of the police in 2017. Given that you're happy to provide all of this information to us today, will you commit to publishing that data?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Police already provide significant data available for—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The specific thing about the authorised strength—historically, it had always been published, and then your Government stopped publishing it abruptly in 2017.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll continue, as Minister, to—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Will you commit to providing that publicly?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'll continue to provide significant information to the public in relation to the operations of the police.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Why won't you say how many police are actually on the beat?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If I could just finish, I'll give you the 154, if you're ready. Central Metropolitan Region, 27: Eastern Beaches, six; Eastern Suburbs, one; Inner West, four; Kings Cross, two; Leichhardt, two; South Sydney, four; St George, one; Surry Hills, two; Sutherland Shire, three; and Sydney City, two. North West Metropolitan Region, 33: Blacktown, three; Hawkesbury, two; Ku-ring-gai, two; Mount Druitt, three; Nepean, two; North Shore, four; Northern Beaches, nine; Parramatta, three; Ryde, three; and The Hills, two. South West Metropolitan Region, 25: Auburn, three; Bankstown, one; Burwood, two; Camden, two; Campbelltown City, two; Campsie, four; Cumberland, four; Fairfield City, five; and Liverpool City, two.

Northern Region, 18: Brisbane Water, four; Lake Macquarie, two; Mid North Coast, two; Newcastle City, four; Port Stephens-Hunter, two; Tweed-Byron, two; and Tuggerah Lakes, two. Southern Region, 24: Lake



Illawarra, three; Monaro, three; Murray River, three; Murrumbidgee, two; Riverina, four; South Coast, four; and Wollongong, five. Western Region, 27: Barrier, four; Central West, five; Central North, one; Chifley, two; New England, five; Orana-Mid Western, three; and Oxley, seven. The total is 154. The last class—the one previous to the last one of 154—was 201 probationary officers.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Deputy Premier, why will you not publicly release how many actual police—if you're happy to give us those numbers, why won't you tell us—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You asked for them.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I'm asking you now, why won't you give the authorised strength and the actual strength figures of how many police are on the beat in each of those commands?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We continue to provide information relevant to communities about our constables being rolled out and police numbers across the State.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Deputy Premier, do you agree with the NSW Farmers vice-president, Xavier Martin, who said in May, "We need to protect the Liverpool Plains, as it is an iconic food-producing region, from degradation by coal and coal seam gas development"?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have met with NSW Farmers on a number of occasions. I have met with the new president, Mr Xavier Martin, as well. Obviously, we are continuing discussions about where we can improve agriculture and where we can actually ensure that the bush continues to thrive. I continue to have many conversations with Mr Martin.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Are you aware that the CWA of NSW in May this year, at their conference in Sydney, unanimously passed a motion urging your Government to rescind its decision to grant an extension to the petroleum exploration licences Nos 112 and 238 located on the Liverpool Plains?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have met with some members of the CWA in relation to that particular matter that you've raised. I've also made it very clear when we released our *Future of Gas Statement* as well. I need to make it very clear that, whilst we've said there'll be no coalmining that takes place within those areas, there are some PELs that sit over that area. However, I need to make the point that they are petroleum exploration licences. They do not give a green light, and they do not give a guarantee that mining extraction would take place on that particular site. I need to be very clear that there is a difference between having a PEL, but also a difference between believing that there is going to be activity taking place on that. My understanding, and I will get Ms Beattie to confirm this, is that, under the mining regulator, we've had no-one come forward in relation to progressing that. I'll just check with Ms Beattie.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** I'm happy to clarify. The Government renewed four petroleum exploration licences earlier this year, so the titleholder is now able to proceed with exploration. In order to do that, they would need to get the relevant approvals from the Resources Regulator. At this point in time, we haven't seen any requests for that, but we expect that they will be forthcoming.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Deputy Premier, Santos is obviously the relevant holder. Back some years ago, in 2014, Santos agreed that it wouldn't undertake any drilling activities on private land without the voluntary consent of landholders. Would you back in those landholders? Would you support the right for farmers to say no to coal seam gas exploration on their properties?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I would expect Santos—whilst they only have an exploration-only approval, I would expect them to engage very strongly with landholders in those areas. I have made that very clear, even on the public record, especially around times when there are potentially biosecurity threats, that that engagement needs to be strong, and they need to ensure that they are engaging directly with landholders to ensure that they have a level of confidence in relation to any activity that might be taking place. As Ms Beattie has said, there has been nothing come forward at this point in time through the mining regulator, but that would be my expectation: to actually work very closely with landholders.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** When you were making comments not that long ago—this month—about the pipeline, I think you were asked if you would compel landholders to allow the company to access lands for surveys. Would you give landholders who really don't want petroleum exploration activities on their properties—if they came to you and said, "Can you help us? We don't want it on our land; we want to be able to say no", would you support them?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I think we'd have to have a look at each circumstance on its own, but we also know that we have to be looking at future gas supply here in this State as well. When we are talking about energy costs, we also know that gas is going to be a part of that mix. We know that the Federal Government is also supporting

the Narrabri project, and whilst we have Santos that have actually purchased the upper Hunter pipeline again, they would actually be able to come speak with me. I presume they would also be speaking with the energy Minister, who would actually be responsible for the Pipelines Act. But in saying that, we're always willing to talk to landholders, as you know that I did when I was at the latest event at AgQuip.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** You're right. Narrabri gas has got permission. It's got its 850 wells. We're just talking now though about those landholders on the Liverpool Plains where you've expanded the petroleum exploration licences to and the fact that they have been subjected to New South Wales government resource projects now for some 20 years. They've lived under the cloud of that chronic anxiety about trying to protect their farmlands. It's gone on and on, and your predecessor Mr Barilaro said there is no turning back and gave them that guarantee that they would be protected. I'm just talking about those particular landholders on the Liverpool Plains that are now subjected to this new exploration. We're not talking about gas security, because Santos hasn't even started its 850 current wells that it has permission for. I'm just talking about whether you would champion those landholders if they want to say no, and we don't know that's all of them. We suspect it is, because there's been publicity that it's all of them. Would you back them in their right to say no to exploration activities in the event Santos doesn't negotiate with them?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** So just before I go to Ms Beattie I just make the point as well, our *Future of Gas Statement* makes it very clear where gas exploration can occur within New South Wales. I'll also put on the record that this is a government that actually has reduced the number of PELs here in this State. We've reduced PELs by around 77 per cent in total area that has been covered by these petroleum exploration licences in the past. Whilst you're specifically talking about those landholders and that particular area, this is a government that has actually taken away 77 per cent of the PELs here in the State. I might ask Ms Beattie to provide some additional—

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. The Petroleum (Onshore) Act has a land access framework. That really is intended to facilitate discussions between the landholder and the titleholder, where both parties are encouraged to negotiate and need to come to an agreement before activities can occur. That framework sets out opportunities if agreement can't be reached for mediation and arbitration.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. I'm very aware of it. It's more, I've acted for landholders that have been subjected to it and at the end of the day it's just about, really, finding out whether the Government would actually support the right of landholders to say no. But that's okay. I understand we'll rely on the framework.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This Government has actually supported landholders, as I said to you, by reducing PELs by 77 per cent.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** With all respect, Deputy Premier, that's why I'm genuinely asking whether you would back these landholders on the Liverpool Plains who frankly were quite surprised that the PELs were granted. I think they honestly believed that they had seen the end of resource fights on the very fertile farm Liverpool Plains, so thank you. Moving on, I just want to ask some questions about bail compliance checks. We've been contacted by a number of frontline legal organisations that are really concerned about bail compliance checks and particularly in relation to curfew conditions and that there seems to be an increase in these checks happening late at night. Can I just ask, why is this happening and how many are we doing? So maybe just in the last financial year, how many bail compliance checks were conducted where there was no court-ordered enforcement?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I might ask Mr Whyte to answer, if that's okay, seeing as it's more operation—if that's okay, if you know.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I'd take the figures on notice, if that was okay, unless ma'am has them. I'll take those on notice and get them for you.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Okay. With that, can I ask then that those are broken down. We're very interested in how many of those were on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, how many under the age of 18, and, again, how many First Nations people under the age of 18—those categories. I can also provide those questions as supplementary ones if that would help.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** It would. Just for the record, just so you're aware, we are working with the Closing the Gap team around that and we're actively involved in the bail space and the breach of bail and police bail, so we're working together with that team.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** For you, Deputy Premier, do you think if we are committed to that Closing the Gap, focusing on those non-court-enforced bail checks, we just simply wouldn't be doing that at night to the homes of, particularly, First Nations children under the age of 18? Would we be doing those random night-time, quite frightening curfew condition checks?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I think at the end of the day—I'll come back to where I was previously—it's still about ensuring that the community is kept safe. There are, unfortunately, incidences where I can probably explain to you that unfortunately these are young people that we do need to do these checks. It's unfortunate that we have to do that, but Mr Whyte is right. There is a whole-of-government approach when it comes to Closing the Gap, and it is something that we are working on and police are heavily active in this space and heavily involved.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** I will come back after the break and we'll do some more if that's okay. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** To you, Deputy Premier, in relation to exploration in New South Wales, what is the current status for the exploration of uranium in New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** At the moment there is a bit of a pause in relation to exploration for uranium, but I might get Ms Beattie to actually give you an update from her perspective.

**The CHAIR:** Please.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Mr Borsak, uranium mining, as you're probably aware, is currently prohibited in New South Wales.

**The CHAIR:** I'm not talking about uranium mining; uranium exploration is not prohibited.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** That's right. Uranium exploration is allowed but there is currently a mineral allocation area over the whole State, which means that anyone who wants to explore for uranium needs to get ministerial consent.

**The CHAIR:** How many of those consents have been granted since this Government introduced the legislation, I think some nine or 10 years ago?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** At the moment there isn't any active uranium exploration. In 2012, there was previously a ban on exploration. When that ban was lifted, an expression of interest was put out to the market but that didn't lead to any exploration activity.

**The CHAIR:** So really there is nobody actually actively looking for uranium at the moment, even though there is one licence that has been granted for exploration.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** There isn't anyone actively looking. There has been a little bit of discussion and interest around it but at the moment the focus is on critical minerals and we're not—

**The CHAIR:** That was the next part of my question. I was going to talk about rare earths. What is the status with those?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Rare earths are one of the critical minerals, and we see this as a really positive future for the New South Wales mining industry. The New South Wales Government released a Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy at the end of last year. That is a signalling document really to foreign investors that there are opportunities in New South Wales to further develop that industry. We've got a number of advanced projects and they're looking for finance at the moment. Recently in the budget the New South Wales Government also committed to a new critical minerals and high-tech metals fund to support that sector.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Further to that, I'll just make the point that in the budget this year we actually announced \$130 million as well over the next five years in relation to critical minerals. We actually see that this is going to be the next race. We're in a global race right now for critical minerals because these minerals are being used for satellites, they're being used for renewables, they're being used for a whole host of products that are being built. Here in New South Wales we actually want to be the State that's leading the way. We want to make sure that we're actually attracting overseas investment. We've got all the resources here in this State to be able to do that, whether that's things like nickel, cobalt, titanium or zirconium. They're just some of the products that we've got right here in our very own backyard. Already we're seeing a lot of interest in this space. I see that this is also going to be a job generator in regional New South Wales, and not also getting the raw product, also building and creating and manufacturing within the regions as well.

**The CHAIR:** That then leads me to the next thing I was going to ask you about. Are there commercially exploitable volumes of these minerals in the ground or are you still looking to try to assess that?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I've been out west and had a look at a number of companies that are already in this space. It's very early days. Their prospects at the moment in relation to exploration are quite high. So we are talking, you know, some companies that are potentially looking at several hundred people being employed in those areas, and they're actually sending some of their product at the moment overseas, which is getting a lot of interest as well. So I think when you actually speak to investors as well, there is a lot of interest in New South



Wales because of the product that we have right here in the State. I don't know if you, Ms Beattie, want to add any more?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Look, there are three advanced projects in New South Wales and two of those already have received planning approval. And so, as I mentioned before—

**The CHAIR:** Can you elucidate them, please, for me?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Sure. There's the Dubbo project; that is rare-earth elements—zirconium, hafnium and a few other minerals. That has planning approval for 20 years. It's expected to employ 1,000 people during construction and 270 in operation. There's the Sunrise Battery Materials Complex. That's also in the Central West of New South Wales and also has planning approval. It's got an expected employment generation of 1,900 jobs during construction and 350 in operation. And then—

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me, where in the Central West is that?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** It is near—

**REBECCA FOX:** Peak Hill?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** No, Condobolin.

**REBECCA FOX:** Fifield.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Fifield. Yes, it's in Fifield.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Sorry, go on.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** And then there is the Broken Hill Cobalt Project, in Broken Hill. That's got a targeted life of over 20 years as well. That one, they currently have a demonstration plant where they are processing some cobalt and they are looking to get planning approval to expand their operation.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, are there any plans to use any of that grant money to put—or invest, I suppose is the right word—into the production of brown, blue or green hydrogen, regionally, especially since the Government's put so much subsidy money into solar panels and solar farms?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This one is directed more at critical minerals, but there is a fund that would be available for hydrogen. I know that the Minister for Energy, probably about 12 months ago, announced hydrogen and, obviously, that is going to be a leader here in the State. But, obviously, there are investments there that can—well, there is funding there available to coincide and work with investment in this area as well. This is actually a separate fund, so this will be critical minerals, specifically designed for these products that are actually in the ground right now.

**The CHAIR:** You say that there is another fund. Is that one of the funds that you're involved in administering?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, it's not.

**The CHAIR:** No, it's not?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There may be crossovers. I mean, like, specifically for hydrogen, that actually sits with the Minister for Energy. But there may be things, you know, in my particular fund through the Regional Growth Fund. It might be things like Growing Local Economies. So there may be other avenues where investments like this can actually leverage off government support. So I've got Growing Local Economies, which might be where we're seeing jobs created, that might actually go towards putting in some that vital infrastructure that's required as part of the development.

**The CHAIR:** That's right. Obviously, we're seeing a lot of green policy destroying jobs in the bush. What we're now talking about is creating jobs in the bush—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We're creating, and also—

**The CHAIR:** —sustainable, real jobs.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes. Even through our Regional Job Creation Fund, I mean, this particular program, where we've got \$140 million being rolled out and the last round of \$40 million is actually creating another 2,000 jobs. So that program itself is creating around 7,000 jobs directly in regional New South Wales, and it's probably at a time when we're supporting the resurgence of a lot of manufacturing. We're seeing manufacturing coming out into the regions. We're seeing businesses that are expanding. We're seeing businesses that are actually relocating from other States and they're moving into regional New South Wales. So we're seeing a little bit of a

golden era at the moment where, for a long time, some of these communities were crying out for people to move there. They're now seeing jobs being created.

What this actually means is that, even now, young people don't have to pack up and move. In the past, what we've seen is young people have actually believed that they've had to leave town; they've had to go into a metropolitan area to get a highly paid, highly skilled job. No more is that happening. We're finding that where these jobs are being created, people can stay at home. They can continue to live within that local area and they can continue to have a pretty good job, which is not what they've seen previously.

**The CHAIR:** Just to take you back to hydrogen production again for a moment, you're not aware of any hydrogen production projects that are currently on the go that are being funded by the New South Wales Government?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I'd have to take it on notice and actually—

**The CHAIR:** Can you take it on notice?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes. Mr Hanger can provide—

**CHRIS HANGER:** If it might help, there are a number of media releases, including a recent EOI that's been undertaken by the Energy team here in New South Wales. There was \$4 billion of industry interest in potential hydrogen hubs.

**The CHAIR:** Could you take those on notice and send them to me, please?

**CHRIS HANGER:** I'm very happy to do that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Deputy Premier, I just want to ask a couple of questions around Liddell and the workforce there and the transition of that workforce. Have you been involved in any discussions with AGL and Origin regarding their plans for the workers there and the transition?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** No, but my department is heavily involved, obviously, from the point of view that we'll need to ensure that there's a transition. But we'll also need to ensure that there is a workforce within that region as well, because that's going to be critical in relation to securing the economy but also making sure that that area—as part of their changes that they are going to see within that area about what are the jobs of the future. So, what can we create? What can we use the assets for there as well? Can they be utilised for other purposes and other companies and other businesses and other activities? So that is something that we're very heavily engaged in as well.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Does that mean you've allocated some resources within your department to look at workforce planning?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It's part of it. Rather than do it in silos—and I need to make the point, you can't do this in silos—this actually crosses over with a number of government agencies. Obviously, you'll have the Minister for Energy, or the Treasurer, who will be involved in this space as well. There will be, obviously, Regional NSW, and Planning will have a part to play. So this will actually cross over with a number of authorities, a number of departments, a number of agencies in relation to how that's going to look into the future.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** And as a part of this discussion, are you going to look at maybe prioritising some of the displaced workers from Liddell and assisting those workers to be employed elsewhere?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, absolutely. Some of our packages in the past have actually been about retraining the workforce as well, so there may be people who get support to be retrained in other areas. So we want to make sure that we continue to support those people. Just because they've finished up in one profession doesn't mean that they're forgotten. As a government, we've actually done that in the past where we've seen large employers and some communities shut down. So it's making sure that we continue to provide support to those individuals, because we know when you're talking large numbers of people employed in that area it could have a crippling effect on the economy if they were all to disappear overnight. So we've got to do what we can to keep them there locally but retrain them. Where are the gaps? Where are the opportunities that they can look at seeking employment within that region?

