

The committee convened at 8.30 am.

Mr CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome back to estimates 2022. I acknowledge that we gather this morning on Larrakia land, and I pay my respects to Larrakia elders, past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the Pitjantjatjara and Arrernte mobs from Central Australia where I grew up—it is always important for me to make that acknowledgement.

MINISTER WORDEN'S PORTFOLIOS

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr CHAIR: I invite the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services to make a brief opening statement. We will call for questions relating to the statement. The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy-related questions, before moving on to output-specific questions and, finally, non-output specific budget-related questions.

I will invite the shadow minister to ask questions first, followed by committee members, of which we have four plus a proxy this morning—Mr Burgoyne for Mr Yan. Then other MLAs, such as Independents and the like, can attend. We have agreed that members may join in on a line of questioning, so you do not have to wait until the end to ask a question. That will keep the flow going and everything should be good.

I will quickly run through a couple of things. We have the opportunity to go *in camera* if required—if there is confidential information that we do not want outside of the committee. During the day, you may see media coming in and out, taking photos and getting footage.

Everyone is comfortable and aware of Standing Order 109, which is the manner and form of questions. I will run through it, because it is the start of the day in a new week. Questions are not to be debated; they should not contain statements of facts or names of persons, unless they are strictly necessary to render the question intelligible and can be authenticated. They should not contain arguments, inferences, imputations, insults, or hypothetical matters.

Questions must not ask ministers for an expression of opinion, or to announce a new policy of the government, but may seek an explanation regarding the policy of the government and its application. They should not ask a minister for a legal opinion. Questions may not be asked that reflect on, or are critical of, the character or conduct of those persons whose conduct may be challenged only on a substantive motion. Questions critical of character or conduct of other persons must be asked in writing.

Mrs WORDEN: I acknowledge the Larrakia people as well, as traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we are gathered today. I pay my respects, as do our group of people on this side, to elders past, present and emerging, and recognise First Nations people with us today.

I start by introducing the members of Police, Fire and Emergency Services, who are appearing with me today and will assist me to respond to your questions: Commissioner of Police and Chief Executive Officer of the Fire and Emergency Services, Mr Jamie Chalker APM; and the Deputy Commissioner, Murray Smalpage APM. We have others, who will join us if necessary, including Chief Fire Officer, Mark Spain; Chief Finance Officer, Paul Kelly; and Lisa Wilson, Chief of Staff.

As a Territorian and local member, I have come to know many of the members and staff of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. It is a great honour to now have these essential services as part of my ministerial portfolios. Police officers, firefighters, emergency services personnel are staff who support the front line. They are people we see and how are actively involved in our community every day. We see them picking up kids at school, in the supermarket and on the sidelines at our sporting events. They are our family, friends and neighbours, who put their lives on the line every day to serve and protect Territorians.

Our government has invested significantly in the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The 2022–23 budget has increased by \$22.1m, or 4.5%, compared to the 2021–22 budget. Of this total amount there will be \$10.2m for the remote policing implementation plan consisting of an additional 21 FTE police roles; the establishment of community resilience and engagement commands; 30 Aboriginal liaison officers; and four support roles.

The implementation plan provides a framework and pathway to prioritise resource deployment. This ensures responsive and genuine delivery of police services, maximises local police presence and will drive regional

and remote policing over the next decade to achieve exceptional regional and remote service delivery by connecting our people and our community through engagement and partnerships.

As our response changes to the COVID-19 pandemic, more police are back on streets and focusing on crime prevention and engagement. The response from this agency to protect Territorians from the COVID-19 pandemic, led by the Territory Controller, who is also our Police Commissioner and CEO of Fire and Emergency Services, has been consistent, clear and decisive.

In a nutshell, it has significantly contributed to keeping our community safe. The endless hours, remote locations and sacrifices made to drop whatever they were doing at a moment's notice to deploy to borders or remote communities, is testament to the character of these incredible Territorians. At the peak of operations, there were 124 PFES personnel assigned to the COVID-19 response during any rostered week. It is pleasing to see our members returned to more normal duties associated with policing, firefighting and emergency services.

Within this new portfolio, I see great synergies with my other ministerial portfolios, as I am also Minister for Territory Families and Minister for Prevention of Domestic Family and Sexual Violence. The insidious bite of domestic violence demands action.

Domestic family and sexual violence is a serious issue that affects victims, families and the wider community. A whole-of-community response is required to ensure the safety, wellbeing and protection of people in the Northern Territory. Police, Fire and Emergency Services, as well as Territory Families, Health, Education and Corrections, can all play a part in making change.

We continue to see strong activity in our recruitment. On Friday I, along with the Leader of the Opposition, attended the graduation of Recruit Constable Squad 145. We welcomed 26 new police officers, who will serve and protect Territorians. Our police college is doing an incredible job training our new members. They are training two further recruit constable squads, an Aboriginal community police officer squad and two auxiliary squads, including front line. In total, 78 recruit members are going through training.

A big thank you to our career, auxiliary and volunteer fireies, who operate out of 27 locations across the Northern Territory, providing 24-hour emergency response service in both urban and regional locations. I will also give a brief mention to all of our volunteers, who form more than 50% of the NT Fire and Rescue Service workforce. They make a significant contribution by responding to all incidents, including road crash rescues and hazard reduction.

The Fire and Rescue Service is focusing on strong support in remote and regional communities ensuring personnel at these stations are embedded and integrated within their communities. We are building a fire service that we can be very proud of—which it is already. Highlights include: two firefighter recruit squads, each comprising of 12 recruits commencing in 2022; Squad 46 commenced on 19 April and will conclude at the end of August; and Squad 47 will commence on 27 September and graduate in February next year.

Construction on the new Palmerston Regional Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services complex is expected to be completed at the end of July this year. This new facility will bring together the Palmerston Fire Station and the Northern Territory Emergency Service centre in Yarrowonga into one facility, ensuring a safe and resilient Northern Territory.

The vast majority of our emergency service personnel are drawn from everyday Territorians, who volunteer their time and achieve amazing results. They do this, not only in their community, but heed the call from other jurisdictions. Eight NTS volunteer members deployed from Darwin assisted New South Wales State Emergency Services in response and recovery to flood-affected communities in February this year, with a second deployment of six personnel in April.

Other portfolio highlights included the 2021–22 Wet Season, where there were several weather events: Tropical Cyclone Seth in December 2021; Tropical Cyclone Tiffany in January 2022; and a 23-year weather event in February. Tropical Cyclones Seth and Tiffany required the activation of a second Emergency Operation Centre. The southern region also experienced flooding events in November last year.

In the period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, NTES volunteers contributed over 1,400 hours in response to 139 requests for assistance to the public and other agencies. NTES delivered 283 training courses, which resulted in volunteers contributing 863 hours on formal skills training required for response roles. That does not include the many hours spent by volunteers in informal skills maintenance training.

I have only touched on the breadth of the work that this agency and its people do to protect our community. I thank you for the opportunity to provide that overview. To all of the frontline firies, police and emergency workers, Every Territorian and I thanks you for what you do every day. I thank the committee for its important questions today and I look forward to responding to them.

Mr CHAIR: I forgot one thing before we started, which was for the Questions on Notice. I will have to interrupt to go through the procedure. The most important thing is that the light needs to be on when you are talking.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you all for coming. Many thanks to the people behind the scenes, who put in a power of work to prepare the budget by making pitches to Cabinet and preparing your senior executive. Thank you to those in department land, watching closely and trying to provide the best support that you can. It is much appreciated, because it is a very highly-valued process.

Minister, you are the new minister and have come into the policing portfolio at a critical, if not a crisis point, in policing. We have the highest levels of attrition ever seen, at a forecast of about 10% this year. The mental health support to our police is a major issue discussed this year. We had terrible tragedies across the Territory. Morale is at an all-time low, and there is much public and private discussion regarding confidence in the Police executive.

What is it that you will do as the new minister to change direction for the police force?

Mrs WORDEN: Is that a budget question? I thought we were here for the budget. You asked me a question about going forward. I have been in the job for three weeks. We have already had very in-depth discussions about all of the subjects you just touched on. We agreed on a few strategies within that three weeks. We have also prepared for today to answer questions on Budget 2021–22. Would you like to ask me a question about that?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: With all due respect, budget estimates is also about policy. The Chair explained in his opening that questions would be about the policy of the government. You are the new minister. Every Territorian and police officer listening would expect you to outline your vision for how you will turn these things around.

Mrs WORDEN: In a three-week window, you want me to tell you exactly how I will turn around everything that you have indicated is broken? I do not agree with the premise of your question. Yes, there is a lot of work to do on the issue of morale and wellbeing. There was an extensive report. I have read that and will be working intensively with the commissioner to make sure that the findings of that report are implemented. Some of that work has already commenced.

I am still getting out and about to meet people to understand their views. I am talking to Police, Fire and Emergency Services personnel firsthand. That is my approach. I will continue to do that after this process. The commissioner and I meet weekly to have a range of discussions. I have already met with the NTPA and the firies' union. I am meeting with people to form an overarching view. I had to get my head across Budget 2021–22. We had lots of discussions regarding the next budget. That has been all-consuming for three weeks.

My vision is that the members will feel supported in their work, have the right training and tools, and they have a robust organisation they are proud of. That is where my focus is and where I have started. I began that work with the commissioner and that is what I will continue to do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I understand that you have only been in the job for three weeks. Attending budget estimates is—professing not to be across your brief will not cut the mustard for the role of a Police minister. That role really should be with the Chief Minister. You are the minister; these are significant issues, and they have been for a long time. Your predecessor did not take these issues by the horns and show the leadership required to deal with them. What is your priority in terms of agency direction?

Mrs WORDEN: I just indicated what my priorities are. I will not sit here and debate with you. If you are seeking a gotcha moment from me today, you will not to get it. You are not here for the media grabs; we are here to discuss the budget. I reject the premise of your question that I am not across what we are discussing today.

I have invested the time, and public servants have invested their time, to prepare for today. What we do tomorrow, and what we have done in the last few weeks will progress, but to think that we have had a massive

reform in three weeks—to say that everything else before me has failed—I reject the premise of your question.

If we could get to the budget—and you ask me a budget question—I am very happy to talk about that. That is what we and every public servant, who invested in significant information, have prepared for today. Could we just move on? If you want to have a briefing about where our direction from here is, that is fine.

We have certain operational requirements for all of the services. I have made it very clear that my priority is to talk to the members to make sure that their wellbeing is taken care of, and that they are well-equipped to do their job, so we get outcomes on the ground. That is my priority. I hope that we turn today's discussion to debate the budget.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Budget estimates is a very large policy and budgetary discussion, so I will not be abandoning my questions to suit what you would like to talk about today. The whole point of coming here is to be open and transparent, which is something that your government resists at all costs. It is amazing to see you continue in that train.

If you want to pick one element of what I am asking about, pick 'wellbeing'. That report has been sitting with government for how long?

Mrs WORDEN: I saw the report a few days ago, and read it. The first time it was provided to government was in March. We had a change of ministers, so I saw it last week following a presentation. I had a presentation and have now seen the report. That is a discussion we will have going forward. It is my intention that it will be responded to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Since March that report has been under consideration by government. We are now ...

Mrs WORDEN: No, you are twisting that. I did not say that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is what you just said. When did government receive it? You said March. Is that not the right date?

Mrs WORDEN: The commissioner received it in March. I read the report and had a briefing on it—there is a process to go through with a new incoming minister, which has already commenced. I made my feelings concerning wellbeing very clear to the commissioner, and put that in writing. He is aware of my 100% commitment to making sure that wellbeing is addressed. There are other things in train already that came out of the report—restructuring within the service.

Commissioner CHALKER: We received the final report in March, then prepared our relevant briefs to come across to government, while also starting to work out our plan to implement the various recommendations. There were a number of things we are able to progress relatively quickly. That included the return of the FTE, which had been part of the corporate services reform of our human resources across to DCDD, and to return them back into the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. For that to be effected required a significant amount of engagement and work.

We also did key stakeholder engagement. We are working on a communications plan. We started communicating internally over the period of time since March about where we are going. The clear thing is that unfortunately, the model we are moving to, and the recommendations which are replaced, will not be overnight fixes. If they were, we would have implemented them post-haste.

What we were intent on doing was ensuring that the key stakeholders, including the unions and our people, were involved in the outcome of what the recommendations are, prepare them and seek their feedback. Then we will start putting this work plan into place. There is a significant amount of work in train, and a significant amount of reform the recommendations allude to, which are both internally and structurally relevant; as well as a greater commitment into our resourcing, and broadening our approaches.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Police executive received it in March? What is the process then—commissioner, you mentioned preparing that report for government. Did you have to make a Cabinet submission to implement the recommendation, or seek additional funding? What is government's involvement in implementing the report?

Commissioner CHALKER: We provided a brief to the minister at the time. We subsequently did that with the incoming minister, so they had an awareness of the report, its findings and the work that we are seeking

to do. We have not progressed yet to a formal Cabinet submission, because we want to consolidate through our planning what that looks like.

We know the model we are aspiring to, based on the case study that was preferred and recommended. The reality is that it is unlikely we will achieve that in a short period of time. Part of the work occurring—we got the report in March, we are now in June, and worked over April and May to consolidate it and prepare the relevant information to communicate to people, as well as doing the business currently before us.

There will be a formalised Cabinet submission as we work out what the formal plan is. We are also working toward developing a more formal wellbeing strategy, which will align to the future direction we are trying to undertake with the various recommendations that have come forward.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When is it anticipated that the recommendations will be fully implemented? Will it require additional funding from government?

Mrs WORDEN: That is an ongoing discussion, which we will have once we see the plan, but there are components of the plan that can be done immediately.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Which components are they?

Mrs WORDEN: The filling of some positions—there has been some structural HR transfer. There is an area specifically designated to this work, and that structural stuff has already occurred.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Up until recently, Alice Springs has not had a chaplaincy service, is that correct?

Mrs WORDEN: That is correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How long has the chaplaincy service in Alice Springs been vacant?

Mrs WORDEN: About four weeks, but there was a visit by the chaplain from Darwin. There are other services beyond the chaplaincy being provided.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It was in last estimates that we asked questions about Alice Springs and the police psychologist position, which had been vacant for some time. Is that position still existing, or is it filled?

Mrs WORDEN: No, there are positions filled, but there has not been a chaplain and there has not been a wellbeing officer. The review indicated that wellbeing officers were potentially not the right structure or fit for the organisation, but I have asked the commissioner to make sure the filling of those positions is a priority.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Why was it only last week that ads for the two chaplaincy officers were publicly put out?

Mrs WORDEN: There were impending retirements that had to occur first.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A chaplaincy position could not have been put in as people were retiring?

Commissioner CHALKER: That was upon understanding the dates that people were moving on—that is when the advertising was occurring. I believe the team were also cognisant of what the report would ultimately provide. Overwhelmingly, the chaplaincy services were very well supported by our employees, and one that we want to maintain a level of investment in.

We had our substantive chaplain resign during the course of late last year. We managed to have an interim chaplain in place in the southern area, who had previously worked with us. We are actively working out how we can source additional chaplains. Our northern chaplain has indicated that her well-deserved retirement is also impending.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will this wellbeing report be made public?

Mrs WORDEN: I do not have an issue with it being made public. Would you like it to be made public?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of course.

Mrs WORDEN: There was never a commitment to make it public. Sometimes reports are made public and sometimes they are not. I do not see any harm in providing you with a copy, if you would like it. There are no secrets in it. It is a very self-explanatory and straightforward report. It reports the facts and indicates the areas that need to be worked on.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will you publicly publish that today?

Mrs WORDEN: I am wondering how you would like me to publicly publish that. I am happy to provide you with a copy. We will not put it on a website and broadcast it to everybody.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I asked if it would be made public, and you said, 'Yes'. That is different to giving me a copy.

Mrs WORDEN: I did not say yes. What I said was that there was never any public commitment. Sometimes when government does a report, there is an early statement to say that when it comes it out, it will be made public et cetera. There was never a commitment to make this one—this is an internal, operational report.

What I am saying to you, is that if you would like a copy, I am happy—as I did last year for the Member for Araluen—to give you a copy of that report. That is different to publishing it publicly. I am happy to make the report available, if that is what you would like. There was never a commitment to making it—it is an operational and internal review, which I am happy to provide you a copy of.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It will not be released to the public?

Mrs WORDEN: I do not think that there is any need to do that. It is an internal, operational—it affects people internally.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In terms of implementation of the wellbeing report, any other strategies, and restructuring taking place within police—when will all of this be finalised?

Commissioner CHALKER: We are working on what our time frames look like. There are a number of elements we need to do within that. A submission to understand what the budget profile and allocation will be, is an imperative element, as is how it relates to other recommendations we want to do.

I am happy to advise that a key part is growing our peer support network, how we better provide them with ongoing support, and broaden the number of people who are trained, particularly in critical incident stress management. The external psychologists—similar to the chaplains—were some of the highest rating, as it related to support, more so than internally available resources. A lot of that goes to confidentiality and people feeling more confident.

We are working on a time frame, but there are key elements within that, which will influence it. The broader commitment that we have, is that we know the reason we had this review kicked off. It was across the board—nobody was feeling that the current model, which had been in place for a considerable period of time, was meeting the need and growing demand. Something had to be done, which is why we initiated it last year.

Mrs WORDEN: I will add that this has been an ongoing issue. Going back to your original question, this is a focus for me and my police leadership.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is good to hear. At this stage would you expect there will be a budget pitch to government? You will not be able to implement everything you want to do without additional resourcing.

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct. We anticipate, with the case study that we looked at, that we will need further investment in this space, predominantly because of the FTE growth required.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is in this year's budget for preventative response mental health services?

Mrs WORDEN: There is \$1.65m for health and wellbeing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What does that look like? What is that made up of—a certain number of health and wellbeing officers, external support, psychologists?

Commissioner CHALKER: That \$1.65m covers 12 FTE. The model is inclusive of chaplains, health and wellbeing officers, internal psychologists, as well as support and administrative streams.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Attrition is another significant issue. The NTPA is expecting that to hit 10% this year, which is completely unsustainable. When Labor first came to government it was about 2% to 3%. Even at that time, people were concerned about our ability to replace that experience and the police on the ground.

At 10% there must be a different strategy. We cannot keep accepting that as the accepted level of churn in policing. We have to do more to retain our people. It costs a fortune to find them and train them. There is also all the experience they gain in the job, and those relationships and connections, only for them to leave a few years later.

Is this a key priority for you? What do you see as some of the most important issues you have to address to lower that attrition rate?

Mrs WORDEN: Policing in the Northern Territory is across 1.35 million square kilometres. It is unique. I am meeting people on the ground—as you do, Leader of the Opposition. Working in the Northern Territory Police Force comes with unique experiences and challenges, which affect them.

We increased the budget by 36% since 2016 and are investing heavily in police. Some of that goes toward ongoing recruitment, which we have demonstrated. By addressing wellbeing, which we spent the first moments talking about, and making sure that people feel valued and supported in their roles—their whole wellbeing is more important in this agency than any other agency across the Northern Territory. Although Territory Families also has similar issues for their frontline staff.

There are challenges. We have already discussed some of them. We are working towards a plan for attrition post-estimates. That is a priority. I will continue to talk to those serving on the front line about their views on their jobs. We have the wellbeing report, which is a key component of the work we need to address. Regarding attrition, there is significant exit work done by the executive when staff members move on. There are also competing issues across other jurisdictions—that will give you some context.

Commissioner CHALKER: The issue of attrition is hitting police forces across the country and is a discussion that occurs at the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency—ANZPAA. It has become very critical for many of jurisdictions; they cannot recruit to attrition. We have managed to stay in front of that, throughout.

We have clear strategies to ensure that our attraction approach for people to join our agency has kept us with the appropriate resources to deal with all that has been thrown at us, particularly in the last two years. Our attrition rate is not inconsistent with national trends. Within estimates over the last week, you have heard of other agencies suffering quite significantly from attrition, as well, and very high percentages.

We wanted to be on the front foot with our recruit squad process and our recruiting. Noting that, for us to be able to produce a resource to ultimately become an employee in our agency, is not as simple as just advertising for an expression of interest externally or in the paper and hoping to have someone commence employment and be fully operational within four weeks.

We go through a significant recruitment process where we have to vet people to make sure their suitability is appropriate. Training is then upwards of 30 weeks for a recruit constable. We need all these plans in place and continuing, as it relates to the future year, to make sure that we are staying in front.

In the meantime, we are working very closely with people who moved on from us prior to March this year. Supervisors had conversations with 81 people who separated from agency. The various reasons provided included career changes, family and medical. Across the board people were missing family from interstate. Historically, we were recruiting more people from interstate. Proudly, we have been focused on trying to attract and recruit more people from the Northern Territory.

We had significant impacts on people through COVID, and the leave limitations that were in place. One of the other things that came through was that people worked out policing was not for them. That has been a consistent message that has come across most police forces in the country. We are wrestling with this issue at the moment.

Our attrition rate up to 2021–22 at 31 March was at 8.81%. That was up by 0.3% from the previous year. Last year there was a significant jump. Prior to that, it was 4.92% and 4.66%. Through effective strategies, we managed to ensure that our recruitment stayed above attrition.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There were 81 exit interviews undertaken—out of how many people leaving was that?

Mrs WORDEN: That is 141 as at 31 March.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There is still a very significant portion of people who are not willing to cooperate.

Mrs WORDEN: Those 141 separations include one officer passing away. There are a range of scenarios, which are not just a straight leaving type of scenario. There are also retirements.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are exit interviews asked of everyone who is leaving?

Mrs WORDEN: My experience is that it is across the whole NTPS. It is a normal HR practice. It would be the same for the Legislative Assembly employees, or for anybody separating.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It sounds normal, but in the past couple of years with policing it has not been as big a focus as it could or people have not wanted to participate. These numbers are bigger in the last couple of years.

Mrs WORDEN: Now it is a focus and it is something that is practised. My understanding is that it is practised across the whole of the Northern Territory Public Service.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We have a natural attrition here in the Territory. People come from interstate, stay for a while and go. Generally, policing is a lifetime career. People do not become a cop for a couple of years and then do something else.

This idea that people are saying in their exit interview that they are returning interstate for family reasons et cetera—I am very suspicious about people feeling comfortable enough to be honest in those exit interviews and wonder if there is a better way to work this out.

I feel, as do my team, that this attrition rate has hit crisis levels. We have to look more holistically at what might be impacting on peoples' decisions. There is no question that the Rolfe trial had a lot to do with attrition. Disciplinary matters and a range of other things feed into why someone might leave. It is easy for someone to say, 'I miss mum and dad', so they are going back to Brisbane or wherever. That is why we fought hard to have a select committee address this issue.