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** So when it comes to Liddell and Eraring, basically what you're saying is that the Government is looking at pulling together an industry adjustment package for that particular workforce?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That will be part of it as well. There is still a bit of time in relation to that. But they're industry packages, you know—and, obviously, working with other industries within the area as well,

because at the moment we are seeing that there are skills shortages right across the board. At the moment there is probably—it's not right now, but in the future as well it's about looking at where the gaps might be within that region and working with chambers, working with industry, working with various stakeholders to determine what training, where the gaps are, and can we actually focus on that to help the economy as well, as a whole, within that region.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Okay. In the time that's left, just a quick question around legacy mines in New South Wales. In the 2021 budget, there was \$107 million set aside for legacy mines. It's still a bit short on detail. Can you maybe update us, as we wrap this up, around what's going on with legacy mines in New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I may get Ms Beattie to respond to that one.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Thank you. Yes, there was \$107 million committed over 10 years for the Legacy Mines Program. That was to look at the 20 highest risk sites, both in terms of safety and environmental risk. That program is rolling out. We've got quite a few projects underway on that, obviously slightly impacted last year with COVID and weather. But there is a large program of works underway for that.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I think we might explore that in a bit more detail this afternoon.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Yes, happy to go into more detail this afternoon.

**The CHAIR:** Fifteen seconds left, so we'll call it a day. Thanks very much, Minister, for attending this morning. We've got the Government questions now.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. I think you've acquitted yourself quite well—so well, in fact, that I actually have no further questions for you.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Can I answer that?

**The CHAIR:** No, it's not a question.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** He reckons you went well, but how do you think he went today?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Again, can I answer that one?

**The CHAIR:** I note that you've taken a number of questions on notice. The secretariat will be in contact with you, and we'd like a response within 21 days. We shall resume at 2.00 p.m.

**(The Deputy Premier withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** We will commence the afternoon session with Opposition questions.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I want to come back to the breakdown of the people who are leaving the force. Commissioner, you gave us the percentage figures before lunch: 3.6 per cent in 2019, 4 per cent in 2020, 4.4 per cent in 2021, and 6.8 per cent in 2022 but that can be adjusted to 5.7 per cent. Do you have some raw figures for us?

**KAREN WEBB:** Not yet, I'm just getting those verified.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** No worries. I'm happy for you to take this on notice, but can you give us a breakdown of the seniority of those people who were departing the force?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent.

**KAREN WEBB:** I know from the certificates of service that I sign every morning that there's a diverse range of service, but generally around 20 years of service or more, I find, is the average.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Before they leave?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I'm interested in what rank they've achieved and the period of service as they're leaving. If you can provide us with that by year, that would be quite helpful. Having a quick look at that, 6.8 per cent means the number of people leaving the force has almost doubled in four years. Have you done any analysis of why people are leaving?

**KAREN WEBB:** Not empirical analysis. I could spend half a day talking about the insurance scheme. Whenever there's a suggestion that the MOU might be coming to an end or the insurance scheme might change or end, there's a sharp rise in claims. People want to get in before it ends, but certainly it only takes one rumour and that sort of changes things and speculates. People get nervous about it, unfortunately, because that's not the case. We're in an MOU until the middle of 2024, so it's a stable working environment, certainly.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can I ask you about the scholarships for recruits who are looking to study at the academy at Goulburn? Who actually pays for the scholarship? Is that a government-funded program?

**KAREN WEBB:** The scholarships are on offer through the university and through other adult learning mechanisms, I gather. There's only one up-front fee for the first part of the course. But the \$17,000 part of the program can be a HECS debt, when a probationary constable in their first year of service—and bearing in mind they're still studying in their first year of service—is on \$80,000 starting pay.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When you say there's the \$17,000 up-front fee that can be put onto HECS, what are the other costs that a recruit would be facing?

**KAREN WEBB:** It's just the one-off at the front.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How much is that?

**KAREN WEBB:** It's \$650 up-front for the first—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When you say that there's a scholarship, is that for the \$17,000?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, for the \$17,000.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So the two options that a recruit has are that they either defer it onto HECS or they can apply for a scholarship, is that right?

**KAREN WEBB:** That's right—or, third, they pay it. I'll get those numbers, as I said this morning, about what the uptake percentage is on the scholarships and availability. But bear in mind, as I said before, all the jurisdictions are different in terms of what they're looking for in a recruit, but we're the only Australian jurisdiction that requires academic qualification.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I understand. What is the eligibility for a scholarship? Is it means tested?

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't believe so, but that's something I'll be able to get when I get the question on notice for you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, excellent, and you're going to come back with the numbers of who has received them over those last four years as well.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And if you can give me anything on the application process as well, that would be great.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Does the \$17,000 include accommodation, or is it just for academic?

**KAREN WEBB:** That's for the academic, as I understand it. Let me get that for you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Thank you. Mr Witherdin has been sitting there patiently all day.

**The CHAIR:** He's in my sights as well.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Mr Witherdin, welcome to the hearing. I have a series of questions around the corporation. As I understand it, there's an expression of interest for buybacks, for which I think today is an important date. I think the Premier said that today they would be released.

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, what the Premier said was there'd be an expression of interest for land for development, and that has been launched today—yes, that's correct—called the Resilient Land Program. The details around that are live on the NRRC website.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Do those EOIs look at things like their desire to move? I'm just trying to get a bit of an idea about things that would be considered. Land swap, relocatable-type matters—is all that taken into consideration as a part of this?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** They're two separate things. What's been launched today is around sort of unlocking the supply side for suitable and safe development land, in terms of safe from both flood and bushfire risk. We're getting rolling with that today. In terms of a resilient homes-type program, that's still under design and consideration. There's been a lot of work done there with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority—they're with the Commonwealth NRRRA—around design of a program, but Government are yet to make a decision around funding that.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Are you working closely with the Queensland corporation as well?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes—with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority?

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes.

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, we are.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** They're the authority; you're the corporation.

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, we'll let that go. But they've been around since 2011, on the back of the Grantham floods, so there's been some really good learnings there. They're being very generous with sharing that and also in terms of what they refer to as their Resilient Homes Fund, which they launched a little while ago, which is co-funded with the Commonwealth. We've been working closely with them to ensure consistency in approach. Things that are covered by that would include voluntary purchase for those homes that are really at the very highest risk in terms of flooding—so a hazard to life—house raising in some circumstances and resilient rebuilding, so sort of building back with flood-hardened materials.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Do you have housing programs as part of your remit?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yeah, that's absolutely within our remit. Our focus is around the reconstruction of infrastructure and of housing. I think it's important to note there that in terms of determining the capacity that's required on the supply side, it's not just those places that were destroyed by flood or that may be part of a voluntary purchase program. There were already really tight housing pressures right across the Northern Rivers, so there's a real opportunity to integrate solutions on the supply side, in terms of both low cost and social housing, into what we do. That's why we've got rolling today with that Resilient Land Program.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** When pod villages are being looked at, is that a part of your remit as well?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** No, the pod villages sit under the remit of Resilience NSW. But we're certainly a key partner in working with them on that and I guess with two hats on, both from an NRRC perspective and from a public works perspective, where we sort of provide all the procurement and engineering support for the pod villages. Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I guess the terms of reference for your organisation are pretty much publicly available and well known?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Do you have many locals that are involved? There's an advisory group or an advisory board?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, that's correct. We're set up under the growth centres Act as a chief executive-led corporation and then we've got an advisory board, which isn't a statutory board, but we get the benefit of being able to interact and test our strategies with them. But that's certainly not the start and the end of our consultation and collaboration there with the community. We work closely with the seven LGAs under our remit there.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** It's a big task that's been set, so I'm not in any way—

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** No, I'm certainly not taking it negatively at all.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I'm just trying to get my head around how this is going to work, really. Is North Coast Community Housing included in the initial planning phase for the housing that includes pod villages? I know you said you don't have responsibility, but you must have some sort of role in the pod villages.

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** North Coast Community Housing, they're the operator of a number of the pod villages—Wollongbar being one of those. I certainly met with John McKenna, who is CEO of North Coast Community Housing. I think he actually retires today. It's his last day in the job. He did discuss really the opportunity for getting them at the table earlier in that design process so that we can ensure that the broader aspects supporting those pod communities are considered as part of that. So we've certainly taken that on board.



**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** As you've moved to this role, can I just ask what sort of expertise are you drawing upon? Where are you drawing your expertise to assist you in this rather large task that's been set?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** We've been building a team there in terms of the corporation, many of which are locally based people. I think by Tuesday next week we'll have our full executive there on board. But we look at two of our key executive director roles: both with civil engineering background, with masters degrees, both of which will be located there in the Northern Rivers area. We've got another role, leading economic and industry recovery and Aboriginal engagement—a local there based out of Lismore as well. I've been really pleased with the calibre of people who have wanted to come on and really be part of serving the community there in the long journey of reconstruction.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** You've been working pretty closely with Deputy Commissioner Mal Lanyon?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, very closely with Mal, as part of his role, and also with the team at Resilience NSW as well.

**REBECCA FOX:** Mr Veitch, can I jump in there as well? David's had use of the resources across the whole department as well, so people in Chris Hanger's team who have assisted. I've been running the existing development corporation, so we've shared some of our policies and procedures, and Public Works and soil con, who also sit under David. So we certainly haven't had to wait until we had new employees in the development corporation.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, you're drawing upon whatever resources you can—

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Absolutely. With the Public Works team, we've had a number of resources to get us mobilised. We've worked with a couple of key consultants as well just in really trying to get some rapid progress made in terms of what we're doing.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** This may be a question for both Ms Fox and yourself, Mr Witherdin. As part of this then, how many staff—FTEs—do you now have in the corporation?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Within the corporation, 18 currently. At full capacity, we'll have 36. They'll progressively come on board over—I think probably about the next six weeks we should be getting pretty close.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Are they new employees or are you drawing them from other parts of the public service?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** There's a mix: some from within the public service, some from outside of the public service. We've got some from local government, some from the private sector. The majority, I think, are from within the seven LGAs but some from outside of that as well. The focus has just been about really getting the people with the right skills there on board. But we've had a really excellent response.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I'm glad you said that people from within the seven LGAs are being employed. You might have to take this on notice—maybe you don't—but how many of the 18 that you currently have are actually from within those seven LGAs that have been impacted?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** I would need to take that on notice. I could run through in my head, but I'm happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** If you could take that on notice, that would be good. Commissioner, maybe this is for you. Most of the feedback I've had about the role that Deputy Commissioner Mal Lanyon has played up there has been very positive. How long will he remain in that role? Is he coming back towards—

**KAREN WEBB:** He's back with us. In fact, I'm on leave; I'm only a hologram of myself at the moment. He's acting in my role this week, so certainly in that transition back, well and truly, into the police role.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** He's back already?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That is a precedent. You're officially on leave this week?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** That's very impressive. That role doesn't exist now at all for the Northern Rivers, or it's just all been handed across to—

**KAREN WEBB:** It's a transition, as I understand it. David stood up 1 July, was it?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, we stood up 1 July, as you're aware. The plan was always that as we came in Mal would transition out because his role has been around that short-term recovery. What we're leading is that



ongoing reconstruction, and we're looking at a three- to five-year remit. Although Mal has stepped out of that, I maintain a regular dialogue with Mal, as I know he does with other people across communities there in the Northern Rivers.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** With the buybacks and the relocatables and the house razing, have the dollars that have been attached to that really been determined yet, or are you working your way through the EOIs before you determine just what the envelope size will be from government?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** They're two different streams. In terms of the EOIs for land, that's been launched today because the intention is, let's get a picture of that landscape as quickly as we can. The other parallel stream with that is around what we refer to as a "resilient homes program". We've certainly undertaken detailed analysis around that, based on flood-impacted properties. You'd be aware we've undertaken the flood property assessment program, where we've undertaken detailed assessments of more than 3,200 homes. I think we've got about 5,600 registrations for that program. So we've got very rich information in terms of how those individual homes have been impacted.

We've got all of the flood inundation mapping. Then we've worked through a set of guidelines that are similar there in terms of what QRA have used for their resilient homes program, and then looked at a whole lot of options analysis around that, and also made assumptions there around what the uptake will be in a program. If you look at places that may be eligible for a voluntary purchase program because they are at high risk, we know that not 100 per cent of people will put up their hand to be part of that. So that is really at quite an advanced stage. We've undertaken ongoing collaboration there with the Commonwealth, as co-funder. But government will need to make a decision around what that funding envelope is.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Mr Witherdin, one of the lessons post-bushfires—it's still the case down my way now. Some people still—two years heading onto three—haven't had their homes rebuilt, mainly not because they don't want to but the workforce issues around securing tradespersons, the whole gamut really. This is going to be a really big issue for rebuilding. What's the plan for the Northern Rivers?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** It is a really good question, that fact, because potentially you're looking at up towards maybe a couple of thousand houses that may have to be rebuilt there. We know the capacity within the industry across those seven LGAs pre-flooding is only about 1,500 homes a year. You've got that base capacity and then with this on top of it. That's why within the corporation we set up what we refer to as the infrastructure coordination office. We've got a central point of overview of all of the reconstruction projects across New South Wales government, across those seven LGAs. That gives us a picture of the demands there across the workforce. Then we overlay this on top of it. It will give us the opportunity then to go out, bundle like packages of work with contractors and so on, and we've got a central point of prioritisation. Because even from a State Government perspective the demands there are so enormous. I think we're in the order of about \$3.3 billion worth of work over the next three years. That's without housing.

It was a really tight market before the floods being compounded by this and then even just in terms of the lack of availability of critical worker accommodation. I know, even just from a primary industries point of view, the blueberry farmers haven't been able to get accommodation for temporary workers and so on, and then with this coming over the top of it. So, yes, absolutely within our focus, but it will absolutely take years to get that recovery done just because of the market capacity constraints and because this event affected south-east Queensland significantly as well. Normally, you'd pull labour in from that area as well. But yes, it is a whole cataclysm of different events that really make this particularly challenging. That's why we are set up there for the longer term. It was always said, three to five years. I think it'll certainly be towards the latter.

**REBECCA FOX:** Mr Veitch, sorry. Can I just add one more thing to that? There are some good learnings, I think, from the construction leadership group and the work that Infrastructure NSW has done on the big infrastructure pipeline of work as well and constraints in that market. One of the things that government has learnt over probably the last three or four years is that if we're very clear about the pipeline and we signal very early to industry what that looks like then the industry can plan much better for that as well. That ties in with the work that David was saying in terms of prioritisation. If you're very clear about what you need, that's a very good start.

**RICHARD HARDING:** I'll just tidy up, the number of staff within the seven LGAs. Of the 18, 10 reside within those seven LGAs in the Northern Rivers so far.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Commissioner Webb, if I could come back to these random breath tests, between 21 June and 1 July—that is the dates I've been given—a number of people have been subject to stop and searches

on the pretext of a random breath test or checking their licence but then questioned about their involvement in protest activity. Are you aware of that operation?

**KAREN WEBB:** No, not until you raised it. I'm happy to take that on notice so I can get a more full and comprehensive answer for you.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. Maybe I can table this document with a number of examples of these stop and searches, if that's okay. I can table that so that it's on the record. But, for example, one person was stopped in the vicinity of Addison Road on 27 June, subject to a police search on the basis that police were "trying to prevent violent protest". The police officer took the person's phone and tried to put several passcodes in before giving it back. Is that the sort of thing that you would expect?

**KAREN WEBB:** I've not heard of that. But, as I said, once I get the opportunity to look at those cases in full then I'll be able to provide an answer to those questions on notice.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Does the NSW Police Force use facial recognition technology?

**KAREN WEBB:** We use CCTV that's available at public venues such as transport networks et cetera. We use it for intelligence purposes. We take charge photos and things like that. But recognition itself—I might ask Mr Hudson whether he can add to that.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Just to be clear, what I'm talking about here is where we are scanning, whether it's a crowd, whether it's people in vehicles, and computer technology is basically matching the people it sees with a database and trying to identify who those people are. Is that something the New South Wales police are currently using?

**DAVID HUDSON:** No, it's not, ma'am.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** No? Not at all?

**DAVID HUDSON:** No. The only facial recognition—we have a facial identification unit. If we have an unknown offender, we have a unit that matches that against our charge offender photographs to see if we can identify that offender, but there's nothing live about it.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Are you able to tell me anything about how these people were identified as being potentially involved in protest activity?

**KAREN WEBB:** Are they the ones you were referring to in the earlier question?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Correct.

**KAREN WEBB:** No.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I also understand that between 21 and 28 June 13 people were visited in their homes by police and questioned about their knowledge of upcoming protest activity. For example, a person who lives in the Gosford area was visited by two police officers on 23 June. They have no public connection to Blockade Australia at all. They were asked a number of questions from a typed sheet, including whether they were aware of the upcoming protests. Are you aware of that operation?

**KAREN WEBB:** Not particular circumstances of that, no.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** If I could ask you to come back on notice and let me know who approved that and how those people were identified and, if it wasn't using facial recognition technology, how that was done. The raid on the Colo farm, I understand that that was following a period of surveillance of that farm—is that correct?

**KAREN WEBB:** What I've read on the public record and media reporting, and what I understand of that operation, yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Would it concern you if that surveillance had been put in place in order to create evidence or record evidence of potential aiding and abetting of a protest activity that was yet to occur?

**KAREN WEBB:** It's possible. If it was an investigation that had lines of inquiry to prevent protest activity then that might be the case.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** To your knowledge, were the police officers at the Colo farm in any way scared for their lives in the way that the Minister described them to be to the media?