Minister, you are fresh into this role. I hope that this is a major focus point for you. Have you put any thought into how we can approach attrition differently, and into understanding what the real driving factors are for people leaving the force, because of the sheer high volumes there are?

Mrs WORDEN: The commissioner outlined a number of the reasons. The Northern Territory is not unique. Outside of the police service, a lot of people in other jobs made the decision to return to family post-COVID. You cannot take that away. It takes people a while to come to decisions post-COVID about the importance of family. The fact that you could not visit others during COVID forced the hand of people to make that decision. There was genuine decision-making for people wanting to return home to family. COVID affected people a lot more than we anticipated two years ago. The attrition numbers with the police indicate part of that.

I make no bones about the fact that the wellbeing piece is important and is my priority. I made that very clear three weeks ago when I took up the portfolio. It all comes together and is part of the bigger picture about retention. The exit strategies—while I acknowledge your point of view that not everybody will want to do them or be fully forthcoming—some of it is about the questions asked at an exit interview. There is the possibility there are better ways to do that.

This will form part of the work we do going forward. For me, it is pleasing to see that we are staying ahead of attrition. It has been a priority, particularly over COVID. Acknowledging the bigger number of people who make those choices is important. Training is expensive and it is better to keep—and there is a component of wanting people to return to work if they have been on leave or sick leave. It is all included. We will not silo each of the issues, because they form part of attrition and exits, as well as recruitment. It is a whole area. It is my focus and something that we have already set our minds to work our way through.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you think it would be beneficial to have a more independent and confidential way, for police who are exiting to express their concerns, so that government or police executive can have more raw information and things can be dealt with in a more targeted way?

Mrs WORDEN: That is one way; you can also do it online. There are a range of things that can be done to provide more confidentiality—there is already online capacity. We are putting our mind to this whole area. We are not segmenting it; it will come from wellbeing and the drive in that report. That is our focus.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you think there is value in doing exit interviews on members of the force who are retiring? Given their experience and tenure within the police force, they may have insightful information about the changes they have seen over their time, and why there is the churn in rank and file. That might not necessarily be why they are leaving, but why others are leaving.

Mrs WORDEN: They are offered an exit interview.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the uptake of exit interviews for those retiring? Do you have a breakdown of how many have retired and how many undertook exit interviews?

Mrs WORDEN: It is a manual count to pull that data.

Question on Notice No 5.1

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police officers have retired for the reporting period? Of those who retired, how many undertook an exit interview?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.1.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many sworn officers separated in the reporting period for any reason?

Mrs WORDEN: That was the 141 I provided.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can we break the 141 into resignations and terminations?

Mrs WORDEN: There were two dismissals, 108 resignations, 30 retirements and one deceased.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thirty is a significant number of retirements. What rank range did they come from, and can that be broken down?

Commissioner CHALKER: There were 24 constables and above—which would be the ranks of senior sergeant, sergeant, senior constable and constable—and six police auxiliaries. We can get that broken down on the specific rank numbers during this period for you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That would be good. Out of that 141, were any due to the mandatory vaccination for COVID?

Mrs WORDEN: Nil at this point.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There were no police who lost their jobs, because they did not want to have the COVID vax?

Commissioner CHALKER: There was a number who did not comply with the mandate—I think it was three for police. Work occurred with them in respect to that. The matters are before the tribunal, so they are under administrative process.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police were stood down with pay over the mandate?

Commissioner CHALKER: My memory was that it was only three who were proceeded against. I am not sure there were broader than that, but I will confirm for you shortly.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: With the three before the tribunal—now that the rules have changed, does that end those court proceedings, or it continues?

Commissioner CHALKER: My advice and understanding, consistent across NTG and broader applications, is that the point in time when the non-compliance occurred is still the subject of the matter. The fact that the mandate has now lifted does not allow retrospective review of that. The compliance element was required at the time for the mandate.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The annual report showed 1,642 FTEs for sworn officers. What is the current number?

Commissioner CHALKER: It is 1,641. The total head count was 1,669.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It was reported that nine police regions have voted for the Northern Territory Police Association to hold a vote of no confidence in the commissioner and deputy commissioner. What work are you undertaking to ensure the relationship between rank and file police officers and the executive is as strong and connected as it needs to be?

Mrs WORDEN: That is not a budget-related question. We are here for the budget. I said to you earlier that I will not play up to gotcha moments for you today.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am not sure what you mean by ‘gotcha moment’. We have spent all morning talking about police attrition, police morale and issues that might impact that. I am not asking a leading question or casting aspersions. I am asking you what you are doing to ensure that the trust of rank and file—the relationship between rank and file and the executive—is stronger?

I am sure there is always an element of executive and troop differentials across a range of military and paramilitary organisations, but what are you doing as minister, to ensure that relationship is as close and as understood as possible?

Mrs WORDEN: I have already expressed what my priorities are with only holding the portfolio for a very short amount of time. It is ongoing work and a broad ranging discussion for me and the commissioner. I would like to stick to budget-related questions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is a policy-related question.

Mrs WORDEN: It is not a policy-related question; it is not a budget-related question at all. There is a lot of work that goes into preparing answers for the 2021–22 budget. That is the important part. The commissioner and I will continue to work together to improve areas like morale and wellbeing. I have made it very clear that is my focus. I welcome budget-related questions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is not a concern to you that at least six regions—but reported today, nine regions—held these votes? You said that you have been across the Territory talking to rank and file at police stations. Is this something that was raised with you?

Mrs WORDEN: I do not think that is related to the budget at all. My focus is on wellbeing; there is a lot of work we need to do together. That is my response and I would like you to ask me a budget-related question. That is what we are here for and what the staff across the Territory have prepared responses for. We are here today for those questions. If you want to respond to today’s media, then perhaps you should take up a job in the media; you might be better at it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am not sure why you are angry at the media today. There is no media here; I do not know if you have noticed.

Mrs WORDEN: I am not angry at the media; I have a job to do and so do you. You have a different job to do than the media.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, that is right. My job is to hold you to account on the police portfolio and that is exactly what I am doing.

Mrs WORDEN: About the budget; this is called budget estimates for a reason.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is exactly right. You said that there are plenty of public servants who did a lot of preparation for today. Are you telling me that not a single person in your office or in the department prepared an answer for you—since you cannot come up with one yourself—about how you are dealing with this issue of some of the NTPA sub-branches having concerns about the executive?

Mrs WORDEN: I just had a meeting with the NTPA. I have regular meetings with the NTPA, as I do with the commissioner and the United Voice for firies.

What is important today is that we discuss the budget. Every year after estimates you whinge about not having enough time to talk about the budget. How about, when we are in estimates, you talk about the budget instead of looking for a gotcha moment? Work for the media—there are no aspersions on the media; they have their jobs to do, but we are not here to do that today. We are here to talk about the budget and people are here prepared to do that for you. You are just wasting your time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not think it is a waste of time to ask about these issues, as uncomfortable as they might be.

Mrs WORDEN: I am not uncomfortable about it, I just know what my job is here.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I appreciate that. I am not making reflections one way or the other, but the facts are there. This is published information; it is in the public discourse. You just said that you had briefings with the NTPA. Have they raised with you these votes of no-confidence by some of the sub-branches?

Mrs WORDEN: Why would I come to budget estimates to tell you about meetings that I have with the NTPA?

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is about transparency; it sounds like you are trying to hide something.

Mrs WORDEN: I do not have to talk to you about meetings. I have meetings with many stakeholders across my portfolios. That is what ministers do; that is our job. I am not coming into budget estimates to talk about my discussions with the NTPA. I am happy to talk about the planning we are doing together to improve things. As a minister, you do that with every agency you are tasked for, as a minister. Today is called budget estimates. Let us talk about the budget.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have attended 12 of these hearings. Ministers always allow a certain amount of latitude, because it is our only opportunity, during a 12-month period, to look inside the Northern Territory public service and government departments to find out what has been going on.

The reality is that the Northern Territory police service has been shrouded in controversy for several years, through the Walker trial and various things that have happened. What is happening inside the police service is of enormous interest to the people of the Northern Territory. If you are saying that no, you will not answer any questions that do not directly relate to budget, then to me that says you are shutting down, and not being transparent by answering the questions in a way which demonstrates integrity

Mrs WORDEN: I am happy to talk about the work we will do regarding wellbeing and that needs to be done to reduce attrition. I will not talk about discussions I might have with the NTPA, where I consider some of that information confidential. In the same way that you could have a discussion with the NTPA; I do not expect you to walk in here and talk about that meeting. Those discussions are part of my work. I will retain the confidence of those discussions, as I meet with staff members of the agency across the Northern Territory.

There is important work to be done, but I will not sit here and talk about those discussions. I take that on board. When I have those discussions, I take on all the viewpoints of the people that I meet with. I use that to inform myself. That is what is really important. I consider all the feedback I get. I am meeting regularly—it is in the diary—with the NTPA. As far as I know, Paul McCue is very happy with that arrangement. I am meeting with Mark Spain, from the firies regularly, along with the firies' union, as well as meeting with Fleur O'Connor about the emergency services.

That is the job and it is how I have set myself up as the minister to make sure that I am hearing that as well as meeting with people on the ground. It is only three weeks and I have not met with everybody possible but I will be out there and listening. That will come back and inform part of my decision-making.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is about increased attrition in our police force, which is a budget question, because attrition means that we have to recruit. Recruitment is expensive. Losing police is debilitating and expensive. All of it plays a major role in police resourcing, the police budget et cetera. This is a matter of public interest.

Is it of concern to you that nine regions across the Northern Territory would like the NTPA to hold a vote of no confidence?

Mrs WORDEN: I will continue to have discussions with the NTPA about its views.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has this been raised with you during your regional visits so far?

Mrs WORDEN: I will not talk in budget estimates about discussions I had, some of which those members would like to continue to be private.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have you been notified of any results or votes from the NTPA?

Mrs WORDEN: I have read about those matters in the media. I am aware of them, as everybody in this room would be, if they tune into the media.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Morale has been incredibly low over a number of years. A lot of the low levels of morale were attributed to former Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, and the police force's confidence in him as Chief Minister. Will you be monitoring to see if there are any improvements in police morale now that there has been a changing of the guard? What new initiatives will you be making sure, as minister, that you—people want you to do something different. We have had this procession for six years of a woeful government, with the handballing of the Police ministry further down the line, which includes you, with due respect. What will you do differently?

Mrs WORDEN: There is no respect in that, thank you very much; I will take that on board.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You are not the Deputy Chief Minister, the Chief Minister nor the Attorney-General. You are not in the top three. You might be minister five. I do not know what number you are. You are not number one, that is for sure.

What will you do that is different? All we have heard you say is that things are continuing. I do not think the police force, the fires or the community want another caretaker in this role. They want someone who will take this by the horns, really throw passion into it, and have a high level of engagement with both the executive and the rank and file. All we have heard all morning—despite me raising mental health, attrition, morale, confidence in the executive—is that it is business as usual. Is this business as usual under you as the Police minister?

Mrs WORDEN: Thank you for the slap; it is great to know where I sit. I will have to go back and find out which number I sit at. I do not think any of us have numbers.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You do. There is always a number.

Mrs WORDEN: Maybe from your perspective. I am excited to take on the portfolio, because I see it as an indication of confidence in my ability from the new Chief Minister, Natasha Fyles. Despite your view, it is an honour, a massive privilege and a vote of confidence in my capability. I will not waste that.

Holding the two portfolios of Territory Families and Police presents itself in areas such as youth justice and diversion. Both agencies provide service and input into domestic, family and sexual violence—there are unique crossovers. I am the first minister to hold both portfolios, in their current state.

There are exciting things, particularly in the youth place, with closer collaboration and moving towards co-location of Territory Families. There is a huge acknowledgement that we are dealing with the same young people and families, particularly in youth diversion—the police are more at the pointy end. Closer collaboration will be a hallmark of my leadership for this agency. As I indicated, they all sit together on the wellbeing of staff, which lends itself to that attrition. There are lots of areas, which we will work on; we have already discussed many of them.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will you share them with us? You are saying voluminous and meaningless words, which you cannot be held to account on—anyone listening cannot understand them. As a minister of the Crown, you must have a vision, passion, drive and direction for your agency? Whether you have been in it three minutes, three days or three weeks is irrelevant. Three weeks down the track, give us tangible milestones that you would like to achieve in this area.

Mrs WORDEN: I indicated, had you been listening two seconds ago, that we are already working on co-location of staff in the youth diversion space. I would like that to happen straight away in Alice Springs. The commissioner has also indicated that he is happy for that to happen in Nightcliff. A lot of young people in detention are coming from Alice Springs, as well as the northern suburbs. We cannot just tap a person on the shoulder and say, 'Excuse me, will you move over there today?' That work is happening between agencies.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is your most significant measure; co-locating Territory Families and police at the Nightcliff Police Station? That is one of your biggest attrition morale unity ticket items?

Mrs WORDEN: You asked me for my vision on how to effect things in my role. I gave you an example of what could be done within three weeks. I have also asked about wellbeing to ensure that we work urgently on implementing the findings of the report. We can achieve those within three weeks.

We have had early discussions about possibilities in the domestic, family and sexual violence area. We are working through things and are being collaborative. ICRO has been established with the police, under the reform office, to address domestic, family and sexual violence, which is of big concern and consumes a large section of police work. That is already afoot to make sure that we have a vision across the whole of government, which includes Health and Education, as well as Territory Families.

Things are already moving along. Three weeks to do that, prepare properly for estimates today and get my head around all the issues for the new agency—but they will be hallmarks. The close collaboration with Territory Families and all working toward the same thing is another one of those.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not think you understand how significant the police portfolio is. Your top priorities relate to your existing portfolios. It begs the question, when you go into Cabinet, who are you battling for? Whose voice is the loudest? Police ask you to deal with one issue, for example, youth crime, motor vehicle theft, or commercial and home break-ins, yet on the other hand, Territory Families are saying, 'We need to let more kids out of prison'. When you go into cabinet, who are you battling for?

Mrs WORDEN: I am capable of separating the two. There is policing, but there is crossover. All I articulated to you was that there is now crossover that presents unique opportunities in those two spaces—anybody could see the opportunities that we now have.

You are the one who does not understand another agency supporting police to respond to those areas of at-risk youth and domestic, family and sexual violence. It means that police can have a change in police morale, if they are not always dealing with the same rubbish end of the stick, which is domestic, family and sexual violence. If they are not continuously confronted with that; they are not continuously working in the youth space and the pointy end of that—having other agencies supporting them will have a significant impact on the morale of frontline staff. You are missing that point; I was articulating that to you.

I am very conscious and aware of what is policing and what is Territory Families. There are significant areas that do not crossover.

Mr BURGOYNE: On that line of questioning, have police raised their concerns with you about the level of support they receive from Territory Families?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, there were discussions where police raised issues over the last couple of years when I have been the Territory Families minister. Now I have a unique opportunity to address them.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is what you are doing—trying to bring Territory Families to a point where they can better support our police force?

Mrs WORDEN: I am looking for collaboration across agencies. At the end of the month, for example, we will have a workshop with Police, Territory Families and diversion providers. They will come together to review what has been happening in the system. That has not happened before. There are opportunities to do that where issues are raised with possible flow through and consequences that we can work through together. Those are the unique opportunities we now have sitting with the one minister.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a question going back to a topic we moved on from. This is a question about the integrity and reputation of the police force. This is ultimately a budgetary issue, because if you do not have those things in place and working well, then it costs money. For example, like what the Opposition Leader was talking about, attrition and how those things can affect the police attrition rate.

Just going back to the question that she asked earlier—that is if you believe what you read in the media, 'Nine out of 12 NT Police Association regions in the NT have called for a vote of no confidence in the commissioner.' Do the rank and file of the police force have confidence in the Police Commissioner?

Mrs WORDEN: I will keep talking regularly to the NTPA about those issues. There are broader issues, as you said, there is not just one—we cannot sit here and say, 'This is it'. The Leader of the Opposition articulated that there were a series of events that affected things over a while—we have all read the media reports. My role as incoming minister is to ensure that we look at all possibilities to make sure that members feel supported, have a voice, and we can work together to improve things they raise with me.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What I am gleaning from the media and various reports from the people that I speak to, is that there is a problem within the rank and file of the police force. There is a lack of confidence, within the rank and file, in the commissioner. What work is being done to address that? How can the commissioner improve his standing with the rank and file officers?

Commissioner CHALKER: There is little doubt that the Northern Territory Police Force has been pulled from pillar to post across the board over the last number of years. In fact, if we are being candid, it has probably been over the last decade. It is an unfortunate reality that the Commissioner of Police has to—and it does strike at great personal costs—maintain their duty.

That is to ensure I respect all processes that are in place. It is unfortunate that there is so much rumour and rhetoric out there; I am unable to come out and correct that record out of respect for processes. The criminal trial was very prominent. Again, under much criticism, but following the legal advice I received, I said all that I could. I stuck inherently to my duty to all who are involved. It is very difficult and frustrating to be unable to correct the record, but I must respect the processes that are in play—that is, internal processes. These are not processes I established; they are long-standing processes.

As it broadly related to discipline, I am not the person who is investigating the referrals of matters that initiate disciplinary matters. There is a whole area in our agency set up to deal with Professional Standards. They do that under legislation as prescribed members and make relevant decisions based on what is there. We do not as a practice, out of respect and also in compliance with legislation as it relates to privacy of police officers, put out the full details that are the outcome of an investigation and the subsequent considerations that led to it. We do that because we have a duty of care.

There are a number of processes still afoot. I must and will continue to respect those processes. I will candidly say to you, it has been very heartbreaking for me to know that many people are operating under misguided beliefs. There are a number of the mistruths out there. I cannot comment on those, because of the various processes that are in place. I trust the processes that are in place, and that the truth will come out.

There are people who have been emotionally impacted by this, and they read a lot of the rhetoric out there. If you have all been reading the media, and it sounds like you have, then you would know that some of the commentary has been nothing short of disgusting. It has not been factual and was deliberately targeted to cause harm.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is relation to the Walker ...

Commissioner CHALKER: This is relation to a multitude of matters that are in the public domain. I am very proud of this police force and the agency generally. It is disappointing to see the behaviours that have gone on. I have to trust that the truth will come out. I also have to trust that the large majority—arguably, the silent majority—know that is the process in place, and these are not processes that I have implemented to deliberately cause harm to anybody.

It is a sad reality that we are given the role to investigate matters, which include the Yuendumu matter that saw Constable Rolfe charged, in collaboration with the DPP. I am on the record as saying—and I will stand by it—that I had no influence on that whatsoever. It is not in my charter. The process went through a lower court and then the Supreme Court, where a verdict was reached by the jury.

We have to provide the ongoing support for all people involved in that, including our police officers, but also our community. It has been very difficult against a backdrop of a lot of misinformation being out there, and it continually being reported in that way.

The intent of the support for health and wellbeing is a key part of what I have been trying to achieve. It is apparent, against a backdrop of us being exhausted through COVID—I have to make that point. I do not think that anyone could suggest the efforts of this agency have been anything but exemplary in its service to the community, considering what we have been dealing with.

We have not had full resourcing to devote to all of the things that we would have liked to have advanced ourselves to do, but we have made significant advancement. I returned the Territory duties superintendent to provide ongoing support to my frontline people upon my appointment back into the agency.

That has been very well-received, and people know that they have a commissioned officer looking out for them 24-7. All of my executive know that if we have any reports of assaults on police, or any of my fires get injured—the Chief Fire Officer knows—that we must reach out and touch base with those people to provide our support and do whatever we can. There is a clear intent of this executive to try to provide support, which has unfortunately, been diminished by the public rhetoric and picked up in workplace conversations.

In November we initiated that report. It clearly signalled our intent. Unfortunately, we had a number of tragic incidents—it personally impacted me as well, because they are people I have had longstanding personal and professional relationships with. This is an unfortunate outcome of all that we are dealing with. We are trying our hardest to make sure that every person is feeling supported. I know that people are struggling. I will keep getting out of bed every day to do that.

As it relates to the no-confidence motion, if that matter is ultimately progressed, then that is a matter for the NTPA to consider at their conference. We will continue to have the dialogue. I attend the NTPA annual conference every year. That will be the appropriate time for me to have a conversation with people. Hopefully, a number of other matters would have been resolved and the truth out.

Mrs LAMBLEY: When is that conference?

Commissioner CHALKER: It is in August.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You have been around politics and high levels of the public service for many years. You and I both know that perception is very powerful and that it does not really matter, at the end of the day, what is right or wrong, or the truth or not the truth. It is the perception. I feel that I am obliged to ask you, is your position untenable at this stage?

Commissioner CHALKER: I know a lot of the truth, in the domain of what I understand is untruths that are in the public domain. I cannot comment on those things, because there are processes, which will do that. I also know that there is a large amount of support that I receive every day across this agency and the community. It is a case that perception, for a lot of people is reality. It is disappointing that natural justice does not appear to be afforded to all people. I will continue to do my duty to serve and protect this community, my police force and this agency.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is why this is so important, and why we keep bringing it back to parliament and asking you about it during estimates. It is why the dialogue remains alive. It is a very destructive narrative—true, false or otherwise—to be having. We all want to see a strong force, moving forward and doing the enormous job that it has to do.

There has never been more crime and demands on policing, whether that is natural disasters or pandemics now—you name it. This is the list of jobs that, as successive governments, we give to our police force. That is the agency that never says no. It is there 24 hours a day. To some extent, governments can be heaping too much on police, where other agencies should be picking up the slack—for example, Territory Families, Education or Health. They are all agencies that interact with police and should or could be doing more. That is something we are very focused on.

This is exactly why my first question to you was on this topic; because the commissioner cannot work his way out of this. It needs you, as the leader—as the minister—to do something different to ensure that the relationship between rank and file and the executive is at a highly-functioning level. In light of everything that has been said, I will ask you again—what will you do differently that will lead to a different outcome?

Mrs WORDEN: I have articulated a number of areas we are working on already. We can work together more closely. I am glad you are now saying that you support other agencies needing to support. An example of where we had to be innovative is when public housing safety officers came on board under a Labor government previously. That was to support the work of police, because it was recognised police are called

out, and pulled and pushed all over the place to do those jobs. Through COVID we saw over 100 police officers taken from their normal duties to support and keep Territorians safe.

As we settle back into that, in our first meeting the commissioner and I—I do not think he will mind me stating that we agreed that there was the perception—in his words—about how the rank and file might feel. I need to keep going and get out there and speak to more of those on the front line. That is an important job that I will continue to do through my period of leadership.