**KAREN WEBB:** Mr Hudson owns those resources, but certainly what I saw publicly reported and in internal reporting, it appeared that way. But I'll ask Mr Hudson if he has further comment.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is that—sorry, public reporting—

**KAREN WEBB:** As in media reporting and—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** From Minister Toole's comments or from—

**KAREN WEBB:** No. Just media reporting and internal reporting.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Perhaps, just in the limited time, I'll move on then. In terms of the drink spiking issue that I raised earlier, there has been an increase, particularly in the Newcastle area, in drink spiking and needle spiking—

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes. The drink spiking is one issue. We are obviously concerned where there's any increase in that type of behaviour putting women at risk, particularly. It could be men at risk as well. But, equally, the incidents that we had reported to us have been in that Newcastle and lower Hunter area. Some of the spiking is alcohol intoxication, whether that's spiking of extra alcohol or some other drug of some sort. When I've reviewed the matters under report, particularly where there's a co-reporting with some bruising, there wasn't a detection in all cases of any other drug. In some cases, there was codeine and other things. There's been no particular pattern.

There's a pattern in the bruising. That's the one thing that's in common. Intoxication is in common. There's no evidence, necessarily, of needling, although it might have felt like pinching or some other action that's caused bruising in a similar place on the women, not in the same venue but obviously the same geographic region. When the investigators have gone through all the CCTV available at those venues, they haven't been able to identify any offenders. So they very much remain active investigations in the hope that some other form of evidence comes forward. Not all of the victims came forward in a timely manner to allow us to get toxicology, because drugs are out of the system very quickly—alcohol is present for much longer—and presentations for any forensic medical type were not always viable.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So, in the ordinary course, you would expect then for these licensed venues to be providing the CCTV footage?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** And for the police to be using that footage to try and identify the perpetrators?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, and similar to the earlier question, if there's an offender, male or female, not known to us, we try and match against a known offender photo library, for example, or canvass—and often that's one benefit of social media. We use Facebook and other mediums to try and invoke public response, if they identify that person.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I understand that in some cases there's been an incident of drink spiking. The victim has gone to the police that night, that day and then subsequent incidents have occurred at the same venue in the same day, but the police haven't gone to the venue or contacted the venue. Would that be the normal practice or should they be really calling the venue and saying, "There's a drink spiker"?

**KAREN WEBB:** I would think if there's a report to the police where the victim is prepared to make a report that police would follow-up—I'd have to get the specifics of that the matter, but certainly the ones I've reviewed have been followed up. That was where the investigations had landed in terms of when CCTV and any other evidence available hadn't yet identified an offender.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Do the police view this as being their responsibility or is there some element of this also being the responsibility of the licensed venue?

**KAREN WEBB:** Certainly the police will respond because if there's a victim of crime then that's well and truly in our remit. I think all licensed venues have members of the alcohol accord of whatever region they belong to, which police are involved in. So, certainly they all play a part in it. I haven't seen in any recent time licensed venues being uncooperative when police approach them.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Just on the facial recognition, I understand that on the police website it says:

NSW Police Force (NSWPF) uses a range of operational tactics and technologies ... one valuable tool is facial recognition technology ...

**KAREN WEBB:** It's like facial matching, as I said, an unknown photo to a charged photo to compare. It's not AI-type technology. That's live.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay, understood. It's a little bit different to what I'm reading, but that's okay. In the time I have left, can ask you about the WDVCS co-location point?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Why are police delaying the co-location pilot?

**KAREN WEBB:** We're not delaying it. What I'm pleased to say today is that we've been working with the CEO of Legal Aid, Monique Hitter, and WDVCS and in terms of the co-location, we originally proposed five. We're actually going to pilot 14 locations and I can tell you where they will be. They will be up and running before the end of the year: Burwood, Central Coast, Far West, Hunter Valley, Mid Coast, Monaro-Hume, Newcastle, north-west Sydney, Northern Rivers, Oxley, Riverina, south-west Sydney, Sydney, and Western, which captures 73 courts.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sorry, you're saying only at the end of the year will they be up? Now that we've got the funding, this was something that was supposed to happen in February, I believe?

**KAREN WEBB:** I think the funding became available perhaps not until the new financial year.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** That's right, the funding was delayed, but now it's here. I understand everything's ready to go.

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't think it's as easy as turning on the light though when you're talking about co-locating services. I got a letter today, actually. About lunchtime I received a letter from the CEO of Legal Aid indicating that she's looking forward to working with us on that. So we're ready to go.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** It is my first session in this room this afternoon, so good afternoon to you all. Commissioner Webb, have you received a report from the LECC in relation to the matter involving Constable Daniel Keneally?

**KAREN WEBB:** I can't confirm or deny whether I received a report in relation to a specific individual. What I do know is that some matters at LECC are held as private hearings and if that is a matter that could be or may or may not be one of those matters that is a private hearing.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** You haven't received a copy of the report yet then?

**KAREN WEBB:** I can't confirm or deny that because to do so would identify a person.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** What's the current employment status of Constable Keneally?

**KAREN WEBB:** As I understand it, I can't divulge what it is. He's in the workplace but I can't tell what the duties are.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** So, he's in the workplace and he's being paid?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Are you aware of the circumstances involving the allegation about Constable Keneally?

**KAREN WEBB:** From what I've read in media and other reports, yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Do you have confidence in Constable Keneally and his ability to perform a role as a police officer?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will ask Mr Hudson to comment in terms of he owns the Professional Standards Command. As I said, if it's a matter that's a private hearing where LECC may or may not have referred matters to the DPP, then that's certainly a course of action. I understand separately that the matter that relates to Keneally, how it's viewed inside my organisation—he was originally suspended and he's now back in the workplace. That's something that we will have to review subject to what else happens.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I'll re-ask the same question that I just asked: Do you have confidence in Constable Keneally's ability to perform the role as a police officer in New South Wales?

**KAREN WEBB:** Certainly, like I said, the issue of him being suspended predates me. I welcome any resubmission of a report where I can consider that. I haven't had the opportunity to review that in my role as commissioner yet.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I suggest you should review it. I want to tender a document, if I may, Chair, that may assist you. It's a letter by Makinson d'Apice, which are lawyers on behalf of the State Government, that says in it, and I'll provide you with a copy. "The State accepts that Senior Constable Keneally was in error"—this is inter alia; this is not the full letter.

It says, "The State accepts Senior Constable Keneally was in error when he said that you wanted another police officer dead. The State regrets what was said. The State also regrets not having investigated your assertions that you had not threatened the life of another police officer more expeditiously and acknowledges that a more timely investigation would have discovered the audio recordings that you made that contradicted Senior Constable

Keneally's assertions." That letter is dated 25 November 2021. The State knows and the State has admitted that Constable Keneally copped it up. Yet, you're telling us here today that he's still employed and paid for by the New South Wales police. You haven't considered 181D for him like you did for the police officers who simply chose not to have a vaccine?

**KAREN WEBB:** I said I welcome an opportunity to review that matter. As I said, he's been reinstated in the workplace and I welcome from his chain command or through professional standards, an opportunity to review that.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** You do know that LECC's going to table the report in Parliament? That's part of their agreement to us.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** We have someone here who I'll allege—and I don't mind saying it because I'm parliamentary privileged, but the LECC report will show it and the State has already admitted—is a corrupt police officer and he's still serving under your command, being paid. Yet you dismissed 300-odd officers for not having a vaccine. Can you see some discrepancy—

**KAREN WEBB:** Well, it's not 300, but—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Or 290, whatever.

**KAREN WEBB:** They're not the figures I have.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Anyway, let's not argue over the figures. Let's argue over the substance. You're quite happy to sit here and tell us there's nothing to see here?

**KAREN WEBB:** No, that's not what I said.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Well, perhaps commissioner you should re-investigate that matter and revisit it.

**KAREN WEBB:** I've said I welcome an opportunity to review this status.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** We'll move onto something else then. I'll take us onto the mandates. When the last time the force conducted a risk assessment in relation to COVID-19?

**KAREN WEBB:** I can get the specific dates, but we ask and I ask that it gets reviewed regularly, particularly if there's an emerging new variant or some other change to the environment that changes the risk.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Roughly then, when was the last risk assessment done?

**KAREN WEBB:** As I said before close of business today I will get the answer. But it's likely within the last month.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** That'll be appreciated. Given the fact the environment and health advice has changed significantly in recent months, why aren't haven't you, as an organisation, followed the majority of other New South Wales Government departments and removed mandates?

**KAREN WEBB:** Originally—and this predates me as well—the risk assessment in our workplace was conducted based with our police medical officer and WHS HR command and others on the basis of the health advice at the time and mandate was reasonable direction of our offices, unlike a lot of other government agencies that relied on a public health order. We've not relied on the public health order. We were aware—and this is before I joined the executive team—that in other jurisdictions around the world, the NYPD and others, officers had died with COVID. My view is—and remains so today—that if I didn't do something then I would be blamed for their death if that happened in New South Wales. We have a responsibility to keep our community safe and my workforce safe.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I appreciate this, Commissioner, and I don't want to be seen to be stifling your answers, but we're on the clock. The question was why haven't you removed the mandates when other government departments have? I didn't ask anything about the NYPD.

**KAREN WEBB:** No, but it's relative to it.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Why won't you remove the mandates when every other government department has?

**KAREN WEBB:** Because I didn't rely on a mandate that relied on a public health order.



**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** On Wednesday 4 May 2022, in response to a question from the Chair, who said in part, "Is the NSW Police Force intending to remove the vaccine mandates?", you replied in part:

... I would hate to think that a police officer who was unvaccinated passed on corona to my ... mother and led to her death. Certainly, we have a responsibility as officers and as a community.

I want to ask you this question, Commissioner: Can a vaccinated police officer catch, carry and spread COVID-19?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, they can.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Commissioner, I refer you to a statement released on 19 July 2022. I have a copy of it here for you and I'll tender that. The statement released on 19 July 2022 by Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, which says, inter alia:

Australia is experiencing a significant increase in cases of the new BA.4 and BA.5—

and I've highlighted it for you, Commissioner, to make it easier to find—

subvariants of the COVID-19 Omicron strain.

These variants are highly infectious and have an ability to evade the immune protection from either previous infection or vaccine. Although three or four doses of vaccine remain very effective at providing protection against severe disease from BA.4 and BA.5, vaccination alone is not effective at stopping infection or transmission of the virus from person to person.

Having regard to your previous answer that a police officer can catch, carry and spread COVID-19 and taking into account Professor Kelly's statement, why is it then that only unvaccinated police officers pose a threat to your mother? Now, I'm not picking on your mother. You chose that as the example, so I'm not bringing family into it. Why is it then that only unvaccinated officers are of threat when evidence now shows three and four doses don't stop it? So who's the threat to your mother now?

**KAREN WEBB:** The risk assessment and the mitigation of risk assessment—vaccination is one of those things. The others are face masks and using sanitiser and those other things. Our workforce, as you would know, is a workforce where I mobilise staff to do whatever I need them to do based on a particular point in time. So whilst I might have officers that don't work in a front line now, I could and I did—an officer would be moved to the police operations centre and other high-risk environments, quarantine centres et cetera that place risk on themselves being exposed to members of the public coming in on flights and staying in hotel quarantine et cetera and being exposed to and dealing with vulnerable members of our community.

Vaccine was certainly one measure. I note the advice you've provided and we still have a risk assessment that says that we're to use the other methods where we consider it necessary. I've encouraged mask wearing if officers want to wear a mask. They have sanitiser and all those other measures, maintaining physical distance, all of those things, where possible. But it's—as you all know—a contact sport and it's not always possible to have physical distance.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Most certainly. That's not in dispute. But if you consider the mandates are still necessary, why haven't you mandated booster shots three and four?

**KAREN WEBB:** I've encouraged boosters for everyone.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** You've encouraged it but you haven't mandated, though, have you?

**KAREN WEBB:** No

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Why not?

**KAREN WEBB:** The risk assessment at the time, which goes back to August last year, was when Delta was emerging. It was regarded as a very risky variant and the subsequent Omicron and other variants aren't as risky, as we understand it—nonetheless contagious but not as risky to health. So we've been comfortable in our posture that we have the two vaccines plus the other mitigations.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Which we all agree won't stop the spread of the virus.

**KAREN WEBB:** No, but it might make your symptoms less.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We talked a bit about operational strength with the Minister this morning—sorry, authorised strength and actual numbers. I understand that the release of that data is a policy question so I'll leave that to him. But I'm interested in whether the police is looking at moving to a full-time equivalent rather than an operational police officer count. Is that something that you're looking at?

**KAREN WEBB:** Full-time equivalent is the financial way of recording our spend against salary. Then we've got authorised and actual strength. Authorised—I'm authorised to a particular number of officers. And actual



is the number of officers. I guess the calculation part comes in where I'm job-sharing officers et cetera. Really, I could report on all three if I had to.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are you able to provide us with the full-time equivalent on notice?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, that's something I'll discuss with the Minister, but it was certainly something we had done previously. I think it makes sense that we report on authorised versus actual—and FTE if I need to in terms of making sure that I stay within my budget.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** If you can provide us on notice with what the full-time equivalent is and if you've got it for any previous years, that would be quite useful. Obviously, the full-time equivalent would give us a better picture if there's someone on parental leave or leave without pay or a long-term injury—

**KAREN WEBB:** It may not reflect all of those things. It will simply give me a number that's on the books, so to speak. It won't necessarily give their work status. But we can work through that data.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you measure how many police officers are absent on a day? Do you have real time reporting?

**KAREN WEBB:** We do measure absences, vacancies, who's available—as we say colloquially, who's available to strap on a gun when necessary—versus those who aren't able to. It may not be daily. It might be weekly or monthly but certainly we need to monitor that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you map them against a specific region or do you do that against—

**KAREN WEBB:** By commands.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** By command, okay.

**KAREN WEBB:** Certainly frontline commands.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I'm sorry?

**KAREN WEBB:** Certainly frontline commands, like local area commands—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That would make a lot more sense, yes, of course. In terms of that mapping, do you look then at which officers are part-time, which officers are on parental leave or leave without pay or long-term injury or something like that?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'd expect commanders to manage that so that they account for their positions and maximise the use of the positions they've got available to them.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you differentiate between planned absences and unplanned absences—so if someone's on sick leave versus if someone's on annual leave?

**KAREN WEBB:** We can report on that. Internally, certainly, we're always measuring, making sure that people are taking their annual leave in accordance with the award and those requirements as well as how many are absent for either work-related illness or non-work-related illness.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Across your different regions, when you're calculating your authorised strength—and obviously, because we don't have access to that data, it's a bit difficult for us to work it out—is per capita a part of the calculation?

**KAREN WEBB:** No. I know that I was asked that in the last estimates. I mean, that's one measure, but I don't think that's a measure of success necessarily. It'd be interesting to see, if you were to use that rationale, then how many officers would I need and could the State afford them, I suppose.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I'm sorry?

**KAREN WEBB:** It'd be an interesting question about how many would that equal if we were to benchmark ourselves against what some of the other jurisdictions have. But that doesn't necessarily mean that we're performing any worse than them. In fact, I think we're performing much better than in terms of pro rata my numbers and the crime rates going down.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What are the factors that determine the calculation of authorised and operational strength?

**KAREN WEBB:** What I'm funded for.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That's a pretty good way of working it out.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Hello, again. I want to follow up the issue that I was asking about this morning in terms of gang activity. I don't like describing it like that, but I guess that's how I will describe it for the purpose of the questions. Can you give us some information about the number of youth gangs that are active in western Sydney?

**KAREN WEBB:** It's been a matter close to my heart for a long time. I was the operations manager at north-west region many years ago and we had a youth problem in different areas at that time. A youth gang is not necessarily as prescriptive as another gang in terms of they're less organised, their membership is not a necessary membership, they might hang out but does that make them a gang, et cetera. Certainly, youth that hang out together and commit crime is a concern. We've been mounting operations to deal with the youth that congregate, particularly when they're engaged in crime: Strike Force Raider, Maximus, recently it's Strike Force Keller in north-west Sydney, Strike Force Sweetnam that targets young people stealing cars and breaking into houses at night when people are home. There's a whole range of things.

I know you spoke this morning about the issue of postcode wars. I don't like to call it a war because that sort of glamorises it and it's not a glamour issue at all. Certainly, as the operations manager—and that's 10 years ago now—we were dealing with that exact same issue. I think youth, like anyone else, need to belong to something. The problem is that if there's a gap and they feel like the only thing they can belong to is another group that engage in violence, then that's why we invest so heavily with our youth prevention strategies and intervention around PCYCs and all the programs. There's a whole suite of programs. It's not just our youth engagement officers and our youth command officers. There's officers attached to higher patrol, PACs and PDs—all sorts of commands that are actively engaged at PCYCs with these kids just to try and get them a life away from crime.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I accept that the police are working the best they can to deal with this issue. My questions are not a criticism of that. My information about this is that it's a particularly growing issue in recent times post COVID lockdown. You might have better information about that. Perhaps that's the belonging nature of the issue after kids have been in lockdown. I make no judgement about that either. Do you have any information about numbers, though? Numbers of amounts of gangs and numbers of young people that you would say are involved?