It is about us making sure we work together. We talked about how we plan to continue to do that work to make sure there are lots of things in place. Another example is the remote policing initiative that the commissioner has been strong on being out there.

Leader of the Opposition, when you talk to people on the ground, they would say that the squad who graduated on Friday night is enthusiastic about getting out into the regions and being part of the community. COVID has been a big disrupter. The officers I have talked to in the regions are pleased to be back. They understand the challenges of embedding themselves to be part of the community. Not just at the pointy end with law and order, but doing the earlier preventative work, which pays dividends for reducing the crime that you indicated.

It is early days. We already had robust discussions about how those things need to be changed. Wellbeing is, once again, a huge part of that. I have made it very clear that addressing that is my number one priority. There are a lot of facets that come with that. You cannot go in and do one thing and it will fix everything; you have to do a lot of different things. We are working on that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It requires something significant. I hoped that you would take a very strategic approach and look at this in a structured way—anyway, that is your prerogative.

I want to highlight that 49% of 857 respondents to the 2021 People Matter survey said that they were satisfied with their employment in the police force. That is 21 points different to the rest of NTPS. That is substantially less than the rest of the public service. Of those respondents, 61% said that they did not feel their senior managers successfully engaged with employees at all levels of the organisation, and 60% of respondents said that they did not believe any meaningful action would be taken by government as a result of that survey. These are extraordinary and damning numbers coming from the police.

I appreciate that you want to go around and speak to every member of the police force. That is fantastic and you should, but you, yourself, are not a walking survey. It is important for context and important as a minister. Ultimately, the police association is established to do these roles. There is the People Matter survey with significant numbers of participation—857 respondents are a significant portion of the agency coming up with statistics like this. They are horrifying and unsustainable; collaborating between agencies with police will only take that so far.

I feel like this issue of attrition is being politically shrugged off by saying, 'Everyone is recruiting—too bad, so sad', when we know that there are systemic issues like discipline, which need to be dealt with. Every year I go to the Police Association annual conference, and every year your predecessor would stand up and say, 'We are reviewing the disciplinary system and it will be done very soon'. It still has not been done. When can police expect the final version of the discipline system under your leadership?

Mrs WORDEN: The disciplinary reform required legislative reform to Part IV of the *Police Administration Act*. The background is that a working group was formed in March last year to look at the proposed changes. There had to be a wide net cast; a lot of input had to happen. The working group also involved the NTPA, which have been part of this from the beginning.

The police force is seeking to repeal section 14C and replace it with a two-tiered disciplinary model of misconduct, unsatisfactory performance and serious misconduct. It was initially slated to be introduced later this year, but because there has been back and forth—and the NTPA has been in that space with us—it will be introduced in the middle of next year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The legislation for the disciplinary reform will not be introduced into parliament until the middle of next year?

Mrs WORDEN: The middle of next year, but the NTPA are very aware of that. They understand the time frame, so that there can be more discussions between parties.

Commissioner CHALKER: Just to validate, that is the conversation. When this was initially mooted, I met with the NTPA and, in essence, said that I am up for a blank canvas approach if there were other jurisdictions that they felt were a higher benchmark for us to adhere to. I am pleased that we ultimately got the conversation going. Hopefully, that will facilitate the on-time delivery of those estimated time frames through progression for the changes.

Mr TURNER: Commissioner, I remind you that while you are here, you are protected by absolute privilege and the public accounts committee can go *in camera*. If there is something you need to talk about, the cameras can be turned off. You can speak about it and are protected by privilege. If there is something you need to say to the public accounts committee it can be said through the minister.

I have listened this morning and know police officers are watching. The first thing is the report that was done into the mental health review. Will that be made public? It stands to reason, as there are comments in there that will be de-identified and nothing personal will be released.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We have covered that.

Mrs WORDEN: I have already indicated that I would provide a copy. If you would like a copy, I am happy to extend that courtesy to you. There was never any commitment for it to be made public.

Mr TURNER: The comments that police officers make are in public.

Ms PURICK: Minister, could I have a copy please?

Mr TURNER: For all the political point scoring going on, the most excited that I saw the CLP get, was when their photographer came in and they were sharing photos to each other. I have watched the CLP at the annual conferences make the same promises about reforming the police discipline model.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you aware that we are not in government, and we cannot undertake the reform? It is the government's responsibility to do that. Are you here to be a new member of the Caucus and fluff up the feathers of Minister Worden, who needs a water break? How about you ask the minister a question? I know that you are new at this, but it is budget estimates and you are wasting critical time. I have plenty of questions.

Mr TURNER: I care more about police welfare than political point scoring.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Then ask her a question about police welfare. Do you have one?

Mr TURNER: It was said that the \$1.65m allocated for mental health and wellbeing for the 12 FTEs, goes to chaplain, psych and admin staff. How does that break down? Does that include admin staff for workers compensation, or is that proactive mental health?

Commissioner CHALKER: My understanding is that is for the specific support and wellbeing team. There is a separate budget for the workers compensation area.

Mr TURNER: Mental illness and suicide costs Australia a conservative \$220bn per year, according to Productivity Commission reports. Is \$1.65m enough? Do we need to follow other jurisdiction models of ring-fenced mental health funding, as was flagged by previous federal Labor governments?

Commissioner CHALKER: You may not have been here, but I indicated that we will look at putting forward a submission for budget Cabinet for an increase in that funding, as we model the recommendations. My sense is that the current funding is not sufficient for what our demand environment looks like.

Mr TURNER: You mentioned that key information on confidentiality for the chaplaincy service was in the survey. My constituents have spoken about information they provided going to ESS, or the ESP, and then being used in the disciplinary process.

One of my constituents, Mark Casey, is the most recent high-profile instance of someone who, in my opinion, had a mental health issue treated as a disciplinary issue. Is it any wonder that people will not come forward and be truthful about how they feel when that is what they are seeing?

For the rest of the Public Accounts Committee, could you clarify the process of members being offered an exit interview. That is so they understand, when a member exits the agency and decides, 'I will resign', at what point they get offered an exit interview and how they choose yes or no on whether that will happen.

Commissioner CHALKER: In relation to that specific matter, I cannot offer you any information as I do not have the detail. From what you indicated; Professional Standards Command would be working on that. I am restricted from making comments that relate to situations and the circumstances of an individual officer.

For exit interviews, it is common practice when there is a resignation process and/or retirement, that triggers an automated response to offer an exit interview. If that is checked as yes or no, a survey goes out. In the last 12 months we have taken the additional step of touching base with those people verbally to see if they want to have a discussion. That process has been put in place; it was 81 out of 141 in total.

We tried to look at that. In the outcome of the support and wellbeing review, the exit interview process is one that we will be seeking to review more formally to see what we can do to change in that space. We have to be cognisant of the fact that we operate under an industrial relations environment. It is predominantly a consent-based model. We want to see how we can elicit better information, so that we can be more informed on how we deal with things in the future.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On the Professional Standards part of policing, how many internal disciplinary complaints were made against police officers under Part IV of the *Police Administration Act* for this reporting period?

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.1

Mrs WORDEN: The question was how many police officers have retired for the report period, and those who have retired, how many undertook an exit interview?

There were 30 members of the NTPF who retired in the reporting period. The figure includes one inability retirement and four invalidity requirements. Of the 30 members who retired, 24 had an exit interview conversation with their manager. Of those exit conversations, there were four constable 1st class conversations, one constable conversation, one police auxiliary conversation, one police auxiliary 1st class conversation, two senior constable 1st class conversations, five senior constable exit conversations, four sergeant exit conversations, three senior police auxiliary conversations and three senior sergeant conversations. That is the total of 24.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is quite a range of retirements, which is not necessarily reflective of how long those members spent in the police force.

Mrs WORDEN: Correct. You could have a constable that was a constable for 20 or 30 years. Can I table that to finalise the process of the written question?

Mr CHAIR: The minister is tabling a document. The document is number 5.1.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To get a rough indication of experience at sergeant level—is there an indicative time someone would be in the police force to get to the level of sergeant?

Commissioner CHALKER: A person can be promoted to sergeant upon qualification within five or six years. Some choose to stay at that rank throughout their career; others will go up the ranks.

One of the things with the retirements is—it is a diminishing group—those who are still linked into the 54/11 provision of the old Commonwealth superannuation scheme. For many of them, it was a case where the 54/11 was too big a hurdle to overcome, because of how the finance is worked for them. For that particular superannuation, it is more beneficial for them to go at 54/11.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There seems to be a higher number than I expected of people retiring in the lower ranks, but I guess that it is not reflective on tenure.

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: In relation to the previous question, for the reporting period, PSC received 351 initial complaints, which resulted in a series of breakdown. Preliminary cap reviewed was 11; category 1, one; category 2, 49; CRP, 143; declined, 108; info only, 28; cap withdrawn, five; and section 107

cap deferred, six. The total was 351. For the number of members alleged against each of those, I will provide a table for you, which we will talk about.

For managerial outcomes—that was the question you were specifically interested in, about discipline. Managerial guidance, none; period of good behaviour, two; counsel and caution, two; formal caution in writing, eight; no further action, one; reduction of salary band, zero; reduction in rank, one; member transferred, zero; member transferred from position, zero; no action required, 193; remedial advice, administrative, 141; and remedial advice, ancillary, 15.

For your information, on 14 April this year, section 14C of the *Police Administration Act* was reintroduced as an alternative to formal discipline for the Northern Territory Police Force.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could you please explain that?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: Section 14C is an area where if the matter does not meet a serious breach of discipline, it can be dealt with appropriately at a local level. It formalised that it had been removed by a previous commissioner and was reintroduced by this administration on 14 April.

Mr TURNER: Would you be able to explain to the Public Accounts Committee why it was removed?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: I do not know why it was removed; I was not here at the time.

Mrs WORDEN: It was a previous commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: The previous commissioner made that decision. The NTPA was involved at that point in time. I had conversations with the NTPA since I returned about whether it should be reinstated or not. I got the support for that to occur, so that is what we processed and put in place this year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many were dealt with under new section 14C—or renewed 14C?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: I do not have that data in front of me. As you know, it would be some of those (inaudible), but I will check.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Would I be able to get that on notice?

Commissioner CHALKER: It did not come back in until April, so none of the matters are in the reporting period, but next year ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A large number of those—351 is a very significant portion of the police force if we have 1,600-odd police officers, and 350 of them had to go through a disciplinary process only to result in ...

Mrs WORDEN: That is not unique individuals, so you cannot compare those numbers. That might be one person who did five, so you cannot equate that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you have the number of unique individuals? That might be better.

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: There were 543 individual police members referred to in that 351.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is a lot. That is one-third, basically, of our entire police force had to undergo some interaction and contact with the disciplinary system. You said that for 193 of those, no action was required?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: Yes, no action required was 193.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is almost half. You have one-third of our police force interacting with Professional Standards. You then have just under half of those requiring no further action whatsoever. What is the shortest and longest wait period for the unique individuals, in that 193, who had to wait for that result?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: I have not got a breakdown on time. I can get that information.

Mrs WORDEN: Do you want to put that on notice because that will take going back through?

Mr TURNER: We had the Ombudsman here earlier in the week.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have to do it on notice. Ombudsman matters go to Professional Standards.

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, was that question asked of the Ombudsman?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We did; all of it goes to police standards.

Question on Notice No 5.2

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 193 Professional Standards incidents that required no further action, what was the shortest period of time an individual had to wait to receive the advice that no action was required, and what was the longest period of time an individual had to wait to receive the advice that there was no action required?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 5.2.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Would it be fair to say that when almost half require no action, that those are captured by the new 14C? Is the idea that we get this stuff out of professional command—or whatever they are called—and back into their stations to be dealt with?

Commissioner CHALKER: If there was no further action, they would not even be subject to a 14C, which is more managerial guidance advice. We receive complaints against police; they are referred to, either by the Ombudsman, or we will refer them directly. We have an obligation to undertake that inquiry, which is why a number is allocated to make up these numbers.

Out of the number of complaints, you can see how many do not have any action proceeded against them. Unfortunately, our officers have to go through the process of potentially being asked about their involvement in that, which tends to defeat it, as does body worn video at times. There is a multitude of things. The point is that unfortunately, we do not control the complaints coming in—as in frequency of the number.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is how you deal with them that is what is most important. I am not quite clear on this—a complaint comes in, which is a person's right to do that, either through the station or the Ombudsman; how could 14C help alleviate that?

Mrs WORDEN: It has just occurred to me, none of this is on the opening statement. Do we want to get to the output for these questions, because these are part of outputs? We have gone wide-ranging; I did not talk about discipline or any of this in my opening statement. I am wondering at which point we will get to outputs. I am not being tricky or anything. If this wants to continue then fine, but we may never get to other things in the outputs, which other members—it is up to the Chair, but it would be good to get to the outputs.

Mr TURNER: The problem is that there is no output for mental health.

Mrs WORDEN: It would be under wellbeing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is up to you, minister. I am sure we will get to outputs. We are talking about discipline now, so I would appreciate it if we could close that off. The opening statement is very broad. I am just finishing off my questions on discipline.

Mrs WORDEN: We are happy to take them, but we are two hours in and have not got to the output—and I did not get to this area in my opening statement. It would be difficult for people looking at the transcript later.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It would be more difficult if they have to find the rest of this conversation.

Mrs WORDEN: I agree with that, too. The Member for Goyder also had a question.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, you have the floor, and the Member for Goyder will be next.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How will 14C practically improve the way complaints come in for police? They come in through the ombudsman or the station—how does 14C interact with that or not?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: It should have a flow-on effect, in that it might result in a formal disciplinary outcome. It could be dealt with at a much lower level.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is a way of triaging?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: Yes, for low-level behaviour. Then it can be dealt with in a more appropriate manner, as opposed to a formal 79 disciplinary process. That is what we currently operate under—until now. We reintroduced that capability back.

Mr TURNER: My understanding was that 14C was removed by former Commissioner Kershaw, because it was being used to stop members applying for transfers. It was removed because there was no right of reply to it. When a member was issued with a 14C it went on their file. They could go before a police deployment panel; the panel looked at two applicants and decided which applicant was unsuitable for a 14C that had been issued by a superintendent.

This is not relevant to budget estimates, apart from the affect it has on police health, welfare and mental health. As already discussed and raised by the Member for Spillett and the Ombudsman, they sit there for 12 to 18 months while waiting for the outcome of an investigation. They then get a 14C, which sits on their file. They have no right of reply to the 14C; there is nothing they can do about it.

Commissioner CHALKER: It is my intention that the 14C will not be held against a person in those transfers. I will follow up on that outside of this. The intent of 14C is to streamline and have a much quicker turnaround time, so these things are not hanging over people's heads. We all know how detrimental that is. The 14C is very much the lower level; it is just a corrective behaviour. It is not something that I consider to be a disciplinary process, which would prevent someone from going through a transfer process.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are section 79s being used it to stop police members from transferring interstate? My understanding is that if a police officer has a section 79 outstanding, no other police force will accept them.

Mr SMALPAGE: No.

Mr TURNER: It is slightly more complicated than that. If there is an outstanding internal investigation, it is a lot more difficult for a serving member to transfer to a different jurisdiction. As raised by the Ombudsman during the week, because the wait for Professional Standards to get investigations cleared is so long, a member could be trying to apply who cannot, because there is an outstanding 79 or 14C—it could be anything. Outstanding internal investigations stop members applying for other jurisdictions.

Ms PURICK: Regarding wellbeing, I previously heard that \$1.65m is spent internally to assist—psychologists or people of that nature. Is there a budget for external services used by police officers? I understand that there are considerable delays in accessing internal health professionals and experts for police officers, to the extent that some police officers need to go outside to access support for their issues. If they are going externally—because they need to—to get access to health professionals and specialists, is that cost covered by NT Police? If not, why not?

Mrs WORDEN: You are right. It is not always right for everybody. Everyone has a different fit for what support they require. There must be a range of options for members.

Ms PURICK: That fit may be, from my knowledge and experience, when you are dealing with that kind of health professional, it has to be the right fit. You have to get on with the psychologist or psychiatrist or whomever. The ones provided by NT Police may not be appropriate for a particular person, so they need to go somewhere else. Is payment to that person covered by NT Police? It is important.

Mrs WORDEN: I agree that it is very important to have the right fit, not just for you, but also for the issue you are seeking assistance with. Everybody has different challenges, and it has to be appropriate.

Ms PURICK: Is there a budget area to use an external?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, there is. We have a \$16m dedicated for our workers compensation.

Ms PURICK: Does that fall under that? This would not be workers compensation.

Commissioner CHALKER: It potentially can be. It depends on the process. We fund external psychologist appointments for our people, who have early entry into our support and wellbeing—we facilitate funding for that. We also work with them if a workers compensation claim is submitted, assist in that pathway—it is picked up through that budget as well. If somebody needs psychological services and prefers external, we facilitate that for them and cover it.

Ms PURICK: Even if it has nothing to do with workers compensation and that person just has issues?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct. Part of our challenge at the moment—this is the case for all employee support services across the board—is the actual number of available psychs and trying to get them within a streamlined time frame. If somebody has a very high priority access, we do what we can to try to facilitate that in a very quick time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Before we go into the output group for the next session, we will have a 10-minute break.

The committee suspended.

Commissioner CHALKER: Coming back to the COVID numbers for police—to the first mandate of two doses—seven members retired, who were initially stood down with pay. Three since then were initially stood down with pay then, as of March 2022, without pay. They are the ones before the further process.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How does that work? Why were they stood down with pay?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is consistent with the government approach. They had notice, were provided time to correct it, and did not do so. The next step was the cessation of pay.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Being stood down with pay is different to taking leave?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How did it work? Did you give them a period of time to think about it? They are sitting at home and being paid—was that indefinite?

Commissioner CHALKER: No. It was consistent with the whole-of-NTG approach, although we operate under the *Police Administration Act*, so there was some difference. In essence, all the communication occurred; the mandate was set. It is not a date that I set. I am simply an employee in this and had to comply with that direction.

They were provided the guidance and advice. Follow-up occurred in the lead-up to that to get our numbers down. In this case, the feedback from these people was that they would not proceed with the further vaccinations. Hence, that is the reason the process was followed through.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many section 79 notices period were issued for the reporting? What is the quickest and longest time period one of those was resolved?

Mrs WORDEN: We do not have that data.

Question on Notice No 5.3

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many section 79 notices were issued in the last reporting period? How does that compare to the previous year and the previous five years? What is the earliest amount of time it took to resolve a section 79 notice? What is the longest period it took to resolve a section 79 notice for the reporting period?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, we do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 5.3.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many are pending resolution?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: We have none pending resolution; it would be outcomes reported previously.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is that the ones you gave me?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: Yes. I have the data I read out earlier, under Part 4 Outcomes: period of good behaviour, two; counsel and caution, two; formal caution in writing, eight; no further action, one; and reduction in rank, one.

Question on Notice No 5.4

Mr CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many section 79 matters are unresolved as of today?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 5.4.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We talked a lot over the last few hours about contemporaneous issues that have impacted policing and the police force. One of those is the Rolfe trial, and everything in and around that. After the trial there was much public discussion about what would happen to Constable Rolfe. There was talk—I have no idea of the truth of this—that Constable Rolfe remain suspended. What is the status of Constable Rolfe's service with the police force?

Mrs WORDEN: It would be inappropriate to talk in budget estimates about the circumstances of one police officer, particularly as the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption has another process at the moment and the substantial work of the coronial in September. We will not be answering questions about individual police officers. It is inappropriate in this forum.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To be clear, the coronial will not be dealing with whether Constable Rolfe continues employment with the NT Police Force; neither would the ICAC inquiry.

Mrs WORDEN: Those processes are away in terms of that matter, but we will not speak today in budget estimates about the individual circumstances of a member of the police force, it would be entirely inappropriate.

Mr TURNER: Following on from the member's question about members being left under section 79—it goes to some of the long-time section 79s—what support is provided to them while they are suspended, especially considering those that are not allowed any contact with the Northern Territory Police Force?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: In every instance they have access to ESS and health and wellbeing support as part of that process. They have support through NTPA and ongoing support from, usually, a peer support person. They get appropriate and ongoing support during the process.

Mrs WORDEN: We have 65 peer support officers in the workplace.

Mr TURNER: That is wonderful, it was not in place when I was in the agency. If someone is off with a section 79, they will be assigned a peer support person who will look after them while they are off?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: They get the opportunity to do that and are referred to ESS to reach out and take support, if they so desire. It is not forced on them.

Mr TURNER: Commissioner, I appreciated your answer on a question I asked earlier, about not commenting on individuals. The reason I asked was that the reticence of officers to use the ESS and EAP program was because the information officers give to the ESS or EAP program was then being used in police disciplinary investigations.

Commissioner CHALKER: I will defer to Deputy Smalpage on that. I do not do the investigations or read full disciplinary outcomes, so I am not sure of that practice.

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: I am not aware of that at all. Unless it is relevant, I cannot see what process it has in it.

Mr TURNER: Can you see why—the conversations and how—it is relevant to estimates about the money being spent, and the impact on members' welfare, that we have the EAP program? That program is fantastic. It is one thing I am very keen to do. The NTPFES EAP program is the best out of the public service. Not only does it apply to members, it applies to members' spouses and children. It is fantastic—as it should be, and it should rightly be applauded.

If members going through a disciplinary process are concerned about using that and fear it will be used against them—because that goes against the principles of what it is meant for—as we have already discussed, it is difficult for them to get access to providers in the first place anyway in the Northern Territory.

Mrs WORDEN: You are raising an issue that I am not aware of, and other members here have indicated that they are not aware that is happening. The wellbeing report has come down with a number of things in it. Are you happy if we just park that, and we will consider it as part of our action regarding our approach to reforming the wellbeing for police, fire and emergency services? We might just park that, because it is more feedback, rather than—there is general disagreement—that is a perspective from those present today. I am more than happy to incorporate that into the work we have ahead in that space.

Mr TURNER: Thank you, minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police officers are suspended with and how many without pay?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: Give me a bit of time to find the data.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a health and welfare question. How do you break down the \$1.65m? How do you allocate that funding under the health and welfare program?

Mrs WORDEN: At a higher level, we have a team made up of three psychologists, two social workers, one occupational rehabilitation adviser, three wellbeing and health officers, 65 peer support officers, and two chaplains.

Commissioner CHALKER: That budget has been an ongoing, rolling one, which was part of what we explored through the review to understand whether that was appropriate. It pays to support the 60 peers. It does not pay for the peers. They are employees who are out in other work areas.