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't have numbers of kids in gangs, as I said, because they're too hard to define and it's not structured. What does concern me, and I have spoken about this publicly and on the record, is the number of kids—and adults, for that matter—that carry knives. Kids that turn up to a punch-up with a knife and of course it ends deadly. The number of operations that we've been running for years—Colossus, we've been running through the Police Transport Command since 2012. In one particular year, when I was there, it was 496 knives in a year just off public transport networks. You know, that's more than one a day. Unfortunately, what we're seeing in New South Wales is not unique to New South Wales. It's been seen in Queensland, Victoria and probably other places—but certainly the UK and US—which is a tragedy. We're really working hard with our partner agencies to say, "Well, what else can we do to get kids away from that before they commit crime?"

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Can you give us some information about the age range of the young people involved? My information is that it's getting younger.

**KAREN WEBB:** It does seem to be getting younger. We do see kids of 13, 14. I was the commander at Holroyd in 2007 when the Merrylands High School riot happened. We had 14-year-old boys turn up from one high school to Merrylands High School with a bag full of machetes. It became a lockdown riot situation. Those kids had never come under notice before. They are starting younger—not coming under police notice, but certainly that's a concern. We said this, too: It's not just a law enforcement problem; it is really a societal problem. What else can we do with these kids?

I know, you mentioned this morning, it's a 10-minute video. But it's a 10-minute video that we've done with some sporting identities to try and start a conversation with these kids so they understand that carrying a knife is a crime. It can turn deadly. And other people who have grown up in Mount Druitt and other places have made different choices and have different outcomes. After the launch last week I got word through that there were some kids, after seeing that video, that had actually gone forward to the police there or school counsellors to hand in a knife and say, "Well, I want to do something different." If I can save one kid, then I'm happy.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, I accept that. Again, it's not a criticism. I think you guys are doing a terrific job to engage with these communities. But I think there needs to be a better whole-of-government response to it; that's why I'm raising it. It's also getting more public attention because it has been more extreme in recent months and some young people have died as a result of activity. I put this question yesterday, but there are some young people who are now dead and there are some young people who are facing murder charges as a result of what seems to be this activity.

**KAREN WEBB:** It's just tragic, isn't it?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Do you have any information about how many people, from your perspective? I'm aware of two. Are there any other deaths in relation to this activity?

**KAREN WEBB:** I would have to look and go back, but certainly there's people who have been seriously injured as well. It's not just the deaths that I'm concerned about, but just kids that—

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Do you have numbers about that? You can take it on notice, which is fine.

**KAREN WEBB:** I will take it on notice. Certainly it's a concern to all of us. We will be co-chairing a youth crime task force with government, and I think the first meeting is in October. Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell will be leading that on my behalf.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Who will that involve?

**KAREN WEBB:** Other agencies.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Other agencies that are involved in youth support?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes. Education, Youth Justice, DCJ and others.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Commissioner, how many houses are currently leased for police to live in across New South Wales?

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't know, but all the police housing is now managed by Property NSW. We have care and responsibility for police premises, as in police stations, not the residential premises.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Okay. But can you, on notice, acquire the number of how many—

**KAREN WEBB:** Officers that have police housing?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Yes. Or how many police houses there are—or houses for police?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will take that on notice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** It's often said that police housing is of poorer quality than housing in the same location for other New South Wales public servants, like teachers. Can you tell us how the police directs Property NSW or how Property NSW finds housing for police? Is there a financial limit or a size limit? Is there a selection criteria?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'm sorry, I can't answer you, sir, because I'm not sure. Now that it has been given over to Property NSW, I think that there's certainly an opening up of the market. Housing that should be available to a teacher or a nurse is also available to a police officer. We shouldn't be the poor cousins. Unless we're the lock-up keeper, and then we're required to be right next to the police station.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Okay. But, just to be clear, your service no longer has any role in police housing?

**KAREN WEBB:** No. We talk to them when we're trying to get police into a town that has housing available. If we find that the property is in a standard really not fitting, I know that my assistant commissioner leading that area will talk to Property NSW to have that situation remedied.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What is the assessment criteria to determine whether a police station will be or become a 24-hour station?

**KAREN WEBB:** Often that's about workload, which is then reflective in the resourcing of that area. It depends also on a number of factors—how far to the nearest 24/7 station, et cetera. There will be a range of factors.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Is that reduced to a policy document or do you have a—

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** If you could, that would be great. How many police station upgrades are currently underway?

**KAREN WEBB:** There are a number of new builds as well as upgrades, but I will have to take on notice the specifics of that. There's quite a big investment being made.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Sure, if you could come back to us with some details. When you do, could you also let us know how many of them are on time? And how many are on budget and how many are over budget? Basically, all the metrics about the delivery.

**KAREN WEBB:** Sure. Some have been delivered, some are in progress and then there's some committed for future years.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** But you will know that a project might be assessed as being, say, three years but might have taken two or five.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** It might have come in under budget or over budget. If you could break that down for us, that would be very useful. How are reductions and staffing hours at police stations determined? Is there a criteria?

**KAREN WEBB:** Did you have a particular issue?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** No, I'm just asking about how you approach the issue.

**KAREN WEBB:** Again, to my earlier answer, it's really about the demand for policing services and that the resourcing is reflective of that, would be the general response, and/or the distance to the nearest 24/7 station where there are resources that can respond in time.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** How many police assets are subject to native title claims at the moment?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll take that on notice, but there are quite a few.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When you report back, can you indicate what kind of assets they are? I assume they're police stations?

**KAREN WEBB:** Police stations or police premises, yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What is the average length of time to determine those claims, if you know that?

**KAREN WEBB:** There have been open claims for quite a while in some cases.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Again, when you're reporting back to us about the length of time that they have been open for, can you indicate to us what is the blockage for resolving them? Is there a reason why it's taking a long time?

**KAREN WEBB:** That might be a question for colleagues from the Aboriginal Land Council, perhaps, but I'll give you our response.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Tell us what you know as best you know it. The budget—I think it's *Budget Paper No. 3* on page 5-42—contains \$3.8 million for permanent armoured vehicle capability. How many vehicles are involved in that line item? What is the purpose of the vehicles?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll defer to Mr Hudson, who owns those resources.

**DAVID HUDSON:** My recollection was six, but I would have to confirm that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What is the purpose of the acquisition of the vehicles? What work will they do?

**DAVID HUDSON:** To replace existing vehicles within the tactical operations group and also supplement regional areas so that the country units have access to a vehicle as well, which they currently don't have.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When will they be acquired, Deputy Commissioner?

**DAVID HUDSON:** It's going through a process. The money was allocated, and I think they're going through the procurement process at the moment.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Are they an off-the-shelf purchase or do they need to be purpose built or fitted out?

**DAVID HUDSON:** It depends on what model the procurement process selects. There are some models that are off the shelf in the United States, but there are others that can be bespoke built to suit certain needs. It'll just come down to the procurement process and the money available.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Those six vehicles, are they going to be centrally located and then deployed as needed or will they be allocated to specific regions?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Some will be allocated to regions, and some will be based in Sydney.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Are you able to tell us what regions they're planned to be deployed to?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I think each region gets a vehicle for their State Protection Support Unit personnel to utilise, supplemented by a tactical operations group. If they fly into a particularly dangerous situation, they have that vehicle available.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** If the vehicles do need to be fitted out, will that be done domestically or will that be done at the point of purchase?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Previous fit-outs have been done either, depending upon the provider and the supplier. Some have been fitted out overseas, but others have onshore distribution networks which facilitate that as well. Most usually, however, it's done offshore.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Commissioner, with additional police being recruited, as we heard earlier today, how many of your stations are at their physical capacity, can't take any more people?

**KAREN WEBB:** Some are quite full now. There has certainly been work done in some places to change the floor plan to make it more practical in terms of accommodating more officers et cetera.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Can you tell us how many stations will need minor upgrades and how many will need significant work done to accommodate new staff?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will take that on notice and get back to you on that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Are you able to tell us which stations those are as well, when you take that on notice?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Thank you. How many police stations are currently being refurbished, modified or improved in some way?

**KAREN WEBB:** Sorry, refurbished or?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Modified or improved.

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll bring that back on notice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What period of time remains on the lease of the former Dapto TAFE for the active armed offender facility?

**KAREN WEBB:** I think we're procuring that this year, so I'm not sure that we're still in lease. But I'll try to get that answer before today's over.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Has there been an asset transfer or is that—

**KAREN WEBB:** I think we've purchased it, but I'm not sure whether it's peppercorn rates or it's actually market price.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Can you report back to us on what it is you're able to tell us?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** *Budget Paper No. 3* contains a nearly \$53 million allocation to the regional police station program—that's at page 5-42. Can you tell us which facilities are to receive upgrades or new facilities this year under the program?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll provide that on notice, but there is a list of stations right across—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I assume there would be a list. If you could furnish us with that, that'd be good. How are the facilities to be upgraded decided on? What process did you go through?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to have a look at that. There's obviously state of repair or disrepair et cetera and then a priority process.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Again, is there a set of criteria that you apply?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, and I'll provide that.



**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Is there a similar program for metropolitan police stations?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, there is, and, certainly, also new builds and proposals et cetera. It just depends, on a cost-benefit analysis, whether it's better to renovate and improve it or it needs either a knockdown rebuild or a complete new build somewhere.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** What's the budget allocation for that metropolitan police station program?

**KAREN WEBB:** For this year?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Yes.

**KAREN WEBB:** I will take that on notice. We're currently under construction, or will be shortly. The police officers have decanted to another place—Parramatta, for example, and other places. There is quite a bit of work going on around metropolitan Sydney as well.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When you come back on notice, can you tell us what the budget allocation is for each year to 2027, if you have that information?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Are stations in the Hunter, Central Coast and the Illawarra part of the regional upgrade program? What is regional? I guess that's the question.

**KAREN WEBB:** Outside of metropolitan Sydney, so, yes, they would.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Leichhardt police station has needed to be replaced for over a decade. That was due to be delivered in 2013, but the funding was withdrawn in 2011. I understand that the station continues to suffer rats, white ants, water leaks and mould. Will you commit to a new police station for Leichhardt at any point?

**KAREN WEBB:** As I understand it, Leichhardt Local Area Command is operated out of Glebe police station. It is in a state of disrepair, and it will undergo some renovations. We have made an application in the past. There is a parcel of land within the LAC that we would like to rebuild on or build on.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** So it's a new Leichhardt police station?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes. We weren't able to get those plans through council at that point in time. I'm not sure if there's any updates to that.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Commissioner, how many people are currently subject to the Suspect Target Management Plan?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll just see if I've got that with me. Mr Hudson tells me 834.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** How many identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people?

**DAVID HUDSON:** A very high proportion. I think it's over 50 per cent.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** How many of those are under 18 years of age?

**DAVID HUDSON:** From memory, 79.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Of those 79, how many would identify as First Nations?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I don't have that information.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Would you mind taking that on notice?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I can take—I can work that out.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. How many are under the age of 14?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I don't think we currently have any. We did previously have one. There is a different process in identification and approval for under 14s that have to go through our youth command—the assistant commissioner there—for approval. I don't think we currently have any.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** The one that you do recall, was that under 14-year-old of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander—

**DAVID HUDSON:** I can't recall.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** What's the breakdown in terms of the police area command?



**KAREN WEBB:** How many police area commands?

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Sorry?

**KAREN WEBB:** How many STMPs per area command?

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Yes.

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll take that on notice.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** I have got quite a few questions on the STMPs. I might put those, if that's okay—

**KAREN WEBB:** Sure. Supplementary? Yes.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** I'm very conscious about time. Thank you. It's basically just trying to get a breakdown and a better understanding of what we're doing with the STMPs. Does the NSW Police Force have a policy manual or directive to guide police interactions with people living with disability?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will have to take that on notice whether it's a specific policy around people with a disability or it is a more broader policy around policing vulnerable communities.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. If you could take that on notice, and really if there is a specific policy for people living with disability, whether that can be released as well—if you can take that on notice too.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Mr Witherdin, if I could just ask you a couple of things about how we're progressing with the reconstruction and actually a question possibly for the secretary as well. When will the NRRC transition to the new reconstruction authority—the big thing that's been announced?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, sure, and that's certainly a recommendation of the independent flood inquiry, but there's a project management office within DPC being set up. The first meeting of that working group is tomorrow around that to sort of work through each of those recommendations. To be honest, I don't have a clear answer on that now. But what I can say is certainly the task we've got to do up there in the Northern Rivers is really clear and we'll just continue to get on with that and certainly work in parallel as part of that transition. But we've got a dedicated team there that will be focused on getting on with the job up there. So we don't want to be distracted by that.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** What are you currently working on now in terms of the probable maximum flood height? If I can help cut to it, have we got new modelling since the last two that puts us at 16.5 or 16 or 16.5?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** The flood that happened, I guess there's sort of various conjecture around what that was in terms of its scale, but probably somewhere between a one-in-200 and one-in-500-year event—a very significant event. The CSIRO have been engaged by the Commonwealth through the NRRA to undertake an extensive piece of modelling for the Wilsons-Richmond River catchments. So they commenced that work probably about three or four months ago. The first phase of that work is an aggregation of all the pre-existing flood studies, and then in December they will make some no-regrets recommendations while they're currently building a really sophisticated model of that catchment. They've collected the lidar data, the bathymetry of the river, and then that will be about an 18-month long piece of work there.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** So what are you doing in the interim in terms of the buybacks and what we're planning? You're suggesting that we need to look at the homes most at risk—

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** —which naturally I understand. If we were to just for a moment zoom in on north and south Lismore, say—which as we know was the total catastrophe zone—and we're saying there we were at about 14.6, or all my friends in tinnies saw it at 14.6 let's say, how are we measuring what are those homes most at risk, the ones that we want to help people get out of? What are we suggesting in terms of the level that we're looking at?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** We certainly don't need any more data to support decisions around that. It's very clear in terms of some of those homes there in north and south Lismore and a number of other areas across the Northern Rivers, because let's be clear it's not just about Lismore. There are areas—Coraki, Woodburn, Murwillumbah and so on—that are equally affected. You just have to look at the number of properties that are affected by what you call a 20 per cent annual exceedance probability there, which is a one-in-five-year event, and certainly the ones that are most impacted in north and south Lismore are in that order.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** They're in there anyway.

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** So, with those, when you were saying there's maybe, say, 2,000 homes in terms of a rebuild, is that taking into account most of those north and south houses? Or where are you suggesting they are across the Northern Rivers?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** They're predominantly there but certainly spread right across the Northern Rivers area.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Do you anticipate anyone right now in that north and south area—do you anticipate that they can talk to you and that they're pretty much on the list for a buyback?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** I think you've got to be really careful around creating expectations we can't deliver on at this point. Until we've got funding approved by both the State and Commonwealth governments, all I can talk about is the broad principles of how it might apply, and I would be really reluctant to create an expectation with a home owner there and then not be able to deliver on that.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** If we're talking, say, 2,000 houses in north and south, say—

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** No, that's across—and it's probably in that order across the Northern Rivers, across those seven LGAs so not just in north and south Lismore.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Realistically, we're looking at around about \$450 million, aren't we? If we were to be looking at all those people that were on their roofs, say, and those families and those people going, "Hey, can you please take me to somewhere safer?" and that meant buying out those places, say at the cheapest possible \$300,000, \$250,000 a pop, then that's kind of what we're looking at, isn't it, in terms of funding required to do this job properly within five years?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Across the Northern Rivers, I've got to be honest, I would be hoping for more funding than that to do what needs to be undertaken up there.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** In your mind, what sort of figure have you got to do that kind of job?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** I don't want to commit to that. We're certainly giving advice there to government around a range of options, and I think it's important that in terms of our approach, because we're looking for that co-funding with the Commonwealth, there's some consistency in the approach that Queensland have undertaken as well.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Again, I know I'm focusing on the north and south because, realistically, I still go home and have tears every time I go through there. If every one of those people that are traumatised there want to go, do you then see for that area that we would then be looking at repatriating that in terms of a flood plain—whether it's native veg, natural lands, farmlands, educational lands—and those people are allowed to exit? Is that part of your vision as the CEO of the corporation?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Yes, and that's consistent with the recommendations of the flood inquiry where they look at flood plains as assets for the community. So I think all of those are live and real options, but it's important there that in terms of that vision there we work with the community in terms of establishing that. It's not about the corporation imposing their vision; it's about sort of developing that with the community. But I think, yes, there are some really good options there in terms of riparian zones, biodiversity corridors and so on. But I think, most importantly, it's not about getting people out of that community. It's about providing other opportunities to keep them within the local community as well, and that's why we're looking to stimulate the development of land, I think, in terms of low-cost housing options need to challenge density restrictions and so on as well.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you.

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** Pleasure.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I'll go back to where we finished, Commissioner. Taking into account the issues you have with staffing at the moment and the anecdotal evidence I've received from the recruitment branch in that they're going back to second-tier candidates, if I could use that expression—people that they've knocked back in the past who didn't meet the satisfaction level. They've gone back and now offered them a chance to undergo the training. Will you now reconsider reinstating those officers that you've dismissed simply for not having a vaccine, bearing in mind that they're a standing workforce, they're trained, they're ready to go and would be very cost-effective to the taxpayer of New South Wales?

**KAREN WEBB:** That's true, and I think of those small number—there wasn't 200 or whatever you quoted, but certainly 12—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Sorry to rudely interrupt, could you tell us how many it was?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, I will.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** If you don't have it, take it on notice, that's fine.