Mrs LAMBLEY: PS means peer support?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, peer support officers. It is primarily funding those exclusive subject matter experts and a small admin element for the coordination of the support and wellbeing.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is there any support given to the families of people who might be traumatised—staff that might be traumatised or sick through work?

Commissioner CHALKER: We offer that. Our employees can come forward, advise and seek support for their family.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Someone sent me through something last week, which said that there was a four-week waiting period to see a counsellor in Alice Springs. Does that ring a bell? Is there a fairly long waitlist?

Commissioner CHALKER: I spoke to officers last week when I was in Alice Springs. They raised a three-week period with me. That is part of our pressure point. As many employers are, we are trying to find the demand environment. We try to make sure that there is a prioritisation, so the interaction they have with

the support and wellbeing team, if they see that it is a far more critical time frame for that individual—the time frames work in with the individual that those time frames are suitable for. We would prefer it occurred sooner. There is a broader understanding, not just for us—but a broader availability of suitably qualified counsellors and psychs is a pressure point in the country.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The other scenario raised with me was for someone who is off on sick leave, stressed, burnt out, traumatised, or whatever you like to call it, through their work with the NT Police Service, contact often drops off. After a while they are not getting contacted by anyone from the police service asking how they are going, so they feel isolated and abandoned. Has that issue been identified?

Commissioner CHALKER: There are people who feel that way. When we tried to explore that on an individual basis, we tended to find that there was interplay between switching over to either workers compensation or advice not to be contacted.

Our preference is that we have a clear pathway to formalise what the expectation is for everyone in the future as part of the support and wellbeing. I have a fervent intent that nobody should be sitting out there feeling isolated and abandoned. It would not meet my hope and expectation for everyone that is an employee—and for family members—in our agency.

Part of the modelling we are looking at is an expansion of our peer support, so more workplaces covering 24 hours a day, seven days a week have people in place. All our key managers are aware that if somebody is an employee within their workplace or division under their control, that their obligation is to ensure those contacts are being made where consent has been given for contact to continue.

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: I have to take that question on notice, I do not have the data.

Question on Notice No 5.5

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As of today, 20 June, how many police officers are suspended with and how many without pay? Across what ranks are those individuals?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.5.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In respect to attrition—we have talked about this, but it is a critical, all-encompassing issue—have you turned your mind to raising the retirement age for police from 65?

Mrs WORDEN: Not at this point in time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is there a reason why? Are you ruling out considering that? Is it something police have looked at?

Mrs WORDEN: No, and I am not aware of police looking at it. It has not been raised with me at any point, but you have raised it here today.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have raised it many times to the former Chief Minister, former Minister for Police. The answer is always, 'We are looking into it'.

Mrs WORDEN: I am not aware of it. It is news to me today. I will take that on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is a good question. How many police are there in the force who are 60 or over? That gives us an indication of how many are approaching retirement.

Commissioner CHALKER: I will have to get the specific age break down of those who are 60 and above. I can confirm the discussion about the age of retirement being 65 has been ongoing over many years. It tends

to circle around individuals who are very close to that point in time. Part of our challenge is that there is an unlimited sick leave provision that for Northern Territory Police, which is different to other employees.

Trying to balance some of those issues more broadly—the pathway is that the conversation still occurs with the NTPA about whether that is something it wants to look at industrially. If there is a groundswell of support for it, it is something we can look at. Historically, that is my understanding of where the discussions have tended to look at the pros and cons of that and noting that our job is physically and mentally demanding.

Question on Notice No 5.6

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As of today, how many members of the police force are 60 years or over?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.6.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have there been any internal funding changes or sideways movements from the dog squad? Has there been any decrease in funding for the dog squad?

Mrs WORDEN: Not that we are aware of.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has there been any withdrawal or movement of funding from the Water Police?

Mrs WORDEN: Not that we are aware of.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is quite different to a 'no'. Can you make yourself aware?

Mrs LAMBLEY: In the last ten years there was a lovely new facility built to train dogs in Alice Springs. Is that still being used? For a while, it was not.

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, the only time it would have been unused is if dogs were offline and/or retired earlier than expected. Unfortunately, the ability to find a ready, fit-for-purpose dog is not an immediate process. Wherever there has been a shortage at any location, be it Groote Eylandt or Alice Springs, we would always try to secure that service quickly.

The only thing that could be in question for the dogs is the Commonwealth funding for Groote Eylandt. We are still in negotiation but have maintained that service through to this point. We are confident that we will move that forward.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will there be any reduction to Water Police?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, there is none signalled from my office or anywhere else. I am not sure where that has come from.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is there any intention to expand the use of dogs in policing in the Northern Territory?

Commissioner CHALKER: Operationally, that is something we always assess to work out our best capability across the board. The cost and recruitment process for dogs is not straightforward, although our model is working quite well. Within the aspects of what we are trying to set up in our services, the use of our dogs appears to be balanced against the demand environment.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many dogs do you use in policing?

Commissioner CHALKER: I could not give you a contemporary number. We will have that back to you before we conclude today.

Mr TURNER: How is the \$1.65m for mental health—high-risk policing areas, such as sex crimes, the CAT teams and the police negotiator unit, typically have welfare checks on a regular basis, because of the stress. It appears, from what I am being advised by my constituents, that is not happening. Is that something you are aware of and is anyone looking at fixing that?

Commissioner CHALKER: For those high-risk areas, I understood that we were still doing those obliged meetings. I will chase that up if it has fallen away. That is not my understanding. Those areas are critical. Unfortunately, the exposure they have is such that we want to make sure they are having those meetings. We roster our support and wellbeing teams to go to some of our regional areas for those meetings to occur. I am not aware they have ceased. In fact, I know they were out recently to those regional areas. I will come back to you today, within this forum, to confirm that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 was passed in May 2021. Since the passage of that bill, how many youths have been arrested? How many of those arrested, were granted bail by police?

Mr TURNER: The multifunctional police facility at the Police college was built some time ago when the police club was removed. It was set up with a children's play area and café. About 12 months ago a number of former members spoke about it. At some point, the police chaplain tried to run events in it. It is now being used by the Police college to teach lessons. Apart from lessons for the college, since the launch by Commissioner Kershaw of the frontline responders' report with then Police minister Manison, it is not being used for its intended purpose. Could you explain why?

Commissioner CHALKER: The intended purpose was a very key focus on health and wellbeing. There was previously a booking arrangement for that to occur. That has not changed, but it is true that at various times demand occurred where decisions were made that it would be unavailable for those purposes. The college was always able to access and use it, but not to the detriment of the available use for health and wellbeing.

It is an intended future use to put it to exactly that purpose—that it is far more frequently used for health and wellbeing, and as a respite area. The support and wellbeing work will be critical to that. Having the return of my human resource branch, we can be far more strategic with our proactive events. That is something we did not provide continually over the last number of years. It is my fervent intent that the health and wellbeing centre be utilised for that very critical purpose. We will ensure we promote that appropriately throughout our workforce.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many police are on return-to-work programs?

Commissioner CHALKER: I will have that information back to you shortly.

Agency-Related Whole-of-Government Questions on Budget and Fiscal Strategy

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates for proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2022–23 as they relate to NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How much is government paying to cover private security in Darwin CBD, Palmerston and the northern suburbs to supplement policing?

Mrs WORDEN: That is not within my remit. That does not sit with us as a budget line. From my recollection, it is a program under Chief Minister and Cabinet.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A different agency is paying for private security? How does that private security interact with police? What is the arrangement for working together?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: Northern Territory Police does not fund arrangements for private security. It is usually a coordinated effort through the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet and subregional co-ordination groups.

Northern Territory Police will predominantly lead the interactions tasking the coordination group and bringing functional roles together, such as First Nations community patrols—Larrakia, particularly in Darwin—town council rangers; public housing safety officers; and transit officers to address government safety issues. We have seen an increase in antisocial behaviour across the Territory with alcohol being the main enabler.

Collectively, through the interagency tasking coordination group—where most government agencies are represented, including Territory Families, Education, Health and council—there is a coordinated effort to address community concerns and direct resources on a demand basis across the major centres of Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Darwin.

There was a huge increase in antisocial behaviour, particularly with First Nations people, in recent months across Darwin, Palmerston and the rural area with people rough-sleeping—up to 3,500 people ingressing to Darwin. That has decreased significantly, which leads to other crime stats and vulnerabilities due to sexual assaults, domestic violence and wide-ranging issues, including the availability of housing. The Return to Country program has been quite successful getting people back to community, where they are safer and can reconnect with their cultural groups.

A lot of work is being invested across Alice Springs. It was touched on briefly by the Leader of the Opposition. It is a considerable challenge for us across the Northern Territory, with about 80% being involved in crimes, including assault, robbery, property crime and, not so much antisocial behaviour, but more public disruption at night when they are displaced from the home environment because of overcrowding or domestic violence.

It is a considerable amount of work (inaudible). The operational commands have been closely and collectively working with regional coordination groups and local stakeholders, including non-government organisations to address the social issues enabling crime across the Territory.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How does it work, practically, with security patrols in the Top End? Do the security guards on the ground have a direct link to police in vans? Or do they have to ring 131—or 000 and go through the call centre?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: The buggies in Darwin city go through to the joint emergency communication centre and are coordinated through that. There is a weekly meeting—we have a commander who chairs the interagency task and coordination group. A number of groups get together, which have now been consolidated for better coordination. It is a collective effort. They have mobile numbers for shift supervisors, watch commanders and duty superintendents to ensure timely connection to us to deploy resources to make sure that antisocial behaviour does not escalate into other problematic events.

With private security in Alice Springs assisting with monitoring of CCTV cameras, we have a real-time effort to see where crime is occurring and collect the intelligence database. We can deploy resources and understand where patterns of crime or antisocial behaviour occur, and what proactive developments we can put in place to deter that. Those include return to country, and talking with regulatory authorities, such as the licensing commission, to address alcohol concerns. That is a body of work police auxiliary liquor inspectors do across the Territory, because alcohol is a major contributor to the unrest in community and in urban areas, as well as domestic violence and displacement of youths.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is the use of private security to monitor CCTV exclusive to Alice Springs?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: Yes, at this point in time it will connect into the Joint Emergency Services Communication Centre where we have a number of operators 24/7 monitoring over 900 cameras. They do an incredible job. They generate about 1,200 proactive jobs every year. If you go—and I know most of you have—to the centre and see the capability of the CCTV program, which is a continued investment, it is worth its weight in gold, as far as proactive officer safety and controlling assets on the ground.

Mrs WORDEN: The project is transitioning from the town council to police. As an example, in Alice Springs the connection will come together at night with public housing safety officers, Territory Families, YORETs and police at a patroller's meeting before everybody heads out. The connectivity is early on; I have sat in on a number of them. There is intelligence sharing.

For example, police were looking for a particular young person one evening. They were concerned for their welfare and actively seeking to return him home—he would come across the borders—the information is shared along with a picture of who they were looking for. During the evening they found him with another group. He was then picked up by another service. There is connectivity in Alice Springs on a daily basis. It may be police information they gain, but they also gain it from YORETs about young people, and Housing as well. They all share information.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We have the Department of the Chief Minister funding security teams to patrol Darwin, Palmerston and the northern suburbs. In terms of having security guards on the ground, is that being replicated in Alice? Is the security paid for by government?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, but it all comes out of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. I do not have visibility of that. There are active patrols in Alice Springs by security.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is okay. I am trying to ascertain that Alice Springs are getting foot patrols and CCTV monitoring as part of that project.

Mrs WORDEN: CCTV is a separate project being done in Alice Springs with the town council. Alice Springs has the CCTV; it is about police getting access to that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I understand. I am trying to work out what is and is not happening in Alice, and what is and is not happening in the Top End. For example, in the Top End we do not have the additional CCTV support. We have the foot patrols. In Alice you have two things happening, which is great.

Mrs WORDEN: To be fair, Alice Springs and Darwin are different environments. There are different approaches tailored for the location.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Operation Knee Hammer is only happening in the Top End, is that correct? What is that? Is that where police are tipping out grog?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, in the Top End.

Commissioner CHALKER: Operation Knee Hammer was in response to the increase in the number of people sleeping rough in the Northern Territory. It started to have significant focus coordinating where the hotspots were, working with all the other entities to focus and coordinate their deployment. As alluded to, there has been a significant reduction of those who were sleeping rough. It is not just about tipping out alcohol. There is a whole range of engagement that occurs.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Police are moving people on. What does that mean?

Commissioner CHALKER: Generally, if someone is acting in an area where there is general lawful compliance, but there is no lawful purpose for them to be there, they can be asked to move on. If they are sleeping rough in an area that is not a place to be sleeping they will ask them to move, as will the rangers from the various town councils.

The point of difference with the antisocial behaviour response required for Darwin, distinct from Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs, is that we do not have the point of sale intervention as strictly in place, because there is a far larger number of takeaway licensed premises available across Darwin and Palmerston. There is an operation that focuses on it. Equally in Katherine, Tennant Creek or Alice Springs, if they saw an increase in antisocial behaviour, their likely process would be to declare an operation where they have a time frame focus to mitigate the issue.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There is no new power, it is more a focus on that area?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: During the operation 38 people were taken into protective custody out of 320 people who had been moved on. To me that does not seem like a large number for protective custody. What is that reflective of?

Commissioner CHALKER: Protective custody is not a default we automatically move to. The taking of a person's liberty, which protective custody is an element of, is not something we choose to do simply to mitigate a broader challenge. We consider taking them to a sobering up shelter, for example, if we cannot find another responsible adult who is prepared to look after them and take them into their care.

Our first response is always to see if there is someone who can look after them effectively and provide a duty of care to them, which satisfies us that they will be looked after. If that cannot occur, we try to find another place, which may be the sobering up shelter. The watch house is the place of last resort we would seek to incarcerate somebody for a protective custody provision that has no sanction attached to it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As part of that specific operation, which is about antisocial behaviour and sounds predominantly like alcohol, are police picking up youths who are—a better question is, of the 38 protective custodies, were any of them youths?

Commissioner CHALKER: I do not have that detail. Knee Hammer's purpose was more about people sleeping rough, as opposed to being a response to youths' behaviour.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As part of Knee Hammer, were police finding youths who were sleeping rough, or youths who were intoxicated?

Mrs WORDEN: There is an alternate response for young people—we have discussed this at length in parliament. In different areas there are different support services. A lot of that is funded by Territory Families, so you might have Larrakia come out and those young people would be found places to sleep.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Would police take a young—an underage drinker, a minor—to the sobering up shelter?

Mrs WORDEN: No, the sobering up shelter does not take young people.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Assuming there are any, what do you do with them?

Commissioner CHALKER: With youths we will try to find a safe place for them to stay—a responsible adult, or a service provider as the case may be.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like to take that on notice. Out of the 38 protective custodies and 320 people moved on, how many were youths? It might be zero.

Mrs WORDEN: The assumption is that they would be adults. We are happy to take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.7

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In relation to Operation Knee Hammer, of the 320 people moved on and the 38 protective custodies, how many of those were under the age of 18?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.7.

Mrs WORDEN: There was a question asked earlier that we did not take it formally on notice, but it was about dog numbers. The answer is that there are 17 dogs in a variety of roles.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is the Darwin watch house currently operational?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, it is operational, but not 24/7.

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It is operational and ready to go. It is not operating all the time. It is operating on a demand basis, usually Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. We (inaudible) safety and other social order operations, which will limit travel to the Palmerston watch house. Other than that we have about 100 protective custodies per month, so unless specific operations dictate, the Darwin watch house is only open for certain periods to support undedicated operations. Predominantly, we use is the Palmerston watch house.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Did you say that you have approximately 100 protective custodies a month at Darwin watch house?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: That is across the Darwin, Palmerston and rural area. It declined because there was a significant decrease in rough sleeping—in that event, there were 1,150 adults transferred to the sobering-up shelter in March and April.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Not just protective custodies are put into the watch house; people are arrested for alleged crimes and enter the watch house as well, so the numbers will be much higher than the 100 a month.

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: Yes, that is only protective custody. All crime-types usually proceed to the Palmerston precinct. When the Darwin facility is open for specific operations, they can house protective custody and arrests, or the 133ABs and the like.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is one of those issues. Darwin Watch House used to be the only watch house available; then Palmerston was built. I am sure the Palmerston facility is more state-of-the-art than Darwin, just because it is newer. Is Darwin Watch House not being used as much because it is not as good a facility as Palmerston? Is there a preference to use Palmerston rather than both? Is the reason Darwin Watch House is closed a lot of the time because it is difficult to resource both?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It comes down to a resourcing matter and where we deploy our people. The priority is to make sure that we have police officers in vans who can deploy—when someone calls for public assistance, we have vans that can deploy and support public safety issues. It is about prioritising. If we need to run the Darwin Watch House, it is usually on overtime. We look at that deployment model as a needs basis.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police and or auxiliaries do you generally need to have an operational watch house?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It is scalable. If you look at running Darwin watch house, usually there is a watch commander oversight, custody supervisor and probably a sergeant to look at prosecutions—about four or five for one shift, depending on how many shifts you run. If you have people there for detention for further investigation, longer episodes or protective custody, you are looking at 24 hours, which is up to 30 staff to house the watch house.

Commissioner CHALKER: I have the breakdown of the members of the age of 60 and over.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.6

Commissioner CHALKER: The ranks are one deputy commissioner; one police auxiliary 1st class; two remote sergeants; one senior Aboriginal community police officer; four senior constable 1st class; 13 senior constables; 13 sergeants, six senior police auxiliaries; four senior sergeants; and two superintendents. That is a grand total of 47.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is a lot of people.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In five years they will all be gone—it is a bit sad.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Normal operating hours are during the day for the very largely signposted Nightcliff Police Station. This is not a 24/7 facility by any stretch. There is no watch house at the Nightcliff Police Station. How many police officers—not auxiliaries or others, but constables and above—are permanently stationed at Nightcliff?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It is not 24/7. We have a youth engagement team, which consists of the youth diversion unit there—a sergeant and 11 constables, an Aboriginal community police officer and an administration officer. We have the school-based constables unit for the greater Darwin area based there, which is staffed by a sergeant, a constable and 10 auxiliaries. We also have an auxiliary that usually works the day shift to look after the front counter and any inquiries.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In the end, what was the total cost of the Nightcliff Police Station?

Mrs WORDEN: That is a question for DIPL. Police did not build that facility, it was DIPL.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Police did not spend any money building the Nightcliff Police Station?

Mrs WORDEN: The construction costs are with DIPL.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many vans are supposed to be on patrol from Casuarina station during the week and on the weekends?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It depends on the time of day—days, evenings or nights—and what day of the week. We are rostering to demand. The rule of thumb is the sergeant and either two or three vans. That changes with personal leave and other interruptions.

We do not look specifically at the station, but the whole command in the Darwin and Palmerston area, which includes Palmerston, Humpty Doo, Casuarina, Darwin and the like. They have a large patrol area under the direction of the Joint Emergency Services Communication Centre, based on priority and demand

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You consider all of them as a whole—as to how many vans you would like for the whole area? How many vans for that entire region of Palmerston, Humpty Doo, Casuarina and Darwin would be an optimum level of resourcing?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: If you had an evening, for instance, you could have at least two vans at Darwin, Casuarina and Palmerston and one at Humpty Doo. Then you have additional support to social order and other operations in crime that are visible. That demand is controlled through visibility—through the watch commander, the call taker supervisor and the dispatcher.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do police keep track of, on average, how many vans they are able to put on the road? We all hear the stories—and that is no reflection on police, it is a pure resourcing issue, which is why attrition—everything comes back to the wellbeing of the force and putting a cap on these attrition numbers. While the aspiration might be there to have two or three vans for Darwin, Casuarina, Palmerston and one at Humpty Doo, what is the reality on any given night? You must have an average number of vans on the road at any one time.

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It goes significantly into planning across rosters to forecast what unit will be available at one point in time, and to want them to support other events. For instance, the V8 Supercars were over the weekend. That is across the entire Territory, including the eight operational commands, through rostering meetings and the like, and forecasting across leave management and thresholds, because (inaudible) everyone need (inaudible) we have recently (inaudible) leave pressure by up to 20%. We had other challenges where everyone wants to have leave (inaudible) that are still at the station. Our biggest challenge is personal leave. If someone books in sick at short notice, they find something to do overtime to fill the spot, that will slide across other resources to fill the gap.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There must be occasions—more often than anyone would like—that you cannot pull people on to overtime, where you cannot find people to fill shifts, so a van—it just does not happen, right? Is there an optimum on a week night like, 'We have five vans on the road'? You must know what the average is over a period of time. I do not know whether you record it over a month, a financial year or whatever.

I liken it to the McDonalds drive-through. They know how many seconds, on average, it takes to get every car through. They work to that timing. Police must be able to track, what they would love to have—everyone has a perfect world—and then what they can actually pump out on the ground.

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: We understand the environment and forecast to a certain degree, but as you will understand, policing is unpredictable. At this point in time, the workload is busier than ever across domestic violence, property crime, youth disturbances and antisocial behaviour. It would not matter if we had 10 units in Darwin, there would still be jobs waiting to be attended to because it is quite busy.

That is where we are really dependent on engaging earlier with a lot of stakeholders through other government departments and non-government departments—councils and the like—to pre-emptively engage. The success of bringing in Aboriginal liaison officers to connect with First Nations people to understand what the problems are—the communication to make sure that disturbances do not occur. That connection and trust is reaping rewards.

Personally, it is a challenge. We still have people suffering from COVID—like me. That impacts upon resourcing. It is an unknown because that could be with less than 24 hours' notice, and impacts our deployment line. We have a dedicated team and 1,600 cops dedicated to public safety. Most of them will roll up their sleeves and put the uniform on to come and help out. The men and women of the police force (inaudible) and protect the community.

Mr TURNER: They are 1,600 very dedicated police officers—former Commissioner McRoberts always used to use the McDonalds analogy, which surprised me.

Are you still using Excel-based rostering?

Commissioner CHALKER: Unfortunately, that is correct. However, we have been working very closely with DCDD. I am hopeful that there will be able to be a formal announcement about the procurement of an e-rostering system in the very near future, which will be welcome for the good management of our whole agency.

Mr TURNER: I agree with you. What happened with the workplace optimisation survey project? It was a media release a couple of years ago.

Commissioner CHALKER: That must have been under Commissioner Kershaw. I am not aware of what occurred with that; it was not something I inherited.

Mr TURNER: The workplace optimisation survey project was about a lot of the matters that the Member for Spillett has raised. It followed on from the work that then Assistant Commissioner Payne did with Project Lure. From a Public Accounts Committee basis—the cost of the WOSP project, and where is the work at? Rather than reinventing the wheel, if work is sitting there that answers all these questions.