**KAREN WEBB:** No, that's alright, I've got it here somewhere. Bear with me. You drew me to the first paragraph, but the rest of that advisory talks about all those other mitigations that I mentioned, which is work from home, you know—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Certainly. But you've dismissed people?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** You have dismissed people from the Police Force, under 181D for misconduct, for not having a vaccine. We're not talking about wearing masks and stuff. This is the crux of what we're getting to.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes. So we've had 50 police officers been terminated, and most of those are coming through the IRC, so we'll have to wait until the outcome of those.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** What about unsworn members?

**KAREN WEBB:** Unsworn, we've had 38. They have also got access to the IRC, as you know, so we'll play that out. But, certainly, the Medical Officer talks about those other mitigations that I spoke about, which is social distancing, wearing masks, working from home. Now, you can't be a police officer working from home; that's just not going to work.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Certainly not.

**KAREN WEBB:** Certainly, that all played into the risk assessment. And to answer your earlier question, our last review of our risk assessment was done on 7 July. So we will continue to review that regularly.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** So, to my question, are you considering reinstating those officers?

**KAREN WEBB:** I haven't yet.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Will you?

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't know.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** When will you know?

**KAREN WEBB:** I don't know.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Okay then.

**KAREN WEBB:** Let's see how it plays out.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** We are on the clock, so we'll move on.

**KAREN WEBB:** Okay.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** So many questions, so little time. What position in the organisation does Paul Pisanos hold?

**KAREN WEBB:** He's the Deputy Commissioner of Corporate Services.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Corporate Services?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Was he the Commander of Professional Responsibilities at some stage?

**KAREN WEBB:** He was.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Therefore, I would assume that he has the highest integrity, is highly ethical, honest and you probably could rely on his word?

**KAREN WEBB:** What are you going to suggest, sir?

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I'm not suggesting anything yet. But I'm asking the questions, not you.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Do you have confidence in Paul Pisanos?

**KAREN WEBB:** I do.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Commissioner, in November 2021, I asked the Minister for Police a number of questions surrounding civil payments awarded against the NSW Police Force. Are you aware of that question that I asked?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Are you aware of the answer that I got?

**KAREN WEBB:** So the answer—the material I have in front of me is that the number of claims is going up and the cost per claim is going down. But what I—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** And the what, sorry?

**KAREN WEBB:** The cost per claim is going down. But what I actually would like to know—and I will provide that on notice—is that my workforce is going up, so what does that look like when I actually compare the numbers of the workforce?

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I'm not worried about that, Commissioner. That's not my question. That's your proposition.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Over the past five financial years, the NSW Police Force has paid out in excess of \$147 million in damages claims, for a total of 1,600-and-something claims. In the last financial year alone, ending June 2021, \$32,972,561 was paid out in civil claims. Are you concerned as commissioner that over the past five years you have paid out \$148 million in civil claims for wrongful actions by police?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, it certainly concerns me. And, certainly, I answered this—you weren't here this morning when I spoke about the—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I was watching upstairs.

**KAREN WEBB:** Okay. So you would have seen my answer?

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Yes, and I like your answer in terms of training and stuff like that—

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, it's important.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** —and that's what we're getting to. What's the main reason for this inordinate amount of damages claims against the NSW Police Force?

**KAREN WEBB:** Well, aside from, you know, if the police officers have done the wrong thing and there are claims against it, but there is a bit of a cottage—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** But they would be an outlier, wouldn't they?

**KAREN WEBB:** Well, I would hope so. But—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I'm certainly not suggesting that the NSW Police Force is full of corrupt officers. In fact, 99.9 per cent of them are good, hardworking decent men and women—

**KAREN WEBB:** Thank you, they are.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** —putting their life on the line every day to protect the citizens of New South Wales. I have no problems with that. My problem comes with the training of these police officers. So I'll put the proposition to you then that you're being sued that much, that sort of goes towards your answer this morning that there's a severe lack of training in terms of police in terms of their powers of arrest, to stop, search and detain, use of physical force, et cetera?

**KAREN WEBB:** LEPRAs, all those things.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Yes, all those things.

**KAREN WEBB:** Certainly, you think about—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** It's an issue though, isn't it?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, I think there's a lot of responsibility on officers—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Certainly, there is. There certainly is.

**KAREN WEBB:** Young officers that—in your day and my day on the truck and on the tools there were less things to contend with. But, certainly, it's getting more—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Yes, well, we were taught properly, though. And I bet you that you and I can recite 352 of the Crimes Act?

**KAREN WEBB:** That's right.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** And I bet you Dave Hudson could as well, still, 40 years later—and 357E of the Crimes Act, notwithstanding that they don't exist anymore. We were taught those for a reason, weren't we?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes. No, that's right.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** So we knew what we could and couldn't do so we didn't impinge on the civil rights of the individuals of New South Wales.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes. But the point I was making—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** This is my concern, Commissioner, where I'm coming from is this. I want our NSW Police Force to be the best there is.

**KAREN WEBB:** So do I.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I'm sure we do. That will only come from proper training. We just heard from Deputy Commissioner Hudson that there are millions and millions of dollars being spent on armoured vehicles, right? I have no problems with that, because that's what they need. But, clearly, if we're spending over \$32 million a year giving money to alleged criminals who have sued us because the police have cocked it up, well then perhaps we should be concentrating on that?

**KAREN WEBB:** Imagine what we could do with that amount of money.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Imagine what you could do.

**KAREN WEBB:** That's right.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** How many more police stations could we have and how many more police officers could we have? So I'm suggesting that the training is severely lacking?

**KAREN WEBB:** Well, I just think—you know, I'm not disagreeing with you. But I'm also suggesting that the life of a police officer has become more and more complex, and the legislation is not 357E anymore or 352.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** It certainly isn't anymore. I know what it is. It's LEPPRA, right?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I know exactly what it is, but it's not that hard to learn and know what's right and what's wrong if you are taught properly in the first place. I'll go one further. As a result of me raising this in Parliament, Natalie O'Brien, a journalist—and I'm sure you know Natalie and her background in relation to the police—at *The Daily Telegraph* ran an article. I have a copy of it here for you if want. In it I said I believe that the lack of appropriate training of officers is the primary cause of all these claims—it goes towards what you said this morning over the strip search and LECC, that you have to go back and retrain officers now to do it—and that police don't know their powers of arrest, stop, search and detain, and the use of physical force et cetera. In that same article, Paul Pisanos is quoted as saying:

There is a myriad of reasons why civil claims are brought against the NSW Police Force, and to suggest that training—or lack thereof—is the cause is incorrect.

Now I have heard you give evidence, on oath, this morning—and perhaps because it is on oath and you take your role seriously, well, you admit that training was an issue over the strip searching. We have some consensus between you and I at the moment that this \$147 million over the past five financial years is a serious issue and we tend to think that it could well be because of a lack of training.

**KAREN WEBB:** As one issue, yes.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** As one issue. But to say "that training—or lack thereof—is the cause is incorrect", do you stand by Pisanos' assertion?

**KAREN WEBB:** Well, I mean, he—you know, what I said is it's—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I asked you do you stand by Pisanos' assertion that training is not part of the issue?

**KAREN WEBB:** Well, I think it maybe is one element but there are certainly other things.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Well, Commissioner—

**KAREN WEBB:** Which goes to the point—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** —let's go a bit further then. Contrary to Pisanos' statement, I asked a further question of the Minister for Police—*Notice Paper* question 8332:

What issues have been identified out of the 1614 claims ... that have required educational or training opportunities?

He replied "all of them" basically, and I have a copy for you here as well if you don't believe me. We can tender it, if you wish. The Minister replied:

Educational and training opportunities identified include non-compliance with sections of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 ... failures to record certain information ... non-compliance with various policies or operating procedures ...

I asked:

What training and educational strategies have been put in place to address these issues?

He said, amongst other things, in-command training, police powers face-to-face training sessions, development or updating of reference materials, publication of further information on police websites—blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Alright? So he says, "There is certainly an issue with training and we're addressing it and we're doing all this sort of stuff." So the Minister has told Parliament there is an issue. Pisanos has said to the newspaper and to the public, "Training is not an issue with the NSW Police." So who's wrong? Has the Minister misled Parliament or has Pisanos misled the public?

**KAREN WEBB:** You draw your own conclusion, but—

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** I have already; Pisanos has misled the public.

**KAREN WEBB:** Well, I mean, he's not on oath here, is he?

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Well, I'll see him here next time then and we'll put him on oath and we'll see how he goes.

**KAREN WEBB:** But, certainly, the issues around improving SOPs and having sergeants do oversight sampling, making sure they're checking and verifying the events—you know, whether that's a training issue or whether it's actually just good governance and good supervision. So there's a mixture, and I think officers just being kept up to date with that. I've got a saying—I've said it for a long time, as do many senior officers—"What gets measured gets done." Certainly, the more we look at this measure—and I welcome the report from LECC that gives us an opportunity to say, "Right, we've got to refocus on this." And it's the basics. Sometimes it's just the basics.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** It is very much the basics, and that's the trouble with policing. As you said, life is too complicated now. They've gone away from basics, and you can't do anything unless you know your powers to start with. I notice the time and I will finish on that, Chair. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We will break for 15 minutes now for afternoon tea.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Commissioner, I was asking some questions about Leichhardt police station and its replacement.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I think you indicated that you hadn't been able to get the plans through council.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Are you able to say what the issue was? Was it that you couldn't get the paperwork done in time, or was the council not able to process it?

**KAREN WEBB:** I think it was on the council, who weren't supportive of us.



**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I'll put a pin in that and come back to it. In 2020 the then police Minister, Mr Elliott, announced a new police station for Moama. At the time he said that construction would begin next year—that is, in 2021. When will Moama actually have a finalised new police station?

**KAREN WEBB:** Can I take that on notice? I've heard of Moama but I haven't been there. I'm not sure of the progress of Moama, certainly.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Okay. In the 2023 budget, \$1.981 million of the \$4 million allocation has been made—so a down payment, if you like. I'm interested in when that will be finalised.

**KAREN WEBB:** Sure, and can I just update the question you talked about with the TAFE at Dapto?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Yes.

**KAREN WEBB:** We're working with TAFE to gain ministerial approval to divest that property to us, and we're currently leasing it from them, which we were prior to our engagement to purchase.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** At last budget estimates, questions were asked about the new Bega police station or the Bega police station redevelopment, and on notice the indication was that that work is currently underway and scheduled for completion in December next year. Are you able to give us an update on how far advanced that work is and whether it's still December 2023 that it's scheduled to be up and running?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, it is. It's still on schedule for December next year.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Where is the construction up to?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll take that one on notice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

**KAREN WEBB:** I can tell you how Broken Hill is. I've been out there and it's well under construction, so it should be ready soon.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** It looks spectacular.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Good to know. I'll have a look next time I'm out there.

**The CHAIR:** That's because it's one of our seats; that's why.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** It looks great; I was out there the other day.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Ms Fox, I want to go back to the drone questions that I started asking the Minister this morning. Some of this you may want to take on notice—I am not sure. Have we had a chance to check how many drones the Department of Regional NSW has?

**REBECCA FOX:** We do, but I would prefer to take it on notice and just confirm the numbers. I've got some numbers here for 144 registered with CASA. But I'm not 100 per cent sure that that's all of them, so I'll take that on notice and come back to you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** That'd be good, thanks. Where do we source those drones from? Does the State Government have a tender process where the different agencies can source them, or do you go through that exercise yourself?

**REBECCA FOX:** I'll take that on notice as well, but I can give you some information. I've got here mixed retail. This is mostly from Primary Industries, so 90 per cent are DJI brand, under seven kilos. But having done some work in NSW Procurement, I'm sure they're looking at it across government as well.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, probably one of the most purchased items by governments these days is a drone, and they have a very good purpose. I'm not in any way casting an aspersion on that.

**REBECCA FOX:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** When you get the drones, do you check them for their IT or any of the software that goes with the drones?

**REBECCA FOX:** I'm sure we've got the experts that are looking at that in Primary Industries. I know the surveyors in Public Works are using them, and I'm sure they'd be putting scopes and specifications together to ensure that the drones are capable of doing what they need. But I don't have any more detail about that at the moment, Mr Veitch.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** This morning I was talking about cybersecurity. One of the real concerns I have about the drones that we're purchasing is there is a capacity for a drone to acquire a whole heap of

information that then could finish up somewhere overseas. You can understand that farmers would have great concern about a drone over their farmland. We're issuing drones, quite rightly, for some of our shark protection measures along the coast, and suddenly there's a lot of information being gathered that could be used elsewhere. What cybersecurity measures are we putting in place with our drones as we purchase them to make sure that we're not breaching the covenant of trust with the taxpayers, the residents of New South Wales?

**REBECCA FOX:** Again I can take that on notice and answer specifically, but I'm sure that our cybersecurity policy is picking that up and managing information. We've put a whole lot of focus and attention on cybersecurity, and I'm sure the information that we're picking up from drones would be covered by that. We have, I think, two dedicated people looking at that cybersecurity issue at the moment. I'll come back to you with a fuller answer.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I'd really appreciate that. Commissioner, the NSW Police Force obviously uses drones. Again, the same concern: What does the Police Force go through to ensure—

**KAREN WEBB:** We certainly go through a competitive procurement process. I couldn't tell you whether they're DJI or some other brand at this point in time, but certainly they're CASA compliant. It's the same CASA regulation as if it's manned, except it's unmanned. We've joined the licensing part of the organisation together at the police aviation command so that they're all under the one roof, so to speak—all the aviation assets. But to answer the question in relation to the technology, I'll have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Could you please, and what we do to make sure that—

**KAREN WEBB:** Mitigate that—how we mitigate that. Yes, sure.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, mitigate that risk. As you can appreciate, a lot of people would be quite concerned. Someone that I know in Sydney had a drone outside their third-storey bedroom window. I'm not sure where it was dispatched from, but that sort of information is also a concern. But anyway, my initial concern is around the fleets that we may have, how many we've got and that we're making sure that the property rights and everything else of the residents of New South Wales are not being dispatched to someone overseas.

**KAREN WEBB:** I understand.

**REBECCA FOX:** I can almost guarantee that the ones being used in regional New South Wales are not on third-storey windows, so that's a good start.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, I know. Anyway, it's the cybersecurity stuff that I'm really concerned about. Thank you. I've got some questions on notice around those that I'll put to both agencies, but I am concerned about that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Commissioner, are you particularly concerned about organised crime activities in the construction industry? Is that something that the police have got a particular focus on?

**KAREN WEBB:** I've said organised crime is really about where they can make their money. Mostly it's about drugs and other commodities that have high yield. That doesn't mean that it's not in construction, but certainly there's building commissioners and other things that sort of take care of that business. Perhaps Mr Hudson could add some further information about our focus around that, but certainly it's not limited to one commodity. We consider whatever enterprise they're into that is a source of income that's illegal.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Okay, but is there any particular focus that police have on the construction industry and activities that might be taking place there? Mr Hudson?

**DAVID HUDSON:** We used to have secondees to the Building Industry Task Force. I'll have to confirm, but I think that arrangement is finalised now. But certainly there was evidence that organised crime had infiltrated certain parts of that industry.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Mr Bodor, what about the Crime Commission? One of your important jobs is to detect, disrupt and tackle serious and organised crime. Does your organisation have any particular focus on the building and construction industry?

**PETER BODOR:** No particular focus on the industry, but we've identified players in the industry, and we certainly focus on them. Thematic investigations are very difficult for an organisation of our size, when we're looking at a construction industry where there might be thousands and thousands of firms and players. But, nonetheless, where we find anything going on we certainly work in conjunction with our police partners and try and advance those investigations.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Mr Chair, I've got a photograph here that I would like to provide to Mr Bodor, Mr Hudson and the police commissioner.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** While it is getting circulated, can I just ask Mr Hudson: It may be a dumb question, but where does the Building Industry Task Force reside? Is that within the Better Regulation department?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I would have to get back to you on that, ma'am, I apologise.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But it's not within the police; it's within the Department of Customer Service or something like that.

**DAVID HUDSON:** Yes, it was external.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** That photograph that I've provided to you comes from a story that appeared in *Rolling Stone* magazine about a rapper, Mr Younes. It shows Mr Andy Nahas, who was the secretary of Coronation Property, with a number of other people. The things I'm about to put to you are all on public record. They were all in an article in the Herald on 20 August, so none of this should come as a surprise to anyone. One of the people in the photograph is a Mr Joe Vokai, who has since been charged with conspiracy to commit murder, knowingly directing the criminal activities of a criminal group, contributing to criminal activity and dealing with proceeds of crime. Also in the photograph is Mr John Bayssari, since charged with drug supply, dealing with proceeds of crime, participating in a criminal group and contributing to criminal activity.

There's Mr Masood Zakaria, who, I think, fled the country and was, at least at the time of the article, facing arrest on commercial drug supply, dealing with the proceeds of crime and participating in a criminal group. I think the rapper Mr Younes was on bail for charges of affray and other matters. I think Mr Younes and Mr Zakaria have orders banning them from associating with other alleged criminal figures. Of course, in that photograph is the person who was then the principal of Coronation Properties, Mr Andy Nahas, suggesting an association between his firm and those individuals. Of course, it's a matter of record that Mr Nahas engaged the former Deputy Premier, John Barilaro, in a senior role in that organisation. Is there any suggestion, as a result of these events, that maybe those elements might be trying to reach out to the world of politics to extend their influence? Is that something that's of concern to the police or to the Crime Commission?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Sir, certainly we'll have a look at it from now on. I've just become aware of that. I know many people in that photograph, I know who they're aligned to, but we haven't detected any attempted infiltration into politics, as you suggest. But we'll have a look at it.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** For example, Mr Nahas is still the director of MN Builders. I think that's the company that was the subject of the stop-work orders. It's a matter of record that Mr Barilaro, when he was engaged by that firm, lobbied the Building Commissioner and possibly the former Minister, Ms Petinos, about that stop-work order. Mr Barilaro soon departed from that organisation. But that photograph obviously suggests a close association between Coronation and those other firms. I think Mr Zakaria has an involvement in a company called Zak Services, which is a shareholder in Alpha Omega Enterprises, a labour hire firm which has worked for Coronation. There are a number of links here, and I want to see if this was on your radar or if it is now.