Commissioner CHALKER: It has not had any expenditure attributed to it in the last financial year. Our focus has been to secure the e-rostering system. That has been bandied around police for many years and never got any traction. I am very pleased to advise that it is imminent.

Our broader challenge, as Deputy Murphy spoke about, relates to resourcing. We do a lot of work with our intelligence to determine hot spots and identify various trends. We are in a competing environment against our industrial relations element. For example, over a 35-day period, a police officer can only be deployed for 18 of those for a mix of evening and night shifts. They cannot do further than that, outside overtime, or by consent.

We have limitations on the full deployment of our people to ensure they are getting adequate respite. Fatigue management is a clear path element to ensure that is in place. We have as much of a response capability as we can with our available resources. Operations, such as Knee Hammer, presents a heavy demand on our reactive environment, so we focus on proactive resources to break down that demand. We pay a price in the short term, while that demand is still high, but then have to focus on proactive—to bring that down.

You see that consistently, for example, with the work Trident does in Darwin and Viper does in Alice Springs as it relates to property crime. We be as proactive as we can; focusing on repeat offenders and the like. Unfortunately, in the DV space when the demand frequency of domestic-violence-related reports and the time it takes police to deal with each of those independently—particularly if there is an offender in custody. That is part of our challenge to understand how we balance that work more effectively and alleviate pressure on the front line.

Mr TURNER: It goes back to the front line. My electorate has a huge number of police officers in it. It is the practices. A lot of them go back to what they perceive as rostering inefficiencies, where they do a night shift, finish, go to court during the day, and are back on night shift. That is even though the recent EBA renegotiations said that it could be negotiated by consent and the roster cannot be filled unless that is done.

There are processes where they will be in a unit—DV is a fantastic example—and in a command where they are not paid to be on call, but the expectation is that they have to be as the phone has to be answered.

Police, like Mr Murphy said, ‘They are there to plug the gap when nobody else is’, and you are in a situation where you are damned if you do and damned if you don’t, because we have 1,600 people who are always there when the Territory needs them. It goes back to protecting the front line by having an intelligent rostering system. It fills me with great joy when you say that it is coming in imminently.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police assaults were reported in the past 12 months? Is that up on last year?

Mrs WORDEN: In the reporting period from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, there were 157. It is consistent because the previous year was a full figure for the whole financial year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many people for that period were charged under section 189A of the Criminal Code?

Mrs WORDEN: There can be multiple charges related to an assault. There were 250 charges related to those 157 reports.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 157 reports how many people were charged? Not how many charges.

Mrs WORDEN: We would have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.8

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many people—unique individuals—were charged with assaulting a police officer under section 189A of the Criminal Code for the reporting period 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.8.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of those people then served prison time? We have 157 assaults, but there could be multiple charges for one person.

Mrs WORDEN: I have the number of charges that went to a conviction under 189A.

Commissioner CHALKER: Much of this is AGD data. We are only provided figures relating to incidents of assault, not individual offences of assault on police. There are limitations on the data that we will not be able to derive.

Mrs WORDEN: The Attorney-General has not yet appeared. You might be able to ask him. I am sure he is listening, so he will be able to get those.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You have incidents of assault, which might not have resulted in a charge?

Mrs WORDEN: The number of incidents of assault was 147. Assaults on police reported for the current year was 157. The number of incidents of assault, police, this financial year is 147. They are slightly different.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You said that you had conviction data. Can you read exactly what it is, so we do not mix it up?

Mrs WORDEN: The number of those assaults that proceeded to charges was 250. The number of charges that then proceeded to court was 239. The number of those charges that resulted in a conviction was 79. The figure of those that resulted in a finding of guilt was 85. It was slightly higher.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of those resulted in serving any time in prison?

Mrs WORDEN: Sixty-seven. Some orders were fully suspended. You can subtract it to get the breakdown—67 out of the 85.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In the Northern Territory, it is fair to say that we are all victims of crime, including the police at times. How much has the Northern Territory police service had to fork out for damages to vehicles, property and things that it has?

Mrs WORDEN: We will take that on notice. It is not a specific figure we developed for today. I am trying to work out whether those costs sit with us or not. I am checking regarding fleet, which does not sit with me either, but we are happy to take the question.

Question on Notice No 5.9

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much has the Northern Territory police service had to pay out in damages to its vehicles and property over the reporting period?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Araluen has been allocated the number 5.9.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The Alice Springs police prosecutions office was apparently broken into last night. How often do these types of incidents occur—damage to police property, police cars? Is it like a weekly or daily thing at the moment, particularly in a place like Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: That is a very broad question.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I know, but it is relevant.

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, unfortunately, we were advised this morning that a group of youths entered the building where the prosecution area is, including Public Prosecutions. They went into a number of offices, not just those, but other areas of that building. It was a group of kids who, literally, ransacked the various offices. We are responding to and investigating that matter.

The broader response is that from time to time, we have damage to vehicles. Windscreens are impacted by rocks. It is not beyond the realms that our police vehicles are impacted by stolen motor vehicles and the like. Is it a high level of frequency? We are not receiving reports on a daily basis, but our remote police stations do get into that in some cases. We work well with communities on those, and offenders tend to be identified quickly. To suggest that we do not have those would not be accurate. As you indicated, we are likely to be victims as well, given our assaults on police.

Ms PURICK: When vehicles get damaged, either by vandalism or an accident, who is the contractor or panel shop? Is that put out to contract every year for just Darwin, or do you have a contract for Darwin, Katherine or Tennant Creek? Does Katherine come to Darwin and Tennant Creek goes to Alice Springs? Who repairs your vehicles? Is that put out to tender and if so, what is the tender period and how often is it renewed?

Commissioner CHALKER: Our fleet service sits at the Peter McAulay Centre. We also have a mechanical workshop in Alice Springs, which tends to provide most of those services.

Ms PURICK: Do they do the panel beating?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, if they bring those into town, they go through their normal quotation process. I am not aware if they have standing tenders, I will do a deeper dive on that. The arrangements they have is about how to get those vehicles turned around and back on the road. We often send replacement vehicles, so work can be done.

Ms PURICK: I am trying to get it clear; I know people in the panel beating industry. Are you saying that there is no contract for a business to provide work to repair police vehicles? I am just talking about panel beating.

Commissioner CHALKER: There is for panel beating.

Ms PURICK: How often is that contract renewed? Businesses apply as for a normal tender?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, and it is a three-year period contract.

Mr KELLY: It is a publicly tendered period contract.

Mr BURGOYNE: In regard to security, while that is done through the Department of the Chief Minister, do the police have the statistics of the number of people on the street at night; can you provide them today?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is not our data; it is not provided or owned by us. It would be discussed more broadly at the patroller meetings.

Mr TURNER: In relation to victims of domestic violence—sadly, I get a few through my office—services are spread across multiple agencies and portfolio responsibilities. A victim of domestic violence will usually initially deal with police, they may then go to Health and the hospital. If there is a sexual component to the offending, it will be back to police—SARC—the soft interview room. I understand the soft interview room is a PFES asset. From a budgetary perspective, is there money spent on that? Is it looked at from an upgraded perspective?

Commissioner CHALKER: Are you talking about Darwin specifically?

Mr TURNER: Darwin and Alice are the only places that have a soft interview room attached to SARC.

Commissioner CHALKER: If it is a PFESS asset, we provide the support and funding to it. I am not aware that there is an issue with it. That is something we will follow up.

Mr TURNER: It may be worth looking at, from a budgetary expenditure point of view. Sadly, I had feedback that it is somewhat lacking. Difficulties are faced by victims—or victim survivors—because we do not have co-located services, especially those who may not have English as a first language, or are travelling to DVLS, the court, Top End Women’s Legal Service, back to SARC, the hospital and Berrimah.

Commissioner CHALKER: I am happy to look at that process.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION
Output 1.1 – Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Across the Territory, for the reporting people, how many people were taken to a watch house and how many were taken to a sobering up shelter? I want a whole of Territory snapshot. If you combine all the watch houses across the Territory, how many people were taken to watch houses for the reporting period? How many people were taken to sobering up shelters for the reporting period? I would like to compare the numbers for the whole of the Territory.

Commissioner CHALKER: We do not have the total broken down that way. I will see if we can get that before we conclude today. If not, we might need to take it on notice. As it relates to sobering up shelters, we are only one entity that takes people to the sobering up shelter.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not want to know how many people went to sobering up shelters. I want to get an idea. Police might be taking 1,000 people a year to the watch house, but they may be taking 5,000 a year to a sobering up shelter, which should not be your job. I am trying to see the intensity of resourcing you are pouring into that.

Question on Notice No 5.10

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is data for the whole of the Northern Territory. For the reporting period, please provide how many total instances there were of someone being taken to a watch house, and how many total instances there were of police taking people to a sobering up shelter?

Mrs WORDEN: Do you want to include people taken into protective custody versus taken into custody?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, people taken into protective custody as part of that figure.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.10.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have all of the weapons or guns stolen from Kintore Police Station been recovered?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: Yes, all of the firearms have been recovered.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is good news. How many police officers and fires are on extended sick leave. Please break it down, not only into service, but into command area.

Mrs WORDEN: For clarification, what is considered extended sick leave? We can give you data on sick leave, but that can be one day. What line do you want to put in the sand?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not know how police clarify it. There are people who would be on sick leave where there is no return date, but there are people who have the flu.

Mrs WORDEN: That would be more workers compensation, if you do not have a return date. There is a clarification between that and sick leave.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not know if that is the delineator.

Mrs WORDEN: We do not have a delineator; we have sick leave. Do you want to put a line in the sand?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On sick leave for more than one month, three months, six months and 12 months.

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: We have a chart. I can break it down into zero to three months, three to six, six to 12, greater than 12. I will get the raw data. I have a chart here of sick leave, but it does not identify what you would call as extended sick leave.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Broken down into those would be fine.

Question on Notice No 5.11

Mr CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you please state how many police officers and fire fighters are on sick leave between zero to three months, three to six months, six to 12 months and more than 12 months? Please break that down into their command area.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 5.11.

Commissioner CHALKER: In respect to that earlier question about the number of people who are on return to work as of 23 May. There were 74 Northern Territory police, zero NTES, three public sector, and five NT Fire and Rescue Service. Return to work goes from being on that list from limited hours to being fully back to 40 operational hours per week but may not necessarily be frontline operational. They can be deployed in a role that gives them fulltime employment and it is across the board.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.4

Mrs WORDEN: I can give a response to a Question on Notice number 5.4 regarding section 79 matters, and how many were unresolved. The answer to that is 14.

Ms PURICK: How many registered shooters do we have in the Northern Territory? How many registered firearms—as in guns, not bows and arrows—have been seized by police? How many shooters licences have you cancelled for whatever reason?

Commissioner CHALKER: At the time of reporting, there were 15,845 issued firearms licences in the NT and 53,177 firearms recorded as registered. During the reporting period, 305 firearms were acquitted where their whereabouts was previously unknown. There were 346 expired licences finalised, and 389 firearms seized.

Mrs PURICK: Could I clarify, where would I ask about school-based policing?

Mrs WORDEN: My advice would be 1.17. It is still in Output 1.0.

Mrs PURICK: I understand that there is \$3m allocated to the school-based policing program in the Northern Territory. That money comes from Police and goes to Education. Is that correct?

Mrs WORDEN: No, it goes from Education to Police.

Mrs PURICK: How many school-based officers do we have in our schools? This should include your auxiliaries and constables. I know some communities need constables, because they do not have auxiliaries.

Commissioner CHALKER: There are five constables based in our regional locations, which are part of our expanded model—Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. There are 10 auxiliaries based in the greater Darwin area, who are supported by a sergeant in Darwin.

Mrs PURICK: What happens if an auxiliary goes on leave, or gets sick et cetera, from one of the bigger schools in Darwin? How do you backfill that position—with another auxiliary, or with a constable?

Commissioner CHALKER: We are looking at building the capacity of those trained in that space. The MOU came into effect earlier this financial year period; we have been building up that capability and capacity. Invariably, most of our school-based constables only take leave during the school holidays, which should diminish the likelihood of that. The injury or illness component is such that we have the sergeant who floats through. They would work out interim arrangements on a case-by-case basis depending on if it is long or short term.

Mrs PURICK: When the auxiliary system was set up—which you know that I do not agree with—and people said that they wanted to be a school-based auxiliary, who makes the decision to put that person at that school, or did they apply to go to a school? How did it work?

Commissioner CHALKER: That work is with the actual superintendent and commander of that portfolio to determine relevant placements. I am not aware of any strict criteria that school-based policing sits under.

Mrs PURICK: Since the school-based auxiliaries—not a constable—have gone into the schools, I have observed that there were incidents at schools—Taminmin and Sanderson—and school-based constables were not able to do anything to defuse the situation; they had to wait for the police to attend.

That is not a good model, because the school-based constable schemes are all about defusing the situation and forming relationships with students. The school-based auxiliaries have certain powers, but in these two examples, they had to stand by and wait for the police—constables or whomever—to attend. How do we stop that happening? Are they told not to do anything?

Mrs WORDEN: Their tasks are set through an MOU with COGSO, which set a number of parameters on what they can do. It is something that I am keen to have another look at and will be flagging. You can write to me.

Commissioner CHALKER: The assignment of the schools is done whereby the Department of Education provides advice to Police as to what schools will be serviced. Then school-based policing is assigned to schools via consultation with the school-based administration team.

Mr TURNER: Do you think there is sufficient investment in community safety and crime prevention? As far as I can see in my electorate, we do not have a community-based policing strategy. Palmerston Police, under the leadership of the very capable Senior Sergeant (inaudible), go above and beyond for my constituents every day. I thank them dearly. As you are aware, they are going from job to job.

The issues, such as youths with inhalants, volatile substance abuse, and protection, are breached because police are the frontline unit people call when things go wrong. Low-level drug dealing issues, which general duties police officers are too busy to attend to, are falling to me to deal with through Crime Stoppers and writing. Where do we deal with the community safety issue?

Commissioner CHALKER: Community safety through engagement is something we are very keen to do, to build broader levels of engagement and support to see who else can pick up some of the slack.

We have to be candid about the last 12 months—even leaking into the previous financial year. We had significant demand on our reactive environment. We see that through our call taking, and now that so many people are incarcerated in the Northern Territory—adults and youths. They are at significantly high numbers. Those people do not walk into detention establishments. They are placed there through police doing diligent work that ultimately sees them being either remanded and/or convicted and serving a term of imprisonment.

It is the case that personal violence, which has been consistent nationally, has increased. That had a heavy impact on our people, because the ability to be proactive is impacted. Equally, property crime has increased. The commodities people are trying to break into homes—but also commercial premises—for are invariably related to food and alcohol.

When we have large numbers of calls reporting under our prioritisation categories, many of those jobs are ones that we will prioritise a response to—family and domestic violence, sexual assault, serious harms, all those things. We are in a very pressurised environment where all that money went out during the COVID period, then the contraction of that, and the social challenges that flowed through.

We are somewhat hopeful that we are seeing a balancing of that, particularly for operations where we had Operation Knee Hammer; we saw a surge that could not be abated. We had to divert resources to do so. We continue to assess that. Deputy Commissioner Murphy has strong oversight of the deployability across the whole of the Northern Territory to those places. We keep trying to make sure that we can roster to demand. I am very hopeful that any rostering will be a further tool that will help us be better in that space.

Mr TURNER: Has the community CCTV register had much uptake with the public? Has it been a successful resource for the Northern Territory Police?

Commissioner CHALKER: From when it was first implemented, investigations and what we see in some of the running sheets, private CCTV has been very significant in assisting police inquiries.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.7

Mrs WORDEN: The question was about youths being apprehended for protective custody. The answer is nil.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Over the past four years there have been numerous attempts by the non-government members of parliament to create various select parliamentary committees to look into issues of crime, policing and juveniles. This crosses over both of your portfolios.

In other jurisdictions, this sort of work is routine. Parliamentary select committees undertake pieces of work assisting the community to get different insights, do research, gather information and talk to the people in the community about what they think. Yet, repeatedly these motions that have been put to parliament are blocked by your government.

As the new minister for Police, would you be more open to allowing the parliament and the resources of the Legislative Assembly undertake these important pieces of work? These committees are controlled by government—it has the numbers; there is always at least one more government member than the rest of us—and operated by government. The resources are within the Legislative Assembly. I am wondering if you, as the new Police minister, are more open to these parliamentary processes, which could assist the people of the Northern Territory and, indeed, your portfolios.

Mrs WORDEN: It is not something that I have put my mind to. I am one person in a parliament of 25, so it would not necessarily be inappropriate. There are processes of parliament that I respect. If there was agreement of the parliament to do that, I respect that. I have been part of those committees in the past. You are asking me to have an opinion on the will of the parliament; I am just one member of parliament.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are the police still investigating the *NT Independent* online newspaper, as the commissioner told the Estimates Committee last year? If so, what is the status of that investigation?

Commissioner CHALKER: I do not believe I stated that they were under investigation last year. You asked a question and I spoke in broad terms that if anybody was under any scrutiny, it is not something we would confirm. I am happy to have the transcript corrected, but it was not my operating belief.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That was my understanding of what you said—that you were investigating the *NT Independent*.

Mrs WORDEN: We would not respond about a particular issue; it is the same category as a person. We would not talk about an investigation during budget estimates.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It was mentioned a year ago; I was wondering about the follow-up.

Mr GUYULA: How many Aboriginal liaison officers are there in the NT? What is the Aboriginal police liaison officer salary? Do these positions come with government employee housing or any other entitlements?

Commissioner CHALKER: As of end of March we had 37 ALOs. Five ALO squads have been undertaken since we commenced the program in October 2020. We graduated our last group on 8 April this year. There is a further force program for later this year.

Most of the Aboriginal liaison officers are employed at the AO2 level, so the administration stream of AO2 in the Northern Territory. We are working on an initiative where a number of those ALOs may be able to progress to senior ALOs, which would be at the AO4 stream.

As it relates to the provision of housing, there is no housing entitlement attached to those roles. We are working closely with communities about the nomination process and have a strong uptake from community about the people they are prepared to nominate and put forward as ALOs. At the last count we had ALOs for at least 23 communities across the Northern Territory. The general feedback of the program is very positive.

Mr GUYULA: Can you advise what training, support and mentoring is offered for liaison officers from balanda side? What training, support and mentorship is offered from Aboriginal side?

Mrs WORDEN: When they start their employment, they get three weeks of training at the college, which is about skills relevant to their roles. Things like first aid, driver training, road skills, search and rescue, team building, and court processes are supported with any adult literacy and numeracy skills that may be required. They then work on an engagement project, whichever one they would like to put in place, in the community on their return when they have finalised the training program.

It is considered and seen as the start of a career opportunity. ALOs could progress to becoming fully sworn officers, if that was something they decided to do. It is also about bridging the relationships in the community. They provide cultural information back to police officers and work side by side with remote policing teams. At that point, a lot of it is on the ground training, so they get that mentoring and guidance from the sworn police officers serving in their community.

Commissioner CHALKER: When they are nominated by their community, we ensure that they are supported by community throughout their period of employment with us. When they are back in community, we work with the ALOs and communities directly to establish culturally appropriate protocols. We are trying to build those relationships and improve, for example, the arrival of police into community—how we introduce those to key people in community that need to be identified and respected, including the traditional owners.

We use the Aboriginal liaison officers as the bridge between community voice and the Police Fire and Emergency Services. There is a strong focus of mentorship of Aboriginal people within the community resilience and engagement command, and we have broadened the mentoring arrangements for Aboriginal employees across the agency as well. It is a strong focus for us.

Mr GUYULA: Apart from working through ALOs, what specific policies are there that require police officers in remote communities to work with elders and to acknowledge elders' authority? Such as in situations like executing an arrest warrant or searching a house by coming to find elders first, so we can help things happen peacefully and to show respect for our authority.

Mrs WORDEN: I was at Wadeye a week ago and saw an action relating to what you are asking about the connection with TOs and trying to resolve issues first the TOs; there is respect from our members in remote areas.

Commissioner CHALKER: There has been a lot of focus on that. Clearly the Aboriginal liaison officers are one of the pathways. We expect a two-way flow of information. They are engaging with community and communicating with police officers about how things can be done more effectively, particularly in remote communities, and with the focus of safety always at the forefront of everyone's minds.

That work continues. We have many examples where that is occurring, for example, where family presents people to police to take them custody. It is a body of work we want to keep working towards. It is a key part of the cultural protocols we want to establish across each community.

Mr GUYULA: What ongoing cross-cultural and language training is compulsory for police officers working in remote communities?

Commissioner CHALKER: All our police officers go through cultural competency and awareness training whenever they go through police college. We are trying to build those programs into most of the courses that are undertaken for those in service. The key part we do in community resilience and engagement command is then established by community when a new police officer and their family come into community—how do they get exposure to appropriate cultural awareness and engagement, so that time on the ground can benefit them and the community the best way?

Mr GUYULA: In 2021 the minister advised that the funds had been allocated for the installation of CCTV security cameras in Nhulunbuy. Can you advise if the 20 cameras and five audio kits were installed at the identified sites? If not, when is that work expected to be completed?

Mrs WORDEN: In Nhulunbuy, five new camera sites have been identified. That includes 23 cameras, five audio kits, a local network videorecorder and a local CCTV workstation. All the equipment has been ordered and works are scheduled to commence early September—as long as that stuff turns up. It will be completed by the end of September; it is a quick installation.

The committee suspended.

**OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – GENERAL POLICING, CRIME DETECTION, INVESTIGATION
AND PROSECUTION
Output 2.1 – Response Services**

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 was passed in May of 2021. Since the passage of that bill, how many youths have been arrested? How many of those were granted bail by police?

Mrs WORDEN: Since the commencement of the legislation on 15 May 2021, there were 870 youths apprehended for prescribed offences on 1,268 occasions. Since then, 244 youths on 312 occasions have been charged.

Commissioner CHALKER: For those 244 youths on 312 occasions, that is youths charged with prescribed offences and granted bail at first court appearance. The number of youths, who allegedly committed a serious breach of bail for a prescribed offence, was 209 on 339 occasions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For those 244 youths, do you have the breakdown of how many were bailed by police?

Commissioner CHALKER: As it relates to the electronic monitoring device connections for youths on bail, there were 70 connections by the NT Police Force. Connections is the issuance of the electronic monitoring as part of their bail conditions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you saying that police only bail a youth if they had an EMD?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, that is the only figure I have as a reference for bail.