**DAVID HUDSON:** The persons known to me, I think, are all in custody or on bail at the moment. They're all aligned to the Alameddine family. We'll certainly take it away and have a look at it.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Are you concerned about any connection between Coronation and these people?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I am concerned about any people or any organisation that that particular group is associated with.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Mr Bodor, what about the Crime Commission? Is there anything there that's on your radar?

**PETER BODOR:** I don't want to talk about operational matters—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** No, of course not.

**PETER BODOR:** —but the names are all familiar to me. Indeed, there's even a former client of mine featured in it.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I won't ask who.

**DAVID HUDSON:** But, yes, they're all familiar to me. I know of no links or attempted links to politics or politicians.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Obviously they engaged Mr Barilaro to open doors for them to do lobbying. Obviously that would be a matter of concern if that is occurring. Would you agree?

**PETER BODOR:** Yes, it would certainly be a matter of great concern. I heard that he had some temporary and brief engagement with a building group, but I didn't know that any of these people were in that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Now that I've raised it, is this something that you'll keep on your radar and watch closely?

**PETER BODOR:** Definitely.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Mr Hudson and Commissioner?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I'll definitely have a look at it, sir. I'll give that undertaking, and I'll be leaving here today and making those phone calls.

**PETER BODOR:** Likewise.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I've just got one follow-up question to Ms Fox probably. The drones that you say they were using at DPI, did you say they were DJ?

**REBECCA FOX:** I think so. Let me just check the information that I've got. Sorry, DJI.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Are they made in China?

**REBECCA FOX:** I don't have that information, I'm sorry. I'm happy to take more information on notice. This is just part of the information that I got this morning, and I'd prefer to check it and come back to you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** What I'm looking at here is, if there were Australian or New South Wales companies that build drones, do they get a look-in in the State Government's procurement process?

**REBECCA FOX:** We generally procure under the rules set by NSW Procurement, and we look at a whole range of issues when we procure those kinds of things. I'm happy to take that on notice and come back to you with a more detailed answer.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** The other thing is the maintenance of drones. They have a tendency to fall out of the sky, I've been told—I don't operate one—and they need repair. Whereabouts do we do the maintenance? Where does your department undertake that maintenance, or are they just discarded?

**REBECCA FOX:** I'll have to take that on notice too, I'm sorry. It's not an area that I've worked in myself personally, so I will take it from the operational teams and come back to you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I wouldn't mind knowing how much you spent each year, over the last three or four years, on the purchasing of drones.

**REBECCA FOX:** Yes, no problem.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Maybe, Commissioner Webb, if you could do the same thing?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, certainly. I think some of the procurement is not direct with DJI or whoever, but it's often a third party, and the same for the maintenance. But we'll have a look at that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Commissioner, what plans do the police have to deliver a 24/7 police station in Murwillumbah, and when will that be delivered?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice. We've certainly got 24/7 at Tweed Heads. Byron Bay is not that far away, and we've got many other police stations—I think there's 10 police stations—in that district. I mentioned this morning if there's a demand and resources to match demand, but most police stations operate, certainly on those busy nights—Thursday, Friday, Saturday night—extended hours. So I'd have to have a look at what the needs are in Murwillumbah before I committed to a 24/7.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** But are you aware of any plans to deliver a 24/7 for Murwillumbah?

**KAREN WEBB:** No, I'm not, until you mentioned it, but I can take that on notice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Please do.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I want to ask about urgent calls. How many were received by the police in 2021-22?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you tell us how many were responded to in, I understand, the 12-minute benchmark. Is that correct?

**KAREN WEBB:** For P1 and P2?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes.

**KAREN WEBB:** There are four categories: P1 to P4.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you provide us on notice with the amount of calls that were received and the average response times?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are you able to give them to us by region, command and district? I understand this information has been provided previously.

**KAREN WEBB:** I can do it by command, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I just want to ask you a question on the unexplained wealth that we were talking about this morning, the proposals that the Government seems to be still developing. I understand policy questions are for the Minister, so just let me know if this is out of bounds. Obviously, you're still in the stages of developing. Are you looking at deeming certain encrypted platforms to be out of bounds or are you looking at—Mr Hudson's shaking his head. Should I be directing the questions to you?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll give it to Mr Hudson, but it's really about a dedicated device versus an app, for example.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you explain where you're headed?

**DAVID HUDSON:** The devices we're looking to regulate, which technically are unlawful at the moment anyway because they don't hook up to the 000 network—they're impossible to do that, which makes it unlawful under ACMA anyway. But they have their own server. We're basically talking about what we saw in the Ironside or ANOM platform last year, where the FBI, assisted by the AFP, took over control of that server, and that produced that material. But the server was standalone. It wasn't a normal telecommunications company; it was standalone, only allowing people with access to one of their devices to actually communicate with each other.

A large part of what we've been doing is definition. There's no specific definition that agencies agree on in relation to this. We're settling, and I do have a meeting tomorrow to try to finalise some things. But it's basically devices used for the sole purpose of avoiding law enforcement activity and committing criminal activity. The normal phone apps that get loaded onto your normal phone are not captured by this, the distinction being that the normal apps on a phone are end-to-end encryption. They get encrypted on the end that you're sending a message, then decrypted the other end. That's not what we're talking about. The whole network is encrypted in these devices.

The experience we saw from Operation Ironside and the ANOM platform is that these criminals communicate quite openly, not in code. They send photographs to each other because they think they're secure through those networks. We have issues. Part of what we're applying for as well is to compel digital evidence access orders, to compel an owner of one of these devices to actually open it so that we can prove it is one of these devices. At the moment, there's no requirement for them to open the phone with a PIN code. In fact, many of them have a code on it. When they push that, it deletes the contents. We know that many of the organised crime homicides have been committed—the communication facilitation of that has been committed through these platforms.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We're not talking about—I'm using some examples that I know—WhatsApp or Signal or these kinds of things?

**DAVID HUDSON:** No.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We're actually looking at devices that are operating outside of the network and, therefore, like you say, are technically illegal anyway?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Yes. Unlawful.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Unlawful. Thank you.

**DAVID HUDSON:** There's a distinction, apparently.

**The CHAIR:** Commissioner, just a quick one. I think you're talking about applications that are running on VPNs, basically. Is that what you're saying? Or are they running on public network?

**DAVID HUDSON:** No. It's its own independent server. They create their own network.

**The CHAIR:** So it would probably be through a virtual private network? That's what I'm saying.



**DAVID HUDSON:** I'm not too sure if that's correct, sir. I can check that for you. But I'm not too sure if that's correct.

**The CHAIR:** If you could. What do these devices actually look like? Do they look like an Apple phone like you've got, I've got and everyone else has got? Or are they something special?

**DAVID HUDSON:** No, they're not special. They're very difficult to distinguish from a normal phone, which is part of the challenge. I think many of those on the ANOM platform were using Google Pixel phones, from memory, which are readily available and can hook up to a network. But they're only hooked up to their ANOM platform.

**The CHAIR:** On what basis would an officer form a suspicion that a criminal was using such a phone if they look like any other phone?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Hence the request for a digital evidence access order, to be able to prove that.

**The CHAIR:** Can you please explain how that works?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Once that phone's opened, and this will be done in conjunction with a search warrant—what we will be asking for is that at the point of application for a search warrant, we will also apply for a digital evidence access order so that for devices located as part of that search, we can compel an individual to open that phone so that we can determine whether it's a dedicated, encrypted device or not.

**The CHAIR:** A police officer can't apprehend someone on the street and say, "Just open your phone. I want to see what's going on in there"?

**DAVID HUDSON:** That's correct.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Maybe to you, commissioner, through to Mr Whyte, a question in relation to an email I sent to the commander of the Firearms Registry that he look into allegations that we had received that a prohibited paintball marker was being sold in New South Wales by a paintball dealer in Victoria. To date we've received absolutely no response, nor did we receive a response to a follow-up email I sent on 14 July 2022. Do you know whether the allegation of importing prohibited paintball markers into New South Wales was ever investigated?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll defer to Mr Whyte on that one.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I'll take it on notice, if it's okay, sir, because I've got no immediate visibility on it. But I'll chase it up and let you know.

**The CHAIR:** Can you explain why the commander of the registry hasn't responded to our emails? Normally he's very good on these things. But, for some reason or other—paintball is a relatively easy thing to deal with. There's a lot of these things floating around. They're turning up in shops. They're turning up on paintball fields. When the operators tell them, "They're illegal. Take them away", you can imagine what's being exchanged between people.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I'll certainly be able to answer that for you once I chase it up.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Can you also consider what the police are going to do to stop this illegal trade?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Commissioner, we're all saddened by the news that a police officer has taken his own life at Ermington a few weeks ago. How many currently serving police officers are being managed for mental health issues?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Presumably, officers on mental health leave are required to submit a medical certificate. Is that right?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, if it's a work-related claim.

**The CHAIR:** Who assesses those work-related medical certificates and makes a decision on the validity of any claims? Is the assessment done by a medically qualified person?

**KAREN WEBB:** That would be done by the insurer.

**The CHAIR:** The insurer?



**KAREN WEBB:** So workers comp insurer, EML, or if it's a subsequent claim that leads into a claim on the PBR insurance, it would be through TAL.

**The CHAIR:** You could assume that would be someone that's medically qualified?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Would the police medical officer get involved in that process?

**KAREN WEBB:** If there's a need for a review of the situation, but that's rare in the circumstances.

**The CHAIR:** Why, then, are the medical reports on firearm licence applicants assessed by unqualified adjudicators with no medical professional qualifications at all?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice, unless Mr Whyte can speak to that.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I'll give you a far more detailed response on notice. The adjudicators assess the medical report not on a medical basis but to ensure it is in line with what the standards are that they ask them to give in the report, managing the risk. If the report doesn't, in their mind, address those issues, that's what they would seek clarity on, not the content of the report as in what the medical prognosis may be.

**The CHAIR:** We have seen examples recently, and you're probably aware of them, that whenever a veteran applies for a concession on their licence fee, the Firearms Registry automatically generates a letter to them, saying to go off and get a medical certificate, basically, to say that they're a fit and proper person. Why would that be necessary when there's no evidence at all why this person should need a medical certificate, other than the fact that they are seeking a fee concession?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** That's a good point. It's an area that we're looking at in regards to the DVA acknowledgement. There's also a tick box about mental health. If they've ticked the box about mental health, certainly that would be an area we would look further into around risk. But if it's just the fact that they've got a DVA card and they haven't identified mental health, then we really shouldn't be doing that. We're in discussions with the Department of Veterans' Affairs at the moment about streamlining that process. That's something that we've self-identified as being one of those bureaucratic issues that we shouldn't, probably, be doing and we're working on fixing.

**The CHAIR:** Prior to Edwards, that was certainly not the case. People were not getting these letters on a regular basis. Frankly, when people come to my office, I tell them, "Don't ask for a concession. Just pay the full fee", because it is generating those automatic letters to go off and spend \$500, \$600 to get a medical certificate. I also have other examples of where the medical certificates are not interpreted correctly by the adjudicators. That's why I asked the question around the adjudication process, that they be qualified to actually read the letter from the professional properly and come up with the same result, the correct result.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I don't disagree with you around the DVA stuff. That's certainly an area that we've identified and we're working to rectify. Around the issues that there's been some errors around medical certificates and adjudication, you're right. You will know that we've picked a couple up via our senior adjudicators that have identified that, and we've rectified it when we've had our attention drawn to it. On the back of that, we're now actually using those as real-time scenarios to all our adjudicators. We're doing a little bit of consistency around our decision-making. We're running teams through those scenarios and getting them to come to a decision. Our senior adjudicators are sitting and talking through the process so that we can calibrate all of our adjudicators at a certain level where we've got a level of consistency that we're making around those decisions. But, again, it's more about the risk as opposed to what the actual medical certificate or medical prognosis says.

**The CHAIR:** Again, I get back to the Edwards stuff. Isn't it more the perception of risk within the registry? There might be in fact no risk, but it's easier just to send off a message saying go and get a certificate.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I don't doubt that there certainly are people that are probably risk averse. There is constantly a lot of criticism around the registry and there are people that are a bit concerned. We did have people that go through a fairly stringent process on the back of that with a coronial inquest etcetera, etcetera. However, I don't think that that is the norm, I think that the processes that have been put in place for our business improvement—our new adjudication teams with senior adjudicators, we've got a quality assurance manager, we've got business analysts, we're dip sampling, we're calibrating our decision-making, we've got better systems to manage it, we're looking at our case management—I think that all of those factors are showing that we're moving more to a high-performing team model. I think that would be very rare, that people are completely risk averse.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I'll look forward to seeing a change. Commissioner, it was revealed in the iTnews earlier this month that the COPS replacement system, IPOS has been shelved. How many IT systems in

the NSW Police Force have been axed now in the last three years? EFIMS, COPS, WebCOPS—are there any others?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** NewCOPS.

**The CHAIR:** NewCOPS, \$170 million.

**KAREN WEBB:** It's only one that I'm aware of, but I'll take that on notice. It was discussed this morning, the Mark43 question. It's one and the same vendor. But not the only vendor in that IPOS—

**The CHAIR:** Do you have a timetable of when we will actually see a functional replacement for COPS?

**KAREN WEBB:** We'll have to really go back to market and look at the phasing of the two projects that were in phase one. The first one is CAD and there's already work started in that respect and the other is Forensics and Evidence, and there's certainly more options available to us than there was in the market even a couple of years ago. I don't anticipate that that will delay us any longer than it should, but certainly the sooner we move on that and move forward—

**The CHAIR:** So who's the primary supplier of these systems? I assume by what you're saying that you're looking at something that's going to come off the shelf somewhere?

**KAREN WEBB:** It will have to go through a procurement process, as we should for something of that magnitude. But there is a lot of competition in the market and we've already got suppliers in some of the products that supply in some of our systems and whether they're going to be up to the task at the next phase, then that will be borne out through the procurement process.

**The CHAIR:** How will these developments and the failure of the current contract—and I think you're about to go into court and be sued and probably counter sue. How many of these are going to affect the systems that are driving the Firearms Registry developments?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll ask either Mr Hudson or Mr Whyte, but I don't foresee that because it operates on a different system altogether.

**The CHAIR:** It operates on a different platform?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Yes, it is a different platform, sir, it runs off Salesforce.

**The CHAIR:** As far as shooting clubs are concerned and the systems relating to them, at what stage and when do you expect them to be implemented?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Mr Whyte I think has got the details of the second phase business case and funding application for the next iteration of Gun Safe. Mr Whyte?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** We call it Uplift 2 of Gun Safe, so that's in the future plan. Over the next two years there'll be a significant increase around licence holders, dealers, registry and obviously gun clubs and ranges, around membership, digitisation of P650s, reporting activities of the range and the regulator, the Office of Sport requirements, customer sign-ins. There'll be a manufacturer importer bulker upload, individual and witness dealer upload and repairs, consignment, safe storage, significant movement in that space.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Field?

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Ms Fox, this one's for you in the first instance, so you might want to refer it. Recently I have been chasing information around the remake of private native forestry codes. Under a GIPAA request of the EPA I was provided a document entitled, "Advice on koala protection in the proposed new Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice". This document was prepared at the request of Regional NSW by NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer. The document was provided to me, then I subsequently received a letter from lead counsel of the EPA advising that the EPA had consulted with the Department of Regional NSW about the full disclosure of the document and Regional NSW objected to the report's disclosure on the grounds that the document was Cabinet information. Can you advise why this document is considered Cabinet information?

**REBECCA FOX:** I'll have to take it on notice to get you some more detail. I've been sitting in the secretary's chair for I think 11 or 12 days and I'm certainly aware of the issue, but I think it's probably better directed to the Minister for Agriculture and the Local Land Services team that have been dealing with that issue. I certainly know that they received the advice. I'm happy to take some further advice on why we consider it Cabinet in confidence.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** It was the Department of Regional NSW that responded to the EPA and objected to the release, and that's quite recently. The reason was that it was considered Cabinet information. This was the decision taken by the Department of Regional NSW. Who would have made the decision to object to the release?

**REBECCA FOX:** I don't have that information personally. I'm guessing, or I assume, it was done by our general counsel in consultation with the team. But I'm happy to take that on notice and get some more information, Mr Field.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** That would be great, thank you. My next question goes back to this issue of the redundancy payments for Blue Ridge Hardwoods on the South Coast. I think there was some discussion this morning. The Minister may have suggested that he could get some information by this afternoon for me about the guidelines for provision of these redundancy payments. Was any information able to be received?

**REBECCA FOX:** I haven't got it. I'm just not sure whether Mr Hanger has got it, or we can take that on notice. Mr Hanger?

**CHRIS HANGER:** I think we'll take that on notice. It's probably easier to provide all those details. You have asked a number of questions as has been documented and published on the Parliament's website, so we'll take that on notice and provide further details.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Just to be clear, the questions I'm asking on notice are: How many payments in total? How many payments at the \$450,000? How many payments that were pro-rataed? Are there any applications? How many have been paid? Are you aware of how many people have been re-employed at the same facility since receiving a redundancy and were there any restrictions or guidelines about being able to continue employment at the site after redundancy? If you're prepared to take all those on notice, that would be much appreciated.

**CHRIS HANGER:** Absolutely.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Commissioner Webb, this is for you and it goes to the issue of money laundering through poker machines in New South Wales. How many referrals have you received this year from Liquor & Gaming about potential money-laundering activities in New South Wales clubs and pubs due to poker machines?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice, sir.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Thank you. Have you provided any advice to the Minister about regulatory responses, legal responses that could address the issue of money laundering through poker machines at New South Wales clubs and pubs?

**KAREN WEBB:** So we've provided advice into the review that the Crime Commission is leading. I'm not sure who, they're working with ILGA on that. I might ask my colleague, Mr Bodor.

**PETER BODOR:** Yes, if I may. In April 2021 the NSW Crime Commission, ACIC and ILGA began a joint inquiry into the nature and extent of money laundering and AUSTRAC joined it later in the year as a partner. The inquiry commenced following public reporting indicating that there was evidence that organised crime was using electronic gaming machines to launder proceeds of crime and allegations of several high-profile cases in which offenders had stolen large sums of money to fund gambling addiction. The inquiry the commission is conducting is focused on the criminality of laundering proceeds and is not considering the social harm. The objectives are to identify the nature and extent of money laundering, the potential vulnerabilities and if and when we get to that point—let me correct myself, when we get to that point—furnish report to government.

The report is currently in preparation, and we expect to have something by the end of October. As it's a work in progress, if I can use that expression, it's not appropriate to pre-empt what that report will provide, but it is certainly going to go to government in a final form. In the meantime, the commission notes the passing of recent legislation establishing the Independent Casino Commission. We look forward to contributing to that with Liquor & Gaming. That's where we're up to. It doesn't quite answer, perhaps, your question. But the bottom line is there is an inquiry going on. There have been private hearings at the Crime Commission. There will be no public hearings. There have been submissions and a report is being prepared.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** That's much appreciated. That seemed to be that it was a joint investigation. I wasn't aware that the Crime Commission's inquiries were part of a joint investigation.

**PETER BODOR:** No, they're not.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Is that distinct from—

**PETER BODOR:** Yes.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Can you just explain the difference between the two things again?

**PETER BODOR:** The Crime Commission partnered with the other agencies I referred to at the commencement of my answer. As a consequence of that, the Crime Commission is undertaking an inquiry.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** That report you're talking about coming out in October, is that the Crime Commission inquiry report?

**PETER BODOR:** Yes.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Commissioner Webb, are you able to provide any data about the number of charges that've been laid with regard to money laundering through poker machines in the last 12 months?

**KAREN WEBB:** No, I'll take that one on notice as well.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Then I might come back to you, Ms Fox, and I appreciate you'll probably want to refer this on possibly to Ms Beattie if she's still there. In the last round of budget estimates, there was discussion about the early closure of the Eraring Power Station and then there was a discussion about where the coal which is currently being mined to supply Eraring into the future is likely to go. There was a discussion then about the Government working with various mines about potentially transitioning that coal to the export market. Have those discussions borne any fruit? Where are they up to? What's the plan and the involvement in government working with those mines on the future of that coal?

**REBECCA FOX:** Sure. I'll refer that to Ms Beattie. Thank you.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Yes, look, it's really a commercial decision for the company. I think most of the discussions with the company have been around the supply of power and that's other parts of government that have been having those discussions. But in terms of the workers at the mines that currently supply, it's Mandalong and Myuna mines that supply coal to the Eraring Power Station. At this stage those operations are continuing. I believe that the company is looking to pivot towards an export market and, yes, that's a commercial decision that they're working on.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Has any public money been offered to assist in that transition to export?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Not that I'm aware of.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** In the absence of the commissioner, this question will have to be to you, Deputy Commissioner.

**DAVID HUDSON:** She's just taken a comfort break, sir.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** That's okay. Maybe I'll ask you and see whether or not we just need to wait for the commissioner to return. In the past 10 years the rate of psychosocial injuries to NSW Police Force personnel has increased. What processes or systemic processes have been implemented across the Police Force to identify and manage psychosocial risks?

**DAVID HUDSON:** It's not part of my current portfolio, sir, so I'll need the commissioner.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Can anybody else at the table assist?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I would doubt it.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Do we think this is something the commissioner is likely to know about, or will she have to take it on notice?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I would imagine she'd like to take it on notice if you're going back 10 years because there would've been a progressive—

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I'm actually really asking about what's happening now.

**DAVID HUDSON:** I probably can't answer.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I can jump in. I've just got some questions about forensic investigations that occur in heavy vehicle accidents. I know it's quite obscure. I don't know if there's anyone that can answer those questions now. This was something that was raised with me by the Australian Heavy Vehicle Repairers Association. I'm just interested to know, if a heavy vehicle is involved in an accident, what is the level of investigation that occurs? Do you look at the repair history? Do you look at the contributing factors? Or is it just really what happened in the accident itself?

**DAVID HUDSON:** Once a heavy vehicle's involved, my understanding and recollection is that the traffic and highway patrol have a unit that investigates that. Commissioner Webb, being a previous commander of the traffic and highway patrol, might have a better answer. Once heavy vehicles are involved, they are put off the road until cleared and there is an extensive investigation done as to whether any defect in that vehicle was a catalyst to that accident.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, Commissioner, I was just asking some questions about what's the forensic investigation process if a heavy vehicle is involved in an accident. This is off the back of concerns that were raised with me by the Australian Heavy Vehicle Repairers Association. I'm happy if you want to provide more detail on notice. But, for example, do you look at the repair history of the vehicle if it is involved in an accident?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, certainly. I'll take that on notice but traditionally the Crash Investigation Unit would take on something like that if it's serious fatal-type injuries and look at the supply chain issues around the vehicle itself—if there is a history of failure to manage repairs, service, neglect of the vehicle in terms of contributing factors.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Commissioner, what systematic processes are implemented across the NSW Police Force to identify and manage psychosocial risks?

**KAREN WEBB:** Of members of the public, you mean?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** No, of your police officers or police staff.

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice. I am certainly concerned about the wellbeing of my police officers. We certainly do have a range of programs in place—WellCheck for high risk type employment areas of the organisation. It's not for every member of the organisation. But there's certainly a whole range of other services available: EAP, chaplaincy, peer support officers. There's a whole range of things, but certainly WellCheck is a periodic assessment meeting with individuals with a psychologist to check that they're in good mental health.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Of course. I said earlier that in the past 10 years the rate of psychological injuries for your personnel has increased. I am just interested for you to answer on notice that question about the systemic processes that you've got in place to identify those risks and manage them. Given the relatively short time you've been in the role, do you consider those processes best practice and effective, or is that something you're currently reviewing?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'm currently reviewing it. Certainly, the tragedy of any officer lost due to self-harm, mental health issues is certainly a reason that we need to re-examine are we doing everything possible? I think there's an opportunity for us to have a look at is WellCheck enough, or is there something else?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Do you have any insights into why psychological injuries for police service personnel are increasing?

**KAREN WEBB:** Nothing empirical. We certainly are not the only industry seeing it. There's increase in psych injuries right across government agencies. It's been this topic of conversation at secretaries' board meetings. But, you know, I'm only concerned about my workforce, to be honest.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Is that something you're going to have a close look at to get some empirical—

**KAREN WEBB:** It certainly is, yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Does the Police Force keep a risk register or some similar mechanism relating to psychosocial risk and the control measures that are put in place to manage those risks?

**KAREN WEBB:** Not necessarily a risk register. We maintain welfare databases for officers that have recorded injuries, but the concern for me is that not every officer has recorded injuries and it's often too late when we know that there's been a problem. I'm not quite sure what that might look like in the future, but I'm open to suggestions and we will examine that.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When officers are disengaging from the force, do you ask them why they're leaving to try to get some sort of insight into that?

**KAREN WEBB:** We do. We have exit interviews. I'd have to provide you the answer on notice. But certainly there's a range of issues. Like I mentioned this morning, we've had a three-year officer disengagement scheme that allows officers to leave with dignity and do something else of their choosing. Others leave for other employment and others leave with medical conditions. Medical conditions are self-evident, but on why others leave, I can get back to you.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I just wanted to see if there were any particular trends that emerge for reasons for disengagement, for example. Is injury or psychological injury or stress or burnout a key factor?



**KAREN WEBB:** If it is medical, certainly the injury at the time of disengagement would be the reason. But for those that elect to leave, it would be easier to do an exit interview rather than for those that are on medical—it is assumed that that's the medical cause of their leaving. But certainly an opportunity to consider that. We know recruitment retention is not an issue just for the Police Force, but certainly in the wider employment network that this generation—the emerging generation, not necessarily my generation. We've all been in it a long time. You know, they say that they have five careers in one lifetime, but I joined and we have one job for a life type of thing. I don't know what the expectations of employment are, and how we manage those expectations. I guess that's going to be the challenge of the future.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** When we were looking at the departures from the Police Force, I think the evidence that was given earlier today was that a lot of the people who are leaving are quite experienced in terms of years of service, which then suggests that the force you're being left with is less experienced. It would be useful, I think, to get some insights into the key reasons why people are departing.

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** And whether psychological injury is going to play a part in that. If New South Wales, as expected, implements the amended model WHS regulations, are you confident that the NSW Police Force will be able to demonstrate compliance with the new clauses regarding psychosocial risks? Is that something you're looking closely at?

**KAREN WEBB:** Not yet. My Workforce Safety Command might be considering that. But, certainly, I remember when the original laws came in we were given some lead time because it took quite a shift. It was a step change to make sure that those systems were embedded in the organisation. If you're after specific information, then I can take that on notice.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I might just leave that there and ask a question of Ms Beattie around critical minerals. I've had a look at the critical minerals strategy and recently I had the good fortune to go to Europe and look at what a number of countries were doing in terms of transitioning their energy systems. One of the biggest constraints, particularly in light of the Ukraine situation, was access to critical minerals to actually drive the sort of energy transition.

I see that Germany, I think, has signed an MOU with the former Commonwealth Government about access to our critical minerals. In the light of that difficult international situation, what is the New South Wales Government actually doing apart from hanging out its shingle, as it were, through sort of an indication that we're kind of receptive? What active steps is the Government taking to try and attract that investment in the critical minerals sector, particularly from those European countries that are facing difficulties accessing the raw materials they need?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** We work really closely with our colleagues in the Commonwealth Government, and the European market is a new market for critical minerals. But it's not only Europe. There are opportunities in the US and there are opportunities right around the world. As you point out, it's a global issue and everyone's kind of trying to get ahead of it. In New South Wales, we've got the strategy. We've got the fund. There's other things that we're doing to support the projects in New South Wales that are investment ready. As I mentioned earlier this morning, there are a few of those.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** How many?

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** There are three of what we call advanced projects. We have an investor register that was released about six months ago—and it's about to be updated—which also identifies all the investment opportunities for projects in New South Wales. There are those three active—advanced, we call them—and there's a number of other projects as well, high-tech metals and projects in the pipeline that we think present really great opportunities for New South Wales to take a lead in and to further develop. We're also trying to support further exploration of critical minerals in New South Wales and so we've got our geological survey. It does a heap of work to collect pre-competitive data that we release to the market to try to stimulate further investment in exploration.

We have set up a new industry development team within Mining, Exploration and Geoscience to work directly with investors and to work internationally as well to try and attract and promote the opportunities in New South Wales. I think the other exciting opportunity we have is looking at how we can use tailings from existing mines—a re-use kind of concept to see what critical minerals are available in tailings. Some other jurisdictions in Australia and around the world are also looking into that. I guess, back to the pre-competitive data, we have got new surveys that are coming online just to see what potential there is for critical and high-tech metals in New South Wales. It takes a bit of time to do those surveys and collect the data, but it is very welcomed by the sector generally for us to be able to share that information and promote the opportunities.



But it really is a bit of a race, if you like. New South Wales is trying to get investment. We're competing with other jurisdictions in Australia as well as other jurisdictions overseas. There are opportunities in Europe. There are opportunities in the US. The Central West of New South Wales is where a couple of our advanced projects are. We also have—Rebecca may want to talk a little bit more about this—the Parkes Special Activation Precinct, which is really well located for where a lot of the critical minerals potential is, and so we're looking at the opportunities to work with that as well.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I have got some further questions, but I might defer to my colleagues so I don't take up their time. I might come back to you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Thank you. I want to go back to the freight linkages priority registration process, Ms Fox, if I could. There were 47 applications. This morning, when we explored this a little bit with the Deputy Premier, the 47 applications did not meet the Snowy fund legislated requirements and the guidelines.

**REBECCA FOX:** That's right.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Are the guidelines publicly available?

**REBECCA FOX:** It was done before I was responsible for that program. I'm guessing that they were, but I'll have to take that on notice to confirm.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I'm happy for you to take that on notice. If they are able to be provided, that would be good, because I'm just checking their consistency with the Act. That's all I'm after.

**REBECCA FOX:** We generally make those guidelines available. As I said, it was before I was involved in the program, but I will double-check for you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Okay. And then the 47 applications—we worked through where they're all gone, but some have been picked up in other programs. I'm just unclear. Those that weren't picked up or have been funded elsewhere—what are we doing with those?

**REBECCA FOX:** They are programmable projects that are available to be funded in any way that the proponents like at any point in time. We've put the freight priority money, effectively, into the Special Activation Precinct programs. There are lots of opportunities. Again, before my time, but I'm guessing that some of those projects were not well developed, they didn't meet the criteria and they were projects that were not ready to be funded under any sort of program.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Rather presciently, you have pre-empted the question that was next. The funds that were allocated for this particular program—if no-one has been awarded any money, you're saying that those funds have now gone into the SAP funding?

**REBECCA FOX:** They haven't been used in the SAP funding. They are still in the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund bucket, if you like. But the freight priority we have paid more attention to and picked up through the SAP program, yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** There was money allocated, though, for this freight?

**REBECCA FOX:** There was a notional amount allocated, yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** It hasn't been spent, though?

**REBECCA FOX:** It hasn't been spent elsewhere, no.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Thank you. This is probably a question for Ms Beattie. We also started talking about the legacy mines in New South Wales this morning. There were 20 of the highest-risk sites, I think you mentioned, and the \$107 million, which is to be spent over 10 years. What is the detail around those 20 highest-risk sites and how the funding is being allocated to those sites across the 10 years? Clearly, if you have 20 sites and money being allocated over 10 years, how much is going to each of the sites each year, really, is what I'm after.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Sure. There is \$47.7 million over the first four years of the program, and that's for 10 projects that are in the advanced stage of planning. The second phase is an additional \$10 million per year for the remaining six. In the first four years—I can share with you where we're up to with those highest risk projects. The Ottery project—I think we talked about that at last estimates as well. For stage one, it's \$2 million that has been allocated for the Ottery project, \$3 million for the petroleum wells site, \$7.5 million for the Lake George Mine, \$1.5 million at Leadville, \$1.5 million at Cow Flat, \$9 million at McKinnons, \$4.5 million for Mount Royal, \$3 million for Webbs Consols and \$6.5 million for Temora. I think that covers it all. They're the initial ones.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** There may be some questions on notice arising from that. Mr Witherdin, if I could just move to you again, does your corporation have any role in the Disaster Relief Grant allocations? Were you in any way involved in those?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** No.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** How were they administered? I know it's not your agency, but was it through—

**CHRIS HANGER:** Which specific grants? There are about eight or 10, at least, support grants that go out either to individuals, businesses or to councils. Is there a specific grant?

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** It was the ones to individuals I'm looking at. Let's focus on individuals first, and then I'll maybe look at that.

**CHRIS HANGER:** Resilience NSW, Service NSW—there is a really useful website that's been established, but if you can let—

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I did explore this a little bit with Minister Dominello yesterday, but he kept coming back to apps, which is no surprise to anyone who knows Minister Dominello. Essentially, what I wanted to know—this may have been with councils as well—was the way the money was dispensed, the time frame that it took for some people and the fact that people apply once for one grant, and then, the next time they go in to test their eligibility for another grant, they have to put all of the information back in again. They've already done it once. What happens is they then self-assess, and they go, "It's too hard. I'm just not going to do it." Can you see the issue here?

**CHRIS HANGER:** Absolutely. There is a lot of work that's being done across government to tell government once. You're right. There's not only that frustration—and that's outside of a disaster environment. But if you're in a flood or a bushfire, you may not have some of the material that's required. You'll see that many of the grant programs do have the ability to provide funding without requiring documentation up-front, depending on the scale. Some of the business programs will provide—for instance, the \$200,000 medium-sized business grant provides \$25,000 basically up-front. You've got to provide documentation afterwards.