Question on Notice No 5.12

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Since May 2021, how many youths have been arrested by police, and how many of those were granted police bail?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.12.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You said that on 312 occasions they were charged and granted bail at their first court appearance?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Was it 70 of the 312 that had electronic monitoring?

Commissioner CHALKER: There were 70 that had electronic monitoring devices for youth on bail. Given that they were granted bail at first court appearance, I would suggest that a number of those would have been on bail with EM, prior to their first court appearance.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is what I am trying to work out. How many were on bail at the time of getting bailed a second time?

Mrs WORDEN: That is not necessarily a second time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is two things. Some might have had an EMD the first time, and some might have been bailed a second time

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, prior to going to court, they might have had an EMD.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many youths were on electronic monitoring on their first court appearance, and how many were bailed a second time with electronic monitoring?

Commissioner CHALKER: From 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, 71 were issued EMD under the age of 17-years—and comparatively, six adults. The number of youths who allegedly committed a serious breach of bail for a breach of electronic monitoring/curfew was 209 on 359 occasions.

Question on Notice No 5.13

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 71 youths who were issued with electronic monitoring devices between 1 July 2021 and 31 March 2022, how many were already on bail when issued with the device? How many went on to subsequently offend and be bailed with electronic monitoring for that subsequent occasion?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, has been allocated the number 5.13.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How does it work? Not all youths are arrested for serious breach of bail.

Mrs WORDEN: They are, that is incorrect. If it is a serious breach of bail, they would be arrested. That is what the legislation says.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many youths were arrested for a serious breach of bail?

Commissioner CHALKER: The number of youths that we allege were arrested for a serious breach of bail for a prescribed offence was 209 on 339 occasions. For the number of youths that we allege committed a serious breach of bail was 297 on 619 occasions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of the 619 occasions was bail given again?

Mrs WORDEN: We might have to take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.14

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 297 youths who were apprehended 619 times for a serious breach of bail, how many individuals were subsequently granted bail following that serious breach of bail?

Commissioner CHALKER: By the court? We do not hold that data. We hold our police bail data.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could police bail someone for serious breach of bail?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, that is not our process these days because of the legislation.

Mrs WORDEN: It would be zero for police bail. You will have to ask the AG about court bail.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is the answer that police have bailed someone for a serious breach of bail zero times?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, because the legislation says you cannot.

Commissioner CHALKER: I will get that clarified from the team.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question from the Leader of the Opposition is allocated the number 5.14.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many youths had more than one instance of serious breach of bail?

Commissioner CHALKER: Are you talking about recidivous offending?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, it could be one youth had 50, another youth had 2. It is not a straight division.

Mrs WORDEN: We have holistic data. It is not broken down to individuals. I am not sure it is possible.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To work out how many times someone has been bailed for serious breach of bail?

Mrs WORDEN: That would be a question for the AG.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We will make sure we ask that question. Do police run the youth conferences?

Mrs WORDEN: There is police youth conferencing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many youth police conferences have been held?

Mrs WORDEN: Participation in victim-offender conferences is voluntary on the part of the victim and the offender; not everybody chooses to pursue this option. That is in the police domain, not by an external service provider, which is a separate process funded by Territory Families.

There was a decrease this year—only been one where a victim wanted to participate. The downturn was because of COVID; it only just came back. It does not mean that victim offender conferencing did not occur, but it could have been done in another part of the process by Territory Families. I will have that data.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How long were police not offering victim offender conferencing due to COVID?

Commissioner CHALKER: They were offering it. It was due to consent. People were not providing consent for it to occur.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You must have data on how many were offered and how many were rejected by the victim or by the perpetrator.

Commissioner CHALKER: We do not keep that data. We have to manually identify that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I will ask it on notice, given the numbers are so low. This is not to create work for people, but it is important. If we are not capturing data on who is rejecting it, then we cannot tailor the response or make it a more efficient service. For example, if no one is taking it up, then we need to ask why. Are people are not finding value in it? It could be any number of things.

Question on Notice No 5.15

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many victim offender conferences were eligible or offered for victim offender conferencing? How many of those were rejected to be taken up by the victim, and how many were rejected to be taken up by the offender?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.15.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many 000 calls were there to the call centre for the reporting period?

Mrs WORDEN: In the reporting period there were 111,844 calls to 000.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of those went unanswered?

Mrs WORDEN: That is not a measure. The measure against it is the percentage of calls that are answered within 10 seconds. My understanding is that they are all answered, but some take longer to answer.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What portion were answered within 10 seconds?

Mrs WORDEN: In the year to date, 81.9% were answered within 10 seconds.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You do not have how many people hung up before it was answered?

Mrs WORDEN: I do not think that is kept because they are answered.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Every call to 000 is answered? Say someone has been on the phone for 10 minutes, and they hang up because they have to run away or something?

Mrs WORDEN: The aim is to have them answered within 10 seconds. It is pretty quick.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you have a measure of the longest it took to answer a call?

Commissioner CHALKER: The average wait time for Police 000 was 14.7 seconds.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is there no data collection at all of people—I am not trying to be ridiculous. The reason I ask is because we get a lot of feedback in communities and the regions, particularly in Central Australia, about the difficulty people have getting through to 000. Triple zero asks a lot of questions at the start before you are even put through to the service you want, and that can be quite off-putting or intimidating for people.

I wonder how many people are either waiting, cannot wait any longer as per their circumstances, so they hang up. It sounds like it would be minimal, if any. Also, how many people are hanging up during a call, because the process is just not working for them?

Commissioner CHALKER: The advice from our Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre is that the total calls into the facility continued at sustained high levels throughout the COVID-19 period, compared

to pre-COVID. All up, the total number of calls processed from 1 July to 31 March inclusive to 131 444 or 000, and other internal calls was 293,317. That was up by about 2,500 from the previous year, and up nearly 35,000 from 2019–20.

We are cognisant of community concerns about calls not being answered. We continue to do public communiques about ensuring that 000 is used purely as an emergency. Unfortunately, it still is not the case and that is the number being defaulted. Triple zero became a bit of a hotline for COVID for a period. Despite a lot of public messaging, we were not able to change that direction for a while.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That 293 number you read—what is the distinction between that and the 111 number the minister read? Is it because the 111,000 was just 000 ...

Commissioner CHALKER: That was 000, correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could I have the breakdown for how many 000 calls there were for Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: We do not have that by region. Is it possible to break it into regions? I am happy to take it on notice, but it will come down to the capability of the recording system as to whether it can discern where a call ultimately came from.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like to for Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

Mrs WORDEN: That is fine but if we could take that on notice with an overlay that it may not be possible to answer that.

Question on Notice No 5.16

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many 000 calls were there for the greater Darwin, Katherine region, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs regions?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, on the premise that I noted before.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.16.

Mrs WORDEN: I want to respond to your question and confirm that police cannot bail a youth for consideration of bail who has been arrested for a serious breach. That is the legislation at work. The answer is no.

Mr CHAIR: The question on notice was 5.14 regarding serious breaches of bail and how many individuals were then granted bail.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, it is not that question. This is something different. It was not a question on notice. It was just a side question.

Mrs WORDEN: I said no—zero. That was my assumption and said that we would confirm it; I am confirming it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To confirm, there are no 000 police call-take operators in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: Correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There is no live police CCTV monitoring in Alice Springs? There probably is within the station where capacity allows, but there is no centre in Alice Springs like there is here—it is all done out of Darwin.

Commissioner CHALKER: Within the muster room, for example, there is the CCTV live feed. It can be actively monitored from within the muster room as required. We are working towards a CCTV room. It is part

of the project with the Alice Springs Town Council to bring their cameras in, as well, so they can be monitored more effectively and coordinate our resources.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That will be monitored out of Alice Springs. Would it still be connected into Darwin like a backup?

Commissioner CHALKER: The PFES-owned cameras will be, but there are challenges with the Alice Springs Town Council cameras. Hence the reason we have to do the co-location model down there.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police CCTV cameras are there in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: There are four new ones in Alice Springs. There are six existing camera sites already identified for upgrade with a new CCTV installation. That is an increase of 34 additional cameras and 10 audio kits, which will take the network from 106 to 140.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Does Alice Springs have its own dedicated CCTV van or vans, or are they just pulled across the Territory?

Commissioner CHALKER: I think you are referring to the mobile CCTV trailers. It has six.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many are there in Darwin?

Commissioner CHALKER: There are 10 in Darwin, two in Tennant Creek and two in Katherine.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That reflects the seriousness of the situation in Alice Springs, for sure. Just going back, not so much to the call centre, but when people ring 000. That gets triaged and sent out to vans on the road. The most serious are attended to; the rest go down the list.

We hear regularly from the community, particularly from businesspeople and people who have been broken into and had property crimes perpetrated on them, that it can take days for police to get to that job. That is because they are responding to hideous levels of domestic violence and other violent crime. How does that work? What data is kept by police on your ability to have a touch point with every person who has rung the 000 centre?

Commissioner CHALKER: Our call takers take a call and, depending on the description, they have guidance from our policy and procedures, as to how to prioritise the call. It would not be the case that an unlawful entry, where significant amounts of property has been stolen, in a town like Alice Springs would take days before the police got there. I would be surprised if that response was not a lot sooner.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: People have their car broken into or their handbag stolen—which is still hideous and should not happen; or someone has broken into their house and stolen a couple of bottles wine—things like that.

Commissioner CHALKER: This is informed by a triage process the call taker undertakes to understand the prioritisation. We have call centre supervisors—sergeants—who sit over the top to add another layer of quality assurance and control. They can make sure that there is a call back to the person, if there will be a delay in response. They undertake a prioritisation approach.

A watch commander sits in Darwin and Alice Springs to look after those regions, and the Territory duty superintendent looks after the whole broader response. Each time someone makes a report, it will be allocated to someone for follow up, which will either be in our dedicated triage teams—at various stations where, instead of having to physically attend, they will make those calls and follow up.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like the data on that. What is the longest time a caller to 000 had to wait for follow up? I am trying to get a picture of how long people are waiting. I know people who have waited two days, the next day or that afternoon. There is a different amount of time for police to respond, because of the severity of the issue they are facing compared to others.

I would like data on how long people are waiting, and how many times they are waiting for that long? Is it a regular occurrence or a one-off? It must clock on to SERPRO, or whatever you are using, as a 'job shut'. If the 000 call has been logged—my handbag has been stolen, I ring 000, they say, 'Yes, we have your details'. I go back to sleep, wake up the next morning and Constable Bloggs rings me. You must keep data on how long it takes between my original 000 call and the follow up by police.

Mrs WORDEN: I do not believe that data is kept, because you have to interrogate each matter logged into the system. It is an operational decision at different levels and the police are making decisions, I assume, every minute they are on duty. You are asking when the job might be closed; it might not be done at the moment the job is finished. I think that it would be difficult.

Commissioner CHALKER: We use I/CAD, which is a dispatcher. We know the time a call comes through to when we will dispatch it. Some of the dispatch may not be the physical deployment of police to that premises. It may be transferred across for a follow up by a phone call or the like.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is in the system?

Commissioner CHALKER: I/CAD will tell us the point in time that occurs. Invariably the prioritisation is such that would be more like priority fours or fives. They will not have been immediate. We can probably get line of sight on what that is. The challenge is that, because of the service footprint of the Territory, there are remote areas we would not get to for a matter of days, possibly even weeks, that are a priority four or five. There is acknowledgement that we are taking that report—similarly, the reports we get for insurance purposes and the like. I am trying to understand how we would be able to give data that would be informative, to treat what you have. I do not know that it is seamless.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could we do it for the major centres like Alice Springs, Darwin, Tennant Creek and Katherine, because they have police stations in them?

Commissioner CHALKER: The most straightforward way would be if you had specific examples; we could then interrogate those jobs. That would give us a line of sight. I do not know, technically, how we would be able to get that time frame from the mass data assessment you are after, particularly given the large volume of calls we had.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Perhaps I can ask it and the people who do this stuff could work it out, or not. Often we ask written questions and the answer is that there is no answer.

Mrs WORDEN: If you are prepared to accept that there might not be a way to work it out.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, I understand if there is a legitimate explanation why.

Mrs WORDEN: The other thing is resourcing. If your handbag is stolen, you might get a response quickly because there are less demands at that time. Whereas, if the same thing occurred three hours later, it could be a completely different matter.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is the point. There is so much crime and workload. The Member for Blain touched on it earlier in a roundabout way. What we call lower-level crimes now, used to be hideous crimes 10 years ago, and are being overlooked because they are less bad now, because there is so much seriously bad crime.

I want to get a picture on the types of things—I often hear from people that police will ring them and say, ‘Do you want us to send forensics around? There is not much point’. I do not blame police for that at all. They are trying to work within their constraints, knowing that if a kid broke a car window and stole a handbag, nothing will happen to that kid anyway, right?

Mrs WORDEN: That is not necessarily true. That is part of the problem. If you keep peddling that to people—it might be a perception. You have a responsibility as a politician to not peddle what is a perception versus what is right. Unless you tracked an individual, who committed an offence through the system—you have heard plenty today about the number of young people who have been apprehended. That is a total misconception. If you keep peddling it, that is what people think. If you look at police activity where it responds to young people, particularly with the changes to the law, you will find that there is a lot of consequences for young people. I caution you to stop doing that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am saying what people, including police, tell me.

Mrs WORDEN: You are peddling perception.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am trying to get an idea of the volume or time frame which the lower category offences—whatever they might be called—are dealt with. I can ask the question on notice and the IT people

who deal with I/CAD can work out if it is producible or not. If it is not producible, an explanation in the answer will suffice. It happens every day of the week with written questions.

Mrs WORDEN: I am concerned that the data will not be reflective. With resources, sometimes people might get a response within an hour, other times it might be after two days, because other things are going on.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, that is my point.

Mrs WORDEN: When you have a short time like that, it can skew data. All it would take is one matter, which had not been closed, in error or oversight, that could be open for five or six days. For the purposes of transparency, let us take the question on notice. I am happy to do that, but the answer will be almost impossible to drill down, even to the major centres on triage three and four level matters because of the differences.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What if I asked it differently? What if I asked for the average time it takes for police respond to the different categories?

Mrs WORDEN: Perhaps four and five?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, instead of asking average, I will ask minimum and maximum. That way you have the breadth there, which is what I have been doing all day.

Question on Notice No 5.17

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Please provide the fastest and longest period of time police were able to deal with category five, four, three, two and one jobs?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.17.

Mr TURNER: Talking about I/CAD—Intergraph Computer-aided Dispatch—PROMIS and SerPro pricked my ears up. Is there any update on SerPro? It will be transformative to the way we do business.

Deputy Commission SMALPAGE: I am on the steering committee and working group. SerPro is due to be rolled out and go live date set, hopefully, for November this year. It will be a massive scope of work to transform our systems from what we have in PROMIS to the new Serve and Protect SerPro system. At this stage it is on track and on budget, albeit unfortunately, there is pressure with lingering things from COVID.

Mr TURNER: Will SerPro link in with I/CAD or will it replace it?

Deputy Commission SMALPAGE: The intent was that it should integrate with everything—I/CAD and every other system we are working on. That is the plan.

Mr TURNER: In relation to the Yuendumu incident, you raised earlier when discussing morale. I have a question, not about the incident, but about costs or areas where not spending money may cost more in the long run. I recognise that not commenting on a matter currently under investigation for any other body is the correct thing to do. It is a question in relation to funds.

My understanding is that it still is the response to high-risk incidents and most armed offenders to deploy police negotiators and emergency medical personnel—the ANZPAA high-risk policing guidelines would not have changed that much. In relation to what happened—because we are still under police response—does Alice Springs still have sufficient police negotiators?

Deputy Commission SMALPAGE: Yes, and access to it.

Mr TURNER: Do they have the same level of equipment as the police negotiators in Darwin?

Deputy Commission SMALPAGE: I am not sure. I assume they have access to everything they need.

Mr TURNER: My understanding is that—unless things have changed very recently—the police negotiator unit in Alice Springs does not. It is concerning that we could have avoided potentially huge expense by investing more, given the obvious success of the police negotiator unit in Darwin, and how they have been deployed up here to similar incidents.

Mrs WORDEN: That has not come to my notification. I am not aware of that. I might take that as feedback and have a look at it. Are you comfortable with that?

Mr TURNER: As a budget output I am assuming it would come under 'Response', would it? I imagine that it is still costed under TRG.

Commissioner CHALKER: That is my understanding. I am aware that we recently had a number of experts come and give further training in Darwin with our negotiators. We just sent more interstate for training. We are investing in that capability. That has occurred in the last number of months. I will make sure that we chase up any query about the adequacy of tools they need. Nothing has been defunded at my direction. I would be surprised if that is the case.

Mr TURNER: It is more along the lines of contrast and compare. PFES, by my understanding, give every commissioned officer an unmarked vehicle with blue lights and sirens, is that still the case?

Commissioner CHALKER: They have the option. I do not believe all take it up.

Mr TURNER: The cost of commissioned officers' vehicles—the unmarked vehicles—to the agency would be? Just off the top of your head, no pressure.

Mr KELLY: That would be \$35,000 to \$45,000.

Mr TURNER: To give you an idea, the police negotiation unit did not have enough vehicles to deploy the correct amount of police negotiators. Requests to get blue lights and sirens were not authorised.

Mrs WORDEN: Would you write to me raising those concerns? It would be better dealt with. The budgetary response was provided for the cost for those, and your point was made. Are you happy to put your concerns in writing and we can have a look at it? I have made a note.

Mr TURNER: It is the discrepancy—what was raised before with the Berrimah line and how we respond to high-risk incidents. If we respond to a high-risk incident in Alice Springs, whether it be Ti Tree, Willowra, Moulden, Gray or Driver—remarks were made by the Coroner that our resourcing should not be a barrier to the services that Territorians receive.

Mrs WORDEN: I am happy to take that on board as feedback and respond, if you outline it to me in writing.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Checking on people who are on curfew orders used to be part of police duties, is that still the case? Like seeing where they are meant to be at certain times.

Commissioner CHALKER: Previously, we had the practice through our Trident team, which deals with property offenders, but we got feedback from the court that the hours we were doing the activities were not their preference. This is going back some period.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is this checking on people who are on curfew orders?

Commissioner CHALKER: Curfew orders that are with the EM—we are quite active in that space. We mentioned the numbers before of people, youths in particular, breaching the EM, which is enforcing the curfew for them. The world has moved on, so EM for those who have a curfew condition tend to go hand in hand.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is that the case, if they have an EM they are usually on a curfew? I am interested in people on curfews.

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It is specific to each child. There was about 681 people—adults and youths—apprehended and managed between 1 July and 31 March. That is quite a volume of perpetrators,

mainly involved with property crime. Predominantly, EM bracelets are applied to youths. They are geographically fenced and managed by Buddi Ltd, a contractor.

We do bail checks, so if they have a bail condition that says they are not leave their residence and be under a support person or parental guidance between 6 pm and 6 am, there may be a check during the night. It needs to be balanced with common sense depending on compliance, so we are not too disruptive during the night at 10 pm and 2 am waking up everyone in the household. The EM bracelet can notify us of a breach.

We do a lot of positive compliance with people's bail conditions. The earlier evidence and statistics on the amount of youths and occurrences of breaching bail while on bail from court or police is still quite high across the Territory. This is predominantly in Alice Springs, where there are a higher rate of youths engaged in breaches of bail or prescribed offences being detected.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many people would be on curfew orders in Alice Springs? Or is that too difficult to answer?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: I would not have that answer for you. That is specific to each unique undertaking, either to the court order or police bailing officer. Some will have curfews and some not.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Has there been any reduction in remote policing across the Northern Territory?

Mrs WORDEN: There has probably been an increase in remote policing. It is one of the things that had an additional \$10.2m for the next financial year to continue to expand. There has been a real push, to go from two to three police officers to offer relief—so you are not having one person there. I will invite the commissioner to say more about this, because it is a huge policy shift, and one of the big changes occurring.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Has that been implemented now? Or it is about to be?

Commissioner CHALKER: Over the last year-plus, as we ascertained and obtained additional police housing, we have increased police stations that were ordinarily two-person stations, up to three. There are other stations that we have increased higher—Borroloola, for example.

This investment sustains that work. What we have already seen is that vacancies in our remote communities has stabilised. We have more police physically gazetted to remote police stations than we have had for a long period of time—since the emergency response back in 2007.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I get data on how many police stations have one, two, and three or more EFTs?

Commissioner CHALKER: There is no police station that has a single officer in operation. There are still historical two-person stations. Most have been able to progress to, at least being a three-person or above station.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Which stations have two EFTs? I am trying to get a breakdown and measure of progress in this area. It is something my predecessors—former members of parliament—follow up routinely. In that spirit, I feel like I have a duty to follow that up.

Commissioner CHALKER: The information is:

- Ntaria Police Station has an establishment of three
- Kulgera has an establishment of two
- Papunya has an establishment of three
- Yuendumu now has an establishment of five, but we have grown that to an intent to have eight—housing is prohibiting that permanent growth.
- Yulara is four
- Kintore is two; however Kintore is a shared service with WA police officers, so there are three police there including the Western Australian police officer.

- Warakurna—we have an NT police officer based there with a number of WA police officers, so they are not a sole operator.
- Ti Tree has three
- Harts Range—two
- Mutitjulu—two
- Arlparra—two
- Ali Curung—three
- Elliott—three
- Avon Downs—two.

Those are for the central desert. Then:

- Jabiru—six
- Gunbalanya—four
- Maningrida—six, but it will grow as we build the new police station and housing there.
- Ramingining—four
- Wurrumiyanga—six
- Pirlangimpi—two
- Milikapiti—three
- Galiwinku—six
- Lake Evella—four
- Adelaide River—three
- Bachelor—three
- Maranboy—three
- Yarralin—four
- Lajamanu—three
- Kalkaringi—two
- Timber Creek—two
- Mataranka—five
- Ngukurr—four
- Pine Creek—three
- Daly River—three
- Wadeye—14
- Alyangula—14

- Borroloola—nine.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many of those positions would be unfilled as of today?

Commissioner CHALKER: We always carry vacancies, but our current vacancies are quite low. I do not have the information available at this point.

Mrs LAMBLEY: When you say, 'quite low', that is just a vague measure, what is low?

Commissioner CHALKER: We may have three or four positions in the gazette, for example, but we already have people to continue service delivery in those places. Historically, when we only had the two-person station model, predominantly, whenever an individual was on leave an officer from a major centre transferred for that short period of time. It was a lot more impact on our front line and major centres. Having three at a station creates a level of inbuilt relief. They are also able to work in adjoining stations, so they are not impacting as much on our major centres.

Mr EDGINGTON: The sergeant's position—OIC at Borroloola—has that been filled yet? How long has it been vacant for?

Deputy Commissioner MURPHY: It is being recruited to. It has been vacant for about six to eight weeks; we have an acting position in there.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The crime stats come out at 10.30 am every third Friday each month. On Friday, the day the crime stats come out, Channel Nine already had the crime stats. Why is that? Do you give certain people the crime stats before 10.30 am every third Friday? They had the crime stats on Thursday night and that happened the month before. I do not think that is fair. We all hang out for the crime statistics, because it is such a central part of our life.

Mrs WORDEN: I am not aware, but I can ask the question and check. Perhaps they get an embargoed copy before they go out. Can you ask that question of the Attorney-General?

Mrs LAMBLEY: They produce the crime statistics? I thought they were police crime stats. It is always on the police site.

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, they do. They are always done by the Attorney-General.

Mrs WORDEN: We like to publish things, so that it is transparent.

Mrs LAMBLEY: They used to be called the police crime stats. Is that correct?

Mrs WORDEN: They are crime stats. They are compiled by the AGs. I am sure he is listening. He will know to provide you that answer when he is here.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Crime is such a central part of our lives in Central Australia, Alice Springs and the rest of the Territory. My primary interest is always my home town of Alice Springs. We are doing it incredibly tough—every one of us. You guys have done it tough overnight; you have experienced the break-in at the DPP office. It is ongoing and unrelenting.

I do not believe that what you are doing is working. I have referred to the police crime stats, month-on-month, year after year, for at least the last couple of years. We have seen staggering increases. I have to ask what you will do differently and more of—which is what the Chief Minister mentioned last Tuesday in her contribution to the public hearings, 'We will do more'. More of what?

The police work incredibly hard, but something is not working. A lot of things are not working, and in fact, they are failing. The people of Alice Springs and Central Australia are doing it tough; they have had a gutful. You know that as well as anyone. Commissioner, you have lived and worked in Alice Springs for years. Mr Murphy has too. I do not know the circumstances for the rest of you.

Without rambling on, what more will you do and what will you do differently? We cannot sustain these month-on-month, year-on-year increases in crime. It is crippling all of us. It is destroying our businesses and our psychological wellbeing. People do not feel safe; tourists do not feel safe, despite what the Minister for

Major Events and Tourism said the other day. We are all suffering and I only see it getting worse because the trajectory is such. Your response, please.

Mrs WORDEN: I will respond specifically about Alice Springs. As long as I have been in this parliament, you have championed Alice Springs and issues in Alice Springs eloquently. It is not unheard. Anybody in Alice Springs would not be in any doubt that your passion is about them. I am grateful for that, because you are very clear about what you would like.

As you also understand—you just touched on it—if these issues could be fixed overnight, they would have been fixed. Governments going way back would have fixed all these issues. You, as a member of the community, understand disadvantage, and that the gap has widened. There is significant disadvantage and alcohol issues. The minister in that space spoke about it earlier.

From our perspective, now holding portfolios of Territory Families and Police, Fire and Emergency Services, we want to see fewer victims of crime through early prevention and intervention. You indicated that police do a fantastic job. On visiting police in Alice Springs—and I have done it a number of times—they work incredibly hard and are all dedicated. They all live in Alice Springs and want things to change, as do we all.

It is all the compounding issues underneath that need to be fixed. For me, one of the biggest drivers is education. Kids need to go to school and have regular hours of attendance, so they are not out at night. That is the work of YORETs with Territory Families. It is really important to make sure we address disadvantage. Housing, education and health are the under-driving.

I have said this before, possibly not at a public forum, but things like the baby bonus are coming back to bite young people. We have bigger families, and the baby bonus has a tail effect. I saw an article that talked about the impact the baby bonus is having in Australia. The Territory is not unique in this circumstance. We have to keep working at all those layers and challenges, it is not just about the pointy end with policing.

With the two hats I am now wearing—or three with Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. It is working in that preventative space on getting more grants for the early prevention. We just did that for domestic, family and sexual violence—pulling the groups together to have a whole-of-government approach to domestic, family and sexual violence. They are important triggers, which will make an impact over time.

If it could be fixed tomorrow, someone would have done it. We have to keep working in that space. We have to work with youth in that early preventative space, to make sure Police and Territory Families are working together with the same young people, identifying them early and getting early preventative work in place.

Commissioner CHALKER: I have very strong attachments to Alice Springs. That commitment has never wavered and never will. We are focused on doing as much as we can. The harsh reality is that we have probably never arrested more people in the Northern Territory than we have over the last 18 months. That is consistent with the increase in personal violence and property crime.

You would be aware that Strike Force Viper was not in operation. It was introduced while I was the Commissioner of Police. That was a commitment and is a permanent, ongoing focus on property crime and dealing with youths. Its success rate is testament to everyone who have worked in that area. They are dedicated and know the people who are recidivist property offenders. Through those networks, they pick up very quickly who is emerging on the scene.

It is disappointing that the age demographic has got down to young ages. Unfortunately, when our people engage with these youths, they are identifying a distinct lack of support for them—in their family or dynamic they are exposures to all sorts of things, which are aligned to our increase in crime reporting, alcoholism and the like. For example, we are seeing the move towards consumption of hand sanitiser. This is occurring on the front line. We have invested heavily in our Aboriginal Liaison Officer program based in Alice Springs. They are doing a lot of engagement throughout the whole community, as well as the remotes. They are trying to pick up and get a better sense of the movement of visitors into town, and where the problem areas are. There is a significant focus on that.

We are committed to continually ensuring that there is adequate resourcing. The resourcing in Alice Springs continues to be a key focus of what we do. We just graduated more graduates last Friday and there are more on the way. We are keeping those numbers up, so they have as much investment as they can. We have invested in drones to mitigate offending at the time and be as responsive as they can. That is the acute outcome end. We are desperately working with all agencies and other key stakeholders to influence the social end. That is the causation of a lot of these challenges, as the minister just spoke to.

Credit to all police officers based in Alice Springs and surrounding remote stations. They have worked tirelessly trying to protect that community in the face of challenging social times and complete upheaval as it related to extra money being there. The PALIs are still rolling out and doing their job. There is a dedicated and committed focus. We hope that the further we get away from this COVID bubble, the better life starts balancing. For people doing the offending, our people are arresting them and taking them through the process. The incarceration rates of adults and youths should tell you that we are arresting people and they are facing sanctions for the things they are doing. The numbers have never been higher.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You might be apprehending, but the crime rate is increasing.

Commissioner CHALKER: The social space is the causation. It is not police that are the trigger for further offending.

Mr TURNER: I agree with Minister Worden. It is not something that we will arrest our way out of. I am surprised, given the numbers that we have in Viper and Trident, that there are only two members in Orion. I asked for a tour of Orion some time ago which, unfortunately, I was advised you were unable to facilitate. From the response, I am assuming that Orion is funded out of response services. Could you tell the PAC more about the work that Orion is doing now and in the future? We were quite hopeful when it was initially announced in the proactive space.

Commissioner CHALKER: That was an initial work in collaboration with Territory Families for youths who were in care. The work we have done with the minister coming on board now is that co-service model being co-located. Orion has been subject to significant discussion, but discussion we are aiming to expand. We want to make sure that the model we are working towards has the horsepower of the multi-agencies to give it what it was—when particular individuals were in there, it was highly effective.

Unfortunately, as with other things, the demands of COVID sometimes took that away. It is something we are committed to and that we want to become a permanent feature. The work of Assistant Commissioner Wurst, with his other colleagues across other agencies, is dedicated to do that. It is clearly focused on youths and what they are exposed to.

Mr TURNER: Having 20-odd people in Orion compared to 20-odd people in Trident—it would be nice to stop the crimes before they happen and have less victims, rather than more arrests.

Mrs WORDEN: That is the process we are working through. Both CEOs have been very collaborative and have embraced the approach. We want to trial it. My initial response was to trial it in Alice Springs. That was a natural place for it to occur.

The beautiful thing about co-location is the exchange of information without having to go through the whole system of picking up the phone. Police officers are out 24-hours a day and Territory Families are not. That transfer of information earlier in the day, rather than it coming through a system, is the approach we hope to take. It has been embraced. I am grateful for that because that early intervention—understanding who might be out late at night, but perhaps, not committing an offence.

It is interesting in Alice Springs. Police and Territory Families staff often know young people by name—I have been out on patrols—and are able to identify new young people, which is important. There is that early engagement where a younger member of a family might be seen out, not causing an offence. It is not an offence to be out by yourself, no matter your age.

Mr EDGINGTON: It is a child protection issue.

Mrs WORDEN: It might be, but that has to be evidenced. If a young person is out and police are aware of who they are—particularly in Alice Springs, police officers and Territory Families staff know exactly who those young people are. That early transferring of information, so intervention can be made the next day with family, is the critical part. That is where we are focused on going.

Mr EDGINGTON: It is good to hear that agencies are sharing information but, lots of money goes into a range of government departments and non-government agencies. They may be sharing information about offenders and young people; doing what they can to help to prevent and reduce crime. Is there a documented plan, which shows what each agency is doing to help prevent crime? What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure that each agency is doing what it is required to do under that plan?

Mrs WORDEN: There are a number of activities.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is there a documented plan?

Mrs WORDEN: Not across every government agency, because not every government agency has a part to play.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is there one documented plan that shows what each agency is supposed to be doing to reduce crime and what each non-government agency is supposed to be doing? If there is not, why is that?

Mrs WORDEN: I do not know that is a reality. I can only talk to you about the agency I hold.

Mr EDGINGTON: There is no plan to reduce crime?

Mrs WORDEN: That is wrong.

Mr EDGINGTON: Where is it?

Mrs WORDEN: You are playing politics. I will not answer the question.

Mr EDGINGTON: You have never heard of a crime prevention plan or crime reduction plan? Why does this government not have one?

Mrs WORDEN: Each agency would have its own plan.

Mr EDGINGTON: Where is it?

Mrs WORDEN: If you let me respond, without you playing politics. You just joined the committee. There was a lot of discussion earlier. It is poor form.

Mr EDGINGTON: This is not politics.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, we have conducted ourselves well today, in a tough political environment with sensitive issues. As is your custom, the last two times you arrived, you interjected over the minister while she has been answering. I will not repeat what you said, but to say that to a minister, who is trying to answer the question—I find that out of order in this environment. I put you on a warning not to do that again.

I ask all honourable members, and those joining us, whether you are a member of the committee or not, to continue to conduct yourselves in the manner we have done during the estimates hearings.

Mrs WORDEN: There is the Generational Strategy for children, which came out of the tripartite group led by Minister Moss; the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction strategy—the CEs meet regularly—the Children and Families Standing Committee, where they work together; the DV plan; the antisocial behaviour plan.

Commissioner CHALKER: Member for Barkly, with your background it will not surprise you to know that we have crime reduction strategies and utilise those techniques all the time—repeat offenders, recidivist work. All those things are in play.

There are overarching plans the NT government has produced in recent times, particularly through the tripartite forum and as part of the Children and Families Standing Committee, where the CEOs come together. Everyone is trying to point in the right direction. It is not necessarily encapsulated under the title of a crime reduction strategy. They are trying to focus on the causation challenges, for example, the early childhood strategies, school attendance work and Education's approach for engagement for those who are not engaged. A lot of things are going on in that space. It is just not articulated under a determination of a crime reduction strategy for all agencies.

Mr EDGINGTON: That is what I was getting at. The answer is clear; there is no overall documented crime reduction plan for the Northern Territory.

Mrs WORDEN: There are a number of plans within agencies that come under an umbrella. It is a very simplistic view for you to take. It is much more sophisticated than that. Every agency understands its role and has plans to drive it down. The Children and Families Standing Committee has oversight and can pull

different levers accordingly after they have met. They look at all the factors and inputs, for example, the Child and Family Centres, and inputs to places like the Barkly. It comes together under that sub-committee. It does not reference itself as a crime plan, but it is all about addressing generational disadvantage and the drivers of crime, as opposed to fixing crime. The crime end is a policing matter, which I think you understand.

Mr EDGINGTON: I am sorry, but it is a whole-of-government issue. If you think that crime is just for police, then you are wrong.

Mrs WORDEN: The drivers of crime are a whole-of-government response, and that is how we have always approached it. The severity of that—with the children and sub-committee, and the tripartite group coming together on a regular basis, to make sure that the inputs are right to get the outputs—is something we have always taken extremely seriously. We just have not called it about 'crime'.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This whole topic is extraordinarily emotional. The Members for Barkly, Braiiting, myself and others here who may be affected as much as we are—we are at the coalface of a war. It is so bad in our towns that people are despairing. Sitting here, listening to you, I could almost scream, but I will not, because I would be thrown out. It is not political, it is just people doing their jobs, trying to represent their constituents. Does your government consider this urgent? Does your government consider this a crisis? That is what it is, for the people of the Barkly, Central Australia and Alice Springs.

Mrs WORDEN: My comments earlier about making sure that co-location of staff as a first response as a new and incoming minister, will tell you how seriously we understand the issues are in Alice Springs. It is why that is an absolute focus. Yes, we consider it extremely important as an issue.

Where you have such an unequal society—drivers of poverty, housing, education, all those factors. Those things are unique challenges across government, as the Member for Barkly indicated. That is our approach to these issues. While we can throw a load of resources at things that might get a short-term outcome, it is the long-term challenge that is so important. We are focused on making a change.

Mr BURGOYNE: Will PALIs remain, for the medium and long-term, in Alice Springs and across the Northern Territory where they exist?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr TURNER: In response services, in relation to domestic violence, there used to be Strike Force Viridian, which was a quality-assurance/control process to ensure that minimum standards were being met, and to identify trends across domestic violence. Given the high rates of domestic violence, which are overwhelmingly—because as a society, the more that we do to stigmatise it, the more confidence victim-survivors have to come forward and report. Is it something that you are looking at bringing here? I noticed that there was the—I think it was Lyre—that came in at the Darwin Police Station. I would like your thoughts about that, because it affects my electorate, as it does for every other member.

Mrs WORDEN: On the Territory Families side there has been more preventative. One of my first aims was to do the preventative. All the money was essentially going into the pointy end—safe houses. Over the last 18 months to two years, we secured more federal money and put more into the preventative space. There will be a lag for that to hit home. I announced another \$5.1m last week for that space.

The other big initiative is to set up, under the reform office, a collection of senior staff members from Police, Health, Education, Attorney-Generals and Territory Families to look at domestic and family violence right the way across. It is interesting coming through the budget cycle; every one of those agencies has its own need, and it recognises the need for education and more work in their own agencies. The work of that is to come together, look at and find the things that work.

This is one of the issues with domestic, family and sexual violence nationally. The programs for early intervention are not that mature. We have great ones in the Northern Territory. We need them to be evidenced that they work. All the new grants we put out have a component in them that requires a reflective look at them—it is evaluation of those programs on their effectiveness. That is a whole new step for the Northern Territory. If you could take something off the shelf, you would, but in the Territory context that is pointless.

We need different initiatives in different places and that is what all those preventative grants are about. That group—I call them the ICRO—is sitting under the Reform Office. Their work is to look across the whole of government at what is effective, what our priorities should be and make those requests in the form of a Cabinet submission to budget Cabinet next year. That is so we know, as a government, where the best bang

for buck will be, whether that is with Police—where those competing priorities are across agencies, we can make sure that we are putting our funding—plus the new federal government has committed publicly to needs-based funding. In this space, that will be a game changer for the Northern Territory.

Mr TURNER: Does the domestic and family violence section have a substantive officer in charge?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: No, the DV unit currently has an acting detective senior sergeant. We are going through a promotional pathway now.

Mr TURNER: We have spoken a lot about the issues with alcohol. It is an issue raising its head in my electorate. The Alcohol Policing Unit was formed, then disbanded. I struggle to find anything that has taken its place. While it is not under the minister's portfolio, the Liquor Licensing group seem to struggle to fit into that as well. Where are we effectively dealing with alcohol without the Alcohol Policing Unit?

Commissioner CHALKER: The focus of the Alcohol Policing Unit function was given to Darwin, Palmerston and Casuarina, because their patch is the one that they know more inherently. Unfortunately, due to our demands a number of tasks we would have liked to have had ongoing during COVID fell away. As those resources have come back, those social order focuses have increased. Knee Hammer, for example, has already shown that part of the work is being done.

All divisions have a focus on alcohol policing, it is an inherent part of what they do. Their resources were provided from that resourcing and had an element that would consistently focus on it. We are fortunate that we were able to bring our resourcing back to a more suitable level, so we can get that work back up and running. We can see the effectiveness of that already.

Alcohol is a significant causation focus for us and the Alcohol Policing Unit is an inherent part of what we are trying to do. I have made it a focus across the command. Palmerston police will know Palmerston locations far better than someone who is travelling from Nightcliff. We want to make sure it is a local idea and solutions, but with the appropriate support. Where we are now getting cross-command collaboration, it appears to be improving.

Mr TURNER: My understanding is that Knee Hammer is in the reactive space. Is anything happening in the proactive space with licensing and volumetric sales data?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is ongoing work we do consistently to identify where peak areas are. Deputy Murphy leads a lot of that work for us. He is actively engaged with Licensing on those activities, as are other relevant commands. There is little doubt—as I touched on, unfortunately the consumption of hand sanitiser in some localities has been a further environment we had to adapt to, to be proactive and reduce harm.

Mr CHAIR: We will take a short break, as we are halfway through our afternoon session.

The committee suspended.

Mrs WORDEN: I have an answer to Question on Notice number 5.16, police 000 calls.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.16

Mrs WORDEN: For police only, because it does not include fire, there is no ability to review the Tennant Creek records as there is no queue available. The average wait time across the board for police 000 calls is nine seconds for Katherine, Alice Springs and Darwin.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have the numbers?

Mrs WORDEN: The number of calls per region for the reporting period July to March, with an average wait time of nine seconds, was Katherine, 14,250; Darwin, 63,595; and Alice Springs, 29,124.

Output 2.2 – Investigations

Mr TURNER: I will not go over the caveat from earlier—what was the cost to police of the investigation into the shooting in Yuendumu?

Commissioner CHALKER: I will have to take that on notice. I do not have that specific information.

Question on Notice No 5.18

Mr CHAIR: Member for Blain, please restate the question for the record.

Mr TURNER: What was the total cost to Police of the investigation into the shooting in Yuendumu?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Blain has been allocated the number 5.18.

Mr TURNER: I would like to settle things that I read in the media because, like you said, they may not be true. It has been reported that just shy of \$100,000 of taxpayers' money was expended on a report and not used in the trial. As someone who has worked as a former investigator, it appeared to be money down the drain—it relates to estimates—I do not understand why.

Commissioner CHALKER: I do not have that information. I am not aware of what was procured or funded for that, not being part of the investigation. It may be able to be identified in the question you just posed about the total costs, depending on what that breakdown looks like. It is not information that I am aware of or have approved.

Mr TURNER: Can I ask another question on notice, please? How many expert reports were ordered—these will probably be individual ones—into the investigation into the shooting at Yuendumu?

Mrs WORDEN: I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.19

Mr CHAIR: Member for Blain, please restate the question for the record.

Mr TURNER: How many expert reports were ordered in relation to the shooting at Yuendumu?

Deputy Commissioner SMALPAGE: Are you talking about the criminal investigation or the crime investigation? If it relates to the crime investigation, it should be referred to AGD. It was the Coroner. He directed the criminal investigation.

Mr TURNER: If it is relevant to your portfolio—anything in relation to Police. How many expert reports were ordered in relation to the investigation into the shooting at Yuendumu by Police?

Mr CHAIR: The minister said to make it relate to costs rather than how many reports.

Mrs WORDEN: I get the question. It is about how many the Police budget paid for.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: I am happy to take that question.

Mr TURNER: Do you want a separate question on how much they cost individually?

Mrs WORDEN: Do you want a breakdown on costs for each report?

Mr TURNER: Yes, please.

Mr CHAIR: Do you want to roll it into the same one?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, that is fine. We can do that.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Blain has been allocated the number 5.19.

Output 2.3 – Services to the Judicial Process

No questions.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – ROAD SAFETY

Output 3.1 – Road Safety Services

Mr TURNER: How many vehicles were seized under the hoon legislation in Palmerston in this budget year?

Commissioner CHALKER: We do not have that detail, so we will have to take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.20

Mr CHAIR: Member for Blain, please restate the question for the record.

Mr TURNER: How many vehicles were seized under the hoon legislation in Palmerston in this financial year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Blain has been allocated the number 5.20.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – FIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

Output 4.1 – Fire Prevention and Response Management

Mrs WORDEN: I welcome to the table Chief Fire Officer, Mark Spain.

Mr BURGOYNE: When was the last time an audit of fire equipment in the Alice Springs station done? When was the last time new equipment was purchased?

Mr SPAIN: It depends on what equipment you are talking about, whether it be fire appliances—fire trucks, urban search and rescue equipment, technical rescue and the like. Could you be more specific?

Mr BURGOYNE: Has there been a review into the Alice Springs station about its capabilities and equipment?

Mr SPAIN: Yes, there has. It is an ongoing review. Mr Chalker, the Police Commissioner and CEO of Fire and Rescue, dissolved the Fire and Emergency Services group within the PFES, and reformed the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service in July 2020.

I was recruited to the Chief Fire Officer position under the new model. Since then, I have appointed a Deputy Chief Fire Officer, which did not exist under the previous model, and an Assistant Chief Fire Officer. As a result of that, for the last 18 months we have done a number of reviews across the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service. Alice Springs is on that list. We are working with the new minister now.

Mr BURGOYNE: To date, has anything been found that needs to be rectified as part of that audit process?

Mrs WORDEN: I do not think it is a matter of being rectified, it is a matter of working out priorities. I was in Alice Springs and met with the staff last Friday. They are a group invested in their work and very passionate about what they are doing. They pointed out to me that some of their appliances are ageing. There are challenges with that. I have already had discussions about the replacement of items. It is not easy. Things are in train, but there is a lag because of ordering.

Mr SPAIN: We operate under the major appliance replacement program, which does not take into consideration aerial appliances, or the smaller grassfire units and all the rescue equipment. Anywhere down from Katherine to Alice Springs is harsh water, so appliances have a life expectancy of about 20 years due to the wear and tear of the appliances from the harsh water.

We are on minimum staffing, as per our budget. We buy appliances to fit the staffing arrangements, so they are fit for purpose. That also increases the wear and tear. We have a heavy maintenance costs on those. Our major appliance replacement program per year is about \$2m, which has gone up from \$1.7m.