These programs are all funded through Commonwealth programs, and there are audit requirements and acquittal requirements that they, ourselves and the Audit Office would be expecting to see. We don't just hand over hundreds of thousands or tens of thousands of dollars with no documentation. That raises its own issues. But you're right, there are some challenges in those systems. Customer Service, which has been within Minister Dominello's portfolio, Resilience NSW, Service NSW and ourselves are all working on that because no-one wants to make that process any more challenging than it needs to. But we do need to balance that documentation is required. If we hand over funding without any documentation, I'm sure at least the Audit Office, if not others, will absolutely be asking questions about that as well.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** One of the suggestions I have—and you may have already ventured down this path—is that there is an agency or an organisation within the remit of the New South Wales Government called the Rural Assistance Authority. They have been doing this for quite some time. I reckon they would have a lot of knowledge around—

**CHRIS HANGER:** They absolutely do. I am very happy to send you the link to the website that showed, interestingly, for the floods they had 40 per cent new applicants. There are processes you can establish where, once a customer is known to an agency, their ability to be able to apply for new grants becomes a whole lot easier. Absolutely, government uses some of those service apps to achieve that process. In the back end, our agency is leading a whole-of-government grants platform process with that idea that you tell government once, and we should be able to identify you as a business or as a citizen and, therefore, make that process as simple as possible.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Again, that process, I would think, would assist in the fraud component, where you can—

**CHRIS HANGER:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Minister Tudehope, just about every question time in our House, talks about fraud and these programs. Surely, that arrangement—if we could streamline to that point, that would assist in that.

**CHRIS HANGER:** Absolutely. And the Service NSW app, for some of those vouchers that are used, being able to verify that the person who is submitting the information is the person that they claim to be—there is a lot of work that has occurred in that space. I would say that we are improving that enormously. The other observation I would make is that there was a concerted effort—a grants blitz, to use that term—because, for many

people in a distressed state, asking them to apply online is not necessarily the best way to engage them to help. Across agencies, recovery centres were set up with staff who could sit there and literally walk people through those grant application processes. Either people may not have even had telecommunications connectivity or they might be people who struggle with online applications forms, for a whole range of reasons. You will always need the human element there, and that is an important part of how we continue to work with the community in regard to those grants.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Thank you. I think my time is up.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I just wanted to ask a couple of questions again, Commissioner Webb. Just very quickly, in relation to the WDV CAS co-location, I understand there are two programs. There is a hearing support pilot and there is also the co-location of DV specialist workers in police stations. I wanted to check that the evidence you were giving me earlier was in relation to the last of those and not the first.

**KAREN WEBB:** I can take that on notice. As I understand it, the co-location is the 14. There are four sites in the former one that you mentioned, but let me clarify that out of session.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** My understanding is the hearing support pilot is 14 locations. The co-location pilot was five locations and was due to start on 5 September, but I understand it has been unilaterally halted by the police.

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll check and get back to you.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In relation to the IPOS system, I'm devastated to hear that has been halted and that we are now going to have to look for another company to provide that.

**KAREN WEBB:** Another vendor?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Another vendor. Will any of the existing work be able to be saved or are we starting from scratch?

**KAREN WEBB:** It may. We've saved some of the code that was put in escrow, which was in the contract, but it's too early for me to say until we go to market and go through the process again. I'm not sure if you were in the room when I mentioned to Mr Searle that there are two parts to phase one, which is CAD and the other is forensics. There are actually viable options, which has changed in the last two years. Through procurement, we'll see what that looks like.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I've been asking since the beginning of 2019 about why New South Wales is the only jurisdiction not able to record the reasons why a sexual assault claim has been discontinued, whether it has been withdrawn or discontinued. I was then told that it wouldn't be until 2025 that we would have that capability in New South Wales. Presumably, now that expectation will be delayed even further.

**KAREN WEBB:** I will hand to Mr Hudson. We've done a lot of work around sexual assault in the last little while. We've done a comprehensive review of sexual violence, and there's a number of working groups and recommendations that have come out of that that relate to both police and other agencies. Certainly, I will hand to Mr Hudson. He's well briefed on the issues around sexual assault and—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In the interest of time, what I'm looking for is when will we be able to record the reasons for withdrawal and discontinuation of sexual assault claims?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I can answer the question partially. We got every event of sexual assault from last year reviewed. I took 26 people offline to do that. I wasn't happy with the data coming out. The statistics that came out of that are quite interesting and probably not revealed in COPS, such as 82 per cent of victims are known to the offenders. Out of that we only had a 17 per cent legal action rate, and I asked the question why. When you dig down, only 37 per cent of victims actually make a statement to police and wish to pursue it in any form. Only 22 per cent actually consent to a forensic procedure, and then a lesser level actually release that to the police. So there are a number of reasons probably why. I can't totally identify the answer that you want, but when you put those statistics in the level of offender, victim, prior relationship, and the number of victims that actually make statements being 37 per cent, and 22 per cent only agreeing to a forensic procedure, I think the reasons that victims do not wish to pursue the matter are probably related to the core process and everything else.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes, which is why we're so keen to see the data and over time. Unfortunately, I have very limited time, so I'm going to just very quickly ask you, we were talking about facial recognition technology earlier and you were saying that you don't really use it. But I understand that New South Wales is participating in the Commonwealth's face-matching service. Is that correct?

**DAVID HUDSON:** To a lesser degree. We access their photographs. However, New South Wales hasn't loaded our drivers licence photographs to that system and won't until legislation passes, whether that ever does at Commonwealth level. That's been I think a government decision based on our advice. We have limited access to customers' photographs or Border Force photographs from passports which supplement our charge database, but we have greater success from our charge photographs.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sure, but have you been using that FMS program in relation—

**DAVID HUDSON:** To a very, very limited degree. It's not that useful to us.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. My time is up.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Commissioner Webb, are you aware of an incident that took place where a forest scientist was assaulted in the Northern Rivers by some forestry workers. The incident was filmed by a Forestry Corporation officer, and then when the matter of the assault was reported to police in Coffs Harbour, it turned out that some months later the poor chap who had been assaulted was then charged with a criminal offence. Are you aware of that incident?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that one on notice. I'm not aware of that matter at all.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Mr Witherdin, do you think that it is perhaps fair and reasonable that there are many members of the community, particularly in Lismore, that are quite shocked and saddened by the fact that there's an expression of interest process open about landholders that may want to benefit or may have land available to sell, when in fact there are people begging for an expression of interest program to open to say they need help and they need a home and they are the ones that are going to need to be helped?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** I feel their pain in terms of that, having spoken to many of them personally where they've conveyed their circumstances. I think every day you have to wait with more uncertainty is a day too long. So we're certainly working as absolutely quickly as we can to get to a point—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** What was the strategic decision to do that one before the other one? Because that's what I'm imagining it comes down to—a sort of strategic decision.

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** What it comes down to in terms of the land, unlocking that supply again, that's something we can get moving with right now. There are no barriers to that. In terms of the program with the suite of options—everything from voluntary purchase through to resilient rebuilding—that relies on a really robust evidence base—and there's a lot of complexity around this, as I described earlier—and then a joint funding commitment from State and Commonwealth governments. I think we've certainly seen Queensland being able to move with greater agility than New South Wales, and that just speaks volumes to the value of having an organisation like the Queensland Reconstruction Authority that sort of stood up on an ongoing basis. Clearly one of the key recommendations of the flood inquiry is that going forward we have that capacity. So whilst we're behind where I would like to be—I would have liked to have something on the table a month ago but—

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** When do you think we might for the real people that need the help?

**DAVID WITHERDIN:** I would hope that certainly within the next couple of months. We're in that position. But what I will say is that we're quite advanced in terms of what we've done with the Flood Property Assessment Program. We've done that detailed assessment now of around I think 3,200 homes, so that when a program is announced, we've got that rich data which will enable us to really quickly make decisions. Whereas Queensland have announced their program, they've been out for the EOIs but they haven't yet undertaken that program. They're back-ending their program with that, whereas we've sort of front-ended it. I really do feel for people who've got that uncertainty and they just want to get on with the rest of their lives but also understand that this process of reconstruction and recovery will take years, absolutely. But people need certainty around what's on the table, when it's on the table, and how much will be there. Hopefully it's not too far off.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Commissioner Webb, who would have given the instruction or who designed the Colo operation? Where did that instruction come from that we were going to go and surveil and then go undercover on somebody's private property at Colo?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'll have to take that on notice, but, as I said earlier today, it's part of an investigative strategy trying to prevent disruptive activity. But I don't know. I can't give you the specifics now, but I'll provide you an answer on notice.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Are you aware of the years and development of law in the courts around the role of civil disobedience in a healthy democracy and that the courts now in Australia have accepted a view that it plays a role and that really the proper approach is that the police take a kind of restrained approach. Because we're talking about human beings who are not normal criminals, that they are people who are engaging in a

conscientious objection seeking political change, and that it is in fact part of a democracy, and whether they break a law by choice or not, that they are a different type of law-breaker to the ones that you deal with ordinarily on a day-to-day basis?

**KAREN WEBB:** I understand your question, but our job is to uphold the law. If people want to exercise their freedom of speech, they can do it seeking permission for a lawful assembly, public assembly. They don't have to do it unlawfully.

**The CHAIR:** Through you, Commissioner, perhaps again to Mr Whyte, at the Firearms Registry's clubs and ranges information day on 8 June 2022, a new range standard to replace the *Range Users Guide* was discussed. It was said that the range standard would be put out for public consultation. What is happening with the public consultation on the new range standard? Can you tell me that please?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will go to Mr Whyte on that one. I can't say I'm up on that.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, sorry, I said "through you". I don't expect you to answer that.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I'm aware of that conversation, sir, and, to be honest, I stopped it because we really hadn't had a position or a direction from the commissioner or the Minister to do anything to range standards. Out of the process, they're doing some research nationally to have a look at what range standards are and some internal comparative work to see where we are with our legislation and regulations that we have in place. On the back of that, anything that we have a look at we'll share with the consultative committee and obviously all our ranges from there on in. But it certainly was never our intent to go out and look at changing anything without going through a long process of due diligence and engaging the clubs and the ranges about it.

**The CHAIR:** Can I ask you whether an alternate range standard is being considered? In other words, it's one thing to use templates and physical separation, that's fine, but has anyone actually thought of applying a proper risk assessment process to each and every range to understand the nature of the risks—so that, for example, we don't end up in the silly situation we've got in Goulburn at the moment? The range has been closed to all centre-fired shooting for over three or four years now. You're actually shooting into a mountain, but because the physical template, looking at it on a flat piece of paper, runs, I think, 20 or 30, maybe 50 metres into some council area where they were going to do something, that range is effectively closed. That's an Anzac range that's been shooting for over 100 years. You get the idiocy of that type of ruling?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I absolutely understand where you're coming from. I don't know the specifics about that, but I will certainly look into it. But I can tell you that the mandate that I've given the Firearms Registry that are looking into this, doing some due diligence, has been a commonsense approach and it's not change for change sake. It's not about making things harder. It is about following that ethos that we're trying to implement around, number one, community safety; number two, customer service. And that's how we'll continue to move forward.

**The CHAIR:** Surely, it should be on the basis of actual risk rather than perceived risk?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Again, you'd think there would be a commonsense approach and hopefully we're going down that path.

**The CHAIR:** Well, we haven't. Ever since I've been involved in the shooting politics, I've never seen a commonsense approach taken by the registry when it comes to ranges. We actually did, under previous supervisors of the registry. Under "Bluey" Lyons, for example, recommendations did go up to the police ministry, through the police, to adopt as an alternate approach a risk-based approach. In other words, a proper risk assessment. As you would do, for example, if you are doing anything—whether you were going to do mining or any workplace health and safety arrangement—you do a risk assessment. But, again, it always stops dead. It never seems to go anywhere. Why wouldn't you do that? Of course, that then leads to the perception amongst the users of those ranges that they're being victimised because it doesn't make any sense. It makes a fool out of the bureaucratic process. I draw your attention back to the Goulburn example, where they have been shooting there since the Anzac days into a mountain, but the range is closed now. I ask you, why? That's the thing—why? What has changed?

**SCOTT WHYTE:** I'll take that on board, sir, and I'll look into the Goulburn range. As I said before, a lot of what you said makes sense and I will certainly take a commonsense approach when we look into these regulations.

**The CHAIR:** I only draw on Goulburn because it is such a starkly stupid decision, which seems to hang around like a bad smell. We just can't seem to get rid of it. But there are lots and lots of minor decisions around ranges that deal with that—for example, calibre restrictions that make no sense at all, velocity restrictions that make no sense at all. I could go on. Commissioner, there have been a spate of cases recently where local police officers have failed the firearms safe storage inspections, insisting that safes weighing over 150 kilos must be



bolted down. Commissioner, why is it that the local police officers do not understand the firearms safe storage requirements as set out in section 40 of the Firearms Act?

**KAREN WEBB:** I will go to Mr Whyte on that one, please.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Thank you, ma'am. Sir, yes, I don't disagree. A couple of those instances have occurred and, luckily, we've had ability through the Firearms Consultative Committee for it to be brought to our notice straightaway, and we've obviously rectified it straightaway. There has been some misinterpretation and perhaps our internal guidelines around safe storage were probably a little bit robust. They've been redone. They're focused more now on the actual legislative requirements rather than best practice. We fixed it when we've come into those problems. Obviously, it's something that's ongoing.

We've got a March date for all of our licensed officers in the State to come down to Goulburn. We're having a conference. We're going to do some education around safe storage. We can only do continual education through internal messaging, articles in our police monthly, and the annual conference with our licensing people, which we do, and the continued update of our fact sheets on the system, which we're doing now. But, you're not wrong. But can I say from the outset that the number of those compared to the number of transactions at 50,000 a month and the couple that we get wrong, if we get one or two wrong and the officer's intent is that they are trying to err on the side of community safety, well, I would rather fix them up post than do them wrong in the first place.

**The CHAIR:** There is nothing wrong. I don't dispute erring on the side of community safety. But I have seen body-worn camera video of what's been said to firearms owners in their own houses whilst these inspections are being done and it's not edifying, and it's certainly not correct. Again, it does give the impression—because it ends up all over the internet and social media and all that sort of stuff—that police are making up the rules and making up the law as they go along.

**SCOTT WHYTE:** Yes, we certainly could do without it. I don't disagree.

**The CHAIR:** All right, thank you. I'm finished.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** Mr Chair, I showed the witnesses—the police commissioner, the deputy police commissioner and the assistant crime commissioner—a photograph. I want to table that. I have sent a JPEG to the secretariat.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** It can be a tabled document.

**The CHAIR:** It's got all the names on it.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** It's labelled, for ease of reference.

**The CHAIR:** Not that they mean anything to me. Anything else?

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** I have one more question, if that's okay. This is just going back a little bit in relation to the issuing of COVID fines, in particular in the Walgett area. Are there members of the community in Walgett that still have outstanding COVID fines that they have not been able to pay, or who are on hardship payments? I was made aware of a particular concern by the Dharriwaa Elders Group, who sat down with a police officer through their liaison officer. Sorry, I can't remember the correct term. The Dharriwaa Elders Group does a lot of frontline work assisting with the Aboriginal community there. They were assured that the fine system was not going to be used, and then they found out that it was. They were dealing with some members of the community—I was informed it was quite a number—who were really stressed and really struggling. Is that still an issue?

**KAREN WEBB:** I'm unaware of that issue until you raised it, but I'll certainly take that on notice. In terms of the issue around paying the fines through a payment plan or some other arrangement, that's done through Revenue NSW. But in terms of the situation around fining people, I know that the numbers—and I will provide them on notice subsequent to this—are much lower in the last few months. I was asked that question this morning, but the numbers are much smaller. But I don't have the spread of where they've been issued at this point in time.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** If there are still outstanding issues and people suffering hardship, particularly in that area, are you willing to look at that now and seek whatever you can do to alleviate that burden?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, we will certainly look at it. But it doesn't sound like it's a current issue, and it might be an issue from earlier on. But I will examine that and take that on notice.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. Just one final question. The Coroner's report on deaths in custody that was tabled in Parliament on 22 July included a report about an incident of a person who died in Mount Druitt



police custody from a cocaine overdose. The Coroner identified that the current policy requires that police obtain a detainee's medication or medical advice, but there's no clarity on how that should be obtained. The Coroner made a particular recommendation. Are you seeking to address that directly? The question really is how do police obtain this information, and are you seeking to address that particular recommendation?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, we would. If it's a Coroner's recommendation and if we accepted the recommendation, we would certainly be looking to remedy that issue to make that clearer for officers.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** If that recommendation includes having a guideline in the handbook, is that something you would seek to do?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Great, thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** Commissioner—and maybe Mr Hudson knows the answer to this one—have you ever heard of a wearable accelerometer?

**KAREN WEBB:** I haven't.

**DAVID HUDSON:** No.

**The CHAIR:** I'll hand up a paper to you anyway.

**KAREN WEBB:** What does it do?

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** It sounds like something out of *The Jetsons*.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** It sounds like an app.

**The CHAIR:** It's a copy of a paper by a Professor Loeffler at the University of Pennsylvania Department of Criminology, and it "presents the first results demonstrating the feasibility of using wearable inertial sensors to recognise wrist movements and other signals corresponding to firearm usage". That's where I'll leave it.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Excuse me, Mr Chair. If I could just correct something on the record?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**GEORGINA BEATTIE:** Mr Veitch, it's about your earlier question about the Legacy Mines Program. I know you're going to come back with some further questions, but I just wanted to clarify for the record that the McKinnons site has \$10.5 million allocated from the program and the Hebburn site is \$4.5 million.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We've come to the end of the questioning, and it's now Government question time.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I think we're okay, thank you, Chair.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** I just want to thank everyone for being here.

**The CHAIR:** I note that a number of questions were taken on notice. The secretariat will be in contact with you all, and you have 21 days to respond. Thank you very much for coming today.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee proceeded to deliberate.**