Mr BURGOYNE: Does the Alice Springs fire station have the necessary equipment to undertake any emergency that might arise?

Mrs WORDEN: On meeting them, there are changing the facets to the work they do. The Chief Fire Officer has already given me a comprehensive understanding at a briefing about the need for changes overall, in order to ensure that we can get a longer life out of appliances. Some of the appliances are combined; it would be a better improvement for them to be separate. Those conversations have already been had.

At the moment they can meet the needs they have. The more problematic issue is backup services. In Darwin we can call others in, for example, Palmerston. In Alice Springs, if they have a bigger blaze, they do not have that capability. We will have ongoing discussions about that.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do we have the equipment—the necessary ladders et cetera—to fight a high-rise fire in Darwin?

Mr SPAIN: We have finite resources across the Northern Territory to provide a service to the community. I will reference the recent fire of two industrial complexes in Stuart Park. There were 18 firefighters assigned to that task.

In our act, we have what we call emergency response areas—ERAs. For example, in Darwin we have Darwin, Marrara, Berrimah, Palmerston and Humpty Doo. That involves a certain number of firefighters per ERA. For that fire I called in three ERA resources to manage it. If we had a high-rise fire, we would do the same. I had Palmerston manage the ERAs in the event another incident occurred, while that was being dealt with by those crews. It is fair to say that in any other capital city there would be approximately 100 firefighters and more appliances to deal with that issue.

I acknowledge the hard work firefighters did that day. In some cases people wore breathing apparatuses up to four times to protect the other industry around the two complexes we had already lost to fire.

Mrs WORDEN: That is what I was alluding to. Firefighting is a challenge of changes. If you put in bigger buildings, it is a challenge, but some of that work needs to be done before buildings are built. Those buildings should be built with the expertise of fire management for that schedule. That is something I am already in discussions about—whether that might require legislative change to make sure that happens.

Mr BURGOYNE: In regard to ladders and pumps, do we have the necessary equipment to fight a high-rise fire should it eventuate?

Mr SPAIN: We have a 44-metre Bronto ladder, which has a pumper on it. We also have two 17-metre ladders in service. One is away getting its half-life service. The other one will be scheduled to do that.

Once again, I have finite resources. The issue I have with the 44-metre ladder is that if it is offline for training, it can be redeployed for operations. However, if it is offline for a service or breakdown, that will create issues for us. Any building over 25 metres will have a sprinkler system and internal mechanisms to cater for that. It will create a problem for us, but the 44-metre ladder has the capacity to provide firefighting capability.

Mr BURGOYNE: Up to what storey height is that 44-metre ladder?

Mr SPAIN: It is about three metres per floor—four metres for the first level and three metres per floor. Remember it has to work on an angle and from a safety zone when fighting that fire.

Mr BURGOYNE: The height of the buildings in Alice Springs is not as high, but do we have the capability in Alice Springs to fight those high-rise fires, even though they might only be five floors up?

Mr SPAIN: I have to highlight that any building under 25 metres is non-sprinklered, so that will cause an issue. I believe there will be planning scope in Alice Springs in relation to higher than two or three storeys—we already have the courthouse building.

We used to have aerial capability for that in Alice Springs. However, harsh water and whatever has worn the system down, so we only have ordinary pumps there. As part of the 2030 project Mr Chalker put into place, I will be working to highlight appropriate vehicle replacement to our emergency response areas to provide that service for you.

Mr CHAIR: You spoke about harsh water in Alice Springs. Can you explain that?

Mr SPAIN: It is the calcium. Anywhere from Katherine down, calcium gets into the pump. The impellers and the pumps corrode after a period of time. It makes it harder for the gates to open and the water to flow out. It needs continual maintenance and that pump is offline.

Mr TURNER: Police ceased the relation with Rotary over the Police Officer of the Year Award. Have the fires done the same thing, or have they kept that relationship?

Mr SPAIN: No, as you know, we form under Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The Commissioner of Police is my CEO. Generally, we follow the direction and will come up with a new award mechanism for recognising the work of our firefighters, whether it be the volunteer, career or auxiliary firefighter ranks.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – EMERGENCY SERVICES **Output 5.1 – Emergency Services**

Mr BURGOYNE: Can you please outline the cost of the recent break-in at the Alice Springs Emergency Services unit?

Mrs WORDEN: I introduce Ms Fleur O'Connor, the Director of Emergency Services.

Ms O'CONNOR: There was a break-in at our Alice Springs office on 6 April. We had an unlawful entry at that location—our NTES headquarters and the volunteer unit. The cost in total for that break-in was \$4,658.45. That included vehicle repairs, change of vehicle keys, four torches being replaced, window repairs and front gate repairs.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 5.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES **Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance**

Mr TURNER: A couple of years ago there was media done and great excitement about facial recognition within the Northern Territory Police and how it will be rolled out. Could you update the committee on how the NEC product is working?

Mrs WORDEN: We will take that on notice. I do not have it on hand.

Question on Notice No 5.21

Mr CHAIR: Member for Blain, please restate the question for the record.

Mr TURNER: How is facial recognition is being implemented in the Northern Territory Police? What is the cost expended to date?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Blain has been allocated the number 5.21.

Mr TURNER: This was brought to my attention during the break in relation to the unfortunate spate of police officers passing away, which I am sure has affected the Commissioner of Police as deeply as it has me. The EAP/ESS scheme is an anonymous scheme deliberately to protect members, but because of that it means members who utilise it and do not go on workers comp can fall off the radar.

For want of a more delicate way to put it, suicidal contagion is a known issue, where once we get one, two, three and the media start reporting on it—as they have—the risk increases. To maintain the integrity, which is an important part of the ESS scheme, is it possible to consider reaching out to the members who are utilising ESS to ensure that if the agency has not had contact with them, that they are okay to conduct that risk assessment and see if they need to be transited into, or triaged into an emergency care situation? With the nature of the confidentiality, we are unaware if they are engaging with their provider or not.

Commissioner CHALKER: I understand that within the Support and Wellbeing team there is a key focus and strategy on what is undertaken. We try to make sure that we touch base with all we reasonably can.

Mrs WORDEN: There is a body of work in the Wellbeing report that needs to be done. The touch-in base is prominent and will be addressed through the implementation of the recommendations of that report.

Output 6.2 – Shared Services Received

No questions.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

No questions.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of the output groups relating to the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all the officers who provided assistance today. Commissioner, thanks to you and your team for your time—everyone has contributed.

Mrs WORDEN: I would like to put on the record my thanks, not just for those who appeared today, but all of those in Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services, who provided input into the very lengthy and time-consuming process of budget estimates. It is deeply appreciated.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister, commissioner, and deputy commissioner for joining us while you are unwell. Get well soon, Deputy Commissioner Murphy, and thank you to everyone else.

The committee suspended.

TERRITORY FAMILIES

PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC, FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

DEPARTMENT OF TERRITORY FAMILIES, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back to estimates 2022. We are now moving onto Territory Families, Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, and Sport. Minister, I invite you to introduce your officials and make a brief statement, then we will go to questions.

Mrs WORDEN: I introduce the members of the Territory Families, Housing and Communities executive team who appear with me today, and who will assist to respond to your questions. They are Mr Ken Davies, Chief Executive Officer; Ms Nicole Hurwood, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Strategic and Enabling Services; Ms Jeannette Kerr, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Families; Ms Emma White, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Regional Services and Communities.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Territory Families, Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, and Sport. The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities—I will refer to them as ‘the department’ from now on—is a diverse, multi-functional human services agency, which delivers integrated holistic services, programs and initiatives to the people of the Territory.

The reach of its services extends to Territorians at all stages of life, though shaping our communities, celebrating the culture and heritage of the Territory, active recreation and sporting, through to supporting Territorians who are experiencing vulnerability through housing, and/or are requiring support with safety, family support, and care and protection services.

Our government sees every dollar directed to our children, families and communities as an investment into generational change and enabling Territorians to be safe, have a home, live active and inspired lives, feel valued and be included in their community and have access to support when needed where they are.

The department has an operating budget on \$1.1bn to achieve these outcomes for our clients and the vision of connected communities, thriving places and empowered Territorians. The budget relating to my own responsibilities of Territory Families, Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, and Sport for 2022–23 is \$453.7m, and there is \$103.9m in infrastructure funding.

We are investing \$297.1m in supports for children, young people and families, including family support; child protection; out-of-home care; youth justice; and domestic, family and sexual violence reduction services.

Our government is committed to supporting families to keep their children safe by investing in earlier intervention and prevention measures to equip families with the resources they need to manage the challenges they face. In 2022–23, \$24.5m has been allocated to family support. This includes investing \$8.2m per annum to fund non-government organisations to deliver family support programs in communities.

This model increases engagement with regional service providers and supports an integrated and community-led family support model that aligns with Commonwealth investment, with 14 Aboriginal organisations successful in receiving grants under this program.

Our commitment to working with families and carers is paying dividends. We continue to see more families trusting Territory Families, Housing and Communities to work with them to address concerns before they develop into potential risks for their children.

As of 31 March 2022 there were 709 family support cases representing individuals and families willing to work with us on a voluntary basis to address their need to prevent escalation of tertiary services.

Our \$64m investment in the new client case management information system is one of the most significant advances in improved information-sharing practices over the last two decades. We call it the Care project. This project continues to advance well, with extensive engagement with our frontline officers, enabling the system to be fit for purpose. It will deliver improved connectivity to inform better practice and information sharing with Territory Families, Housing and Communities, across agencies and with partnering service providers.

In the area of child protection, our government has allocated \$22.3m for child protection services. This funding supports our highly skilled professional staff, who work with families and children to investigate notifications of children and young people allegedly experiencing harm or neglect.

In 2021–22, \$2.7m is invested in the clinical practice team, which provides frontline services with professional support and oversees the continued implementation of the Signs of Safety practice framework. We support the child protection workforce to continually improve how the department engages with families and communities at risk to keep children safe from harm through partnering with families to co-design safety plans that hold more people to account to provide for the safety and wellbeing of children.

As at 31 March 2022, there were 22,531 child protection notifications received. While this is an increase on previous years, we continue to see a downward trend on the number of children in the out-of-home care system. This is a direct result of families being better supported to keep children and young people safe at home and for longer periods of time after the involvement of the department.

In the out-of-home care space, there will always, sadly, be children and young people unable to remain safely at home, whether that is temporarily or permanently. This can have a lasting impact, especially if children and young people lose their connection to family, culture, education, sport and hobbies, which are fundamental to their development.

The out-of-home care system must keep children and young people safe and at the same time give them the opportunities to heal and thrive. Our ongoing delivery of the out-of-home care services is supported by \$119.4m in the 2022–23 budget. This enables Territory Families to provide things that all children deserve,

such as food, shelter, schooling, clothing, travel, medical and psychological care and opportunities to participate in sport and hobbies for children who are at risk and unable to remain at home.

Even though it is not in my script today—money does not buy love, but that is what our carers provide to every one of those children.

The steady decline in 2021–22 of the total number of children in out-of-home care has continued on from previous years. At 31 March 2022, there were 923 children and young people in out-of-home care placements. That is down 45 since 30 June last year. Of these children in care, 212 were placed in a kinship care placement and 255 in a foster care placement. About \$22m of the out-of-home care budget is invested in intensive therapeutic residential care for children with the most complex needs, who are receiving high-quality trauma-informed care.

Furthermore, we recognise the importance of cultural security for children and young people and the benefits of Aboriginal carers growing up Aboriginal children. In 2022–23 we continue to invest \$1.2m in a grant program for Aboriginal-controlled organisations, which work with communities to play a lead role in finding appropriate and culturally safe arrangements for Aboriginal children wherever possible within their own communities.

In the youth justice space our government has significantly reformed the Territory's youth justice system since 2016, building on our vision of a youth justice system that contributes to community safety and reduces reoffending. In the 2022–23 budget, we continue to make significant investments in establishing youth justice programs to address offending and reoffending behaviour and operate youth detention centres with a total investment of \$76.7m.

The 2022–23 budget also invest \$43.4m to finalise the construction of the new fit-for-purpose youth justice centre in Darwin and the extensive redevelopment of the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre. I visited the site in Alice Springs last week and note that it is progressing well. It is expected to open this year, and the Darwin facility is expected to open in 2023.

The development of a new model of care for youth justice—which is more important than the bricks and mortar—has been co-designed by Territory Families and the non-government sector. It will be embedded within the new centres.

In the domestic, family and sexual violence space—Territorians have the right to experience safety wherever they are, especially in their homes. High on our agenda is an increase to service resourcing for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence. The 2022–23 budget allocates \$54.1m to domestic, family and sexual violence reduction services.

Our government recently named me as the first Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, and we have an investment of an extra \$6.95m in 2022–23. I take this complex issue incredibly seriously. This investment includes \$1.2m to establish a dedicated office under the reform office to ensure delivery of whole-of-government responses; an additional \$2.5m to the department to increase specialist services; secondary prevention and primary intervention grants; and an additional \$3.25m for the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice for community courts, support for law and justice groups and alternatives for custody in Alice Springs and Groote Eylandt. That is in addition to \$1.5m redirected funding within the Department of Health for Aboriginal-led specialist sexual assault responses, training in hospitals and health centres and the Ruby Gaea Centre Against Sexual Violence. It does a great job.

We also continue to support the sector to ameliorate the impacts of COVID-19 with infrastructure upgrades at the Territory's women's' refuges. This includes \$6.5m for the new crisis and transitional accommodation for Dawn House in Darwin; \$1.5m for upgrades to the Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter; and \$3m for increased crisis accommodation at the Katherine Women's Crisis Centre.

We are also investing \$1.2m in 2022–23 to establish the new domestic family and sexual violence interagency coordination and reform office—ICRO. The ICRO will run for 12 months and is being established under the whole-of-government reform management office. It will be staffed by senior officers from our department; Attorney General and Justice; Health; Education; and the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Over the next 12 months the office will work across government with the community sector and the Australian Government to improve the coordination and delivery of domestic, family and sexual violence reform initiatives in the Northern Territory.

In the sport and active recreation space, in November 2021 we released the Northern Territory Sport and Active Recreation Strategic Plan 2021–25 confirming our government’s unwavering focus to achieve our vision for a healthy and inclusive future, one which celebrates communities and creates vibrant places to support and encourage active participation in sport and recreation by all Territorians.

In the 2022–23 budget we commit \$37.5m to maximise participation, achieve sporting success at home and nationally and grow our opportunities in the regions in partnership with the sector. We continue to support families and carers with the cost of participation in sport, recreation and cultural activities, through the \$5.5m sports voucher scheme and the \$0.55m learn to swim program. These investments ensure children and young people develop core aquatic skills through structured play and are water-confident and active in our community. It also keeps down the cost of living for families.

In the emergency management and welfare space—I am proud of the department’s role in leading the welfare and functional response groups’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledge its enormous contribution to keeping Territorians safe since March 2020. Under the Northern Territory emergency management arrangements the welfare group led the multi-agency provision of mandatory quarantine accommodation at the Alice Springs quarantine facility. That facility is now closed, pleasingly, and was handed back to the operator on 11 May.

I am proud to report that during its nearly two years of operation, quarantine accommodation and 24-hour welfare support was provided to almost 4,000 Territorians and visitors. Through the dedicated hard work of staff from across the government, commercial and non-government sector, the Alice Springs quarantine facility achieved the pandemic plan objective of reducing the risk of community transmission of COVID-19 to vulnerable Territorians.

Throughout the pandemic, committed department staff have continued to deliver essential child protection; youth justice; housing; and domestic, family and sexual violence prevention services, including planning and practical assistance to the service sector to maintain essential community services during the omicron outbreak. They continue to provide advice and support to organisations as we transition to new ways of working with COVID-19.

The 2022–23 budget is an investment in our people. The workforce of over 1,304 FTE, as at 31 March 2022, are the backbone of our agency. They continue to deliver high-quality services to support Territory children, families and communities to achieve their best. It is also an investment in good governance to rigorously identify what is working and what is not. This is an investment in strategic legislative and practice reform to deliver contemporary evidence-based services and infrastructure so we can deliver services in contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities in the right locations.

Mr BURGOYNE: Has a site been identified for the northern suburbs youth hub?

Mrs WORDEN: Not at this time. The youth hub project actually has moved to Minister Moss, she will be driving that. I will not close that gate for you. We are very pleased to see the federal government make the commitment of \$6m. I believe \$1m of that will assist to find men’s shed a home, but the residual \$5m will go to building a purpose-built centre.

A number of sites have been discussed and explored extensively to find the right space. We need a space that is accessible for young people. At the moment services are being run out of Sanderson Middle School—The SHAK is up and running there and doing very well. That is in my electorate. By all reports from the school it is working well, and the numbers of young people attending continue to grow. The site needs to be—we are already putting research into that regarding the right site for accessibility for now and ongoing. We need to work out where the young people are predominantly coming from. That work has been under way for the last six months.

We are also talking to young people about what services they want in the centre. They are two bits of work for that to happen. We definitely have that commitment coming through. From here on in that sits with Minister Moss.

Mr BURGOYNE: Have you gone to community groups with consultation on this? Has that been occurring for the last six months, as you put it?

Mrs WORDEN: Personally? No, but the agency has. I will ask the CEO to give you more detail because you can build a building, but the programs which go into it are what is important. We are acutely aware of that.

Mr DAVIES: We have been working closely—we learned lessons out of the model we established in Palmerston. Clearly, we need to engage with local government. We have been working with the Darwin City Council to get its buy-in to what we will be doing in the future. Emma has been doing substantial work with the council.

We are interested in working with the people running the Casuarina centre and making sure they are involved in whatever we put together. We would love to have them sponsoring and supporting the work of the hub, because we want to make sure it has training and employment outcomes.

The other part of it is that if we are to establish this hub, we are keen to do a design that is built around a program. We want support services in there that work for young people. Having learned the lessons in Palmerston, we want to make sure the youths going in there—if they present with problems—are adequately supported and looked after.

We are also keen to make sure that agencies like Education play a role in that space. Part of the deal is that we are working with the NGO sector to talk about what the service might look like. Once we get a model that we think will be able to test, we will work in the community to talk to community groups at a lower level, particularly people in the neighbourhoods, about what a hub service might look like.

It has been a brilliant success in Palmerston. If we can create a similar model—we have had a high level of involvement from the local government. The infrastructure around it, including the swimming pool, netball courts and the schools—it has really worked well. A lot of young people are those who would normally be on the streets if they were not in the hub. There is no doubt about that.

Mr BURGOYNE: Has anything been looked into regarding the amount of agency staff members or the hours it would operate?

Mr DAVIES: That is all part of the model design we will do. We have to work with the Australian Government to make sure the \$5m that has been put on the table is sourced properly. That is for the infrastructure, which is clear, but we will fund the program. Some money has been set aside in the budget next year to start the hub model with what a design would look like and getting a hub service provider similar to the model we have in Palmerston, where the YMCA is the head tenant and harnesses the support services for us, which sit around the model.

Mrs WORDEN: There is \$400,000 in the 2022–23 budget for the final piece of work to get that model together. It is then forecast at \$1.4m going forward. It is in those forecasted budgets.

Mr BURGOYNE: That \$400,000 is not to fund the building of the service. It is to go into the development of the service?

Mr DAVIES: That \$400,000 is helping to support the services there at the moment. We have The SHAK involved in a range of other services, as well as doing the source work on what the model will look like. We are not stopping any of the services we currently deliver there. Around the school holidays we are growing the number of services. We want a model that runs throughout the Christmas period. We need the right programs in place.

We are growing out there and we will do it really well. We will work with the right services to make sure that what we put in place is sustainable.

Mr BURGOYNE: You have spoken about the programs and the service providers. Have you looked at what programs will be provided? Have you identified a service provider?

Mr DAVIES: I will go to Emma to go into detail regarding what we have been doing. Whatever we do there, we will be running a procurement exercise to make sure we do it properly.

Ms WHITE: No provider has been selected. We have had substantive engagement with the non-government and community-controlled sector. We had an excellent workshop March where we fleshed out the first layer of detail about what an operating model might be, what features are needed at the physical location—like multi-purpose space and rec area and a targeted specialist services area, et cetera.

We have been working with DIPL to identify a shortlist of potential locations so that we can do the community consultation. We have something concrete that we can talk through with people. Part of that consultation will be directly with young people for them to co-design features of that operating model and program.

Regarding the \$400,000-plus for this year, we have been investing and targeting the gaps we know exist, for example longer hours, later at night, and trying to use that additional investment to address the transportation gap for young people to access, particularly in the late hours and across the weekend. That is the plan for this year, which will inform the next level of detail to identify the site, stand up the program and go to market.

Mr BURGOYNE: With the youth hub in Alice Springs, a lot of crime related to the operation of that service. What precautions and tactics are being engaged to ensure that similar issues are not experienced with this northern suburbs hub?

Mrs WORDEN: I do not know that there was crime, per se. I spoke to a number of the neighbours in and around. It brought young people. We commissioned the report. We have taken the lessons from the report. This is one of the learnings you get by running a trial.

The fact that government ran the trial stood us in good stead to pivot and do different things from the lessons learned, which is why that work is now happening in the camps.

Location is paramount, which is exactly why we are going through a due diligence process and working with property services and DIPL to get the right location. We need the right space, otherwise young people will not come. Young people have to inform the process. In some ways, it might be as simple as being on a bus route.

I have met with Warren, who heads up the new owners of the Casuarina Shopping Centre, because that seems to be where young people are attracted to—in the absence of another space. We have had good discussions with him and his executive team on the part they would like to play. That puts on the table the opportunity for doing things in close proximity to the centre. Those things need to be worked through properly as we do not want to end up with a white elephant sitting somewhere that young people do not go to. That is a lesson to learn from Alice Springs. The programs there were great. People were disrupted by young people being in that vicinity; it probably brought an increased number of young people into town. That was some of the findings of that review.

Mr BURGOYNE: Can you provide an update on the recommendations about the Alice Springs Youth Hub and the work being undertaken?

Mrs WORDEN: That was quite some time ago and we talked through these in parliament ad nauseum.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am happy to go to the next question. Can you provide an update on the town camp community centres in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: It no longer sits with me. We have provided \$1.35m to Tangentyere to deliver the camps at Karnte and Trucking Yards. They have been running since Christmas; I have visited. Has the Member for Brailling had an opportunity to visit?

Mr BURGOYNE: Not yet. I will ask again; last time I was told they were just developing.

Mrs WORDEN: They are much more developed. They focused on investing in local people and upskilling them. I met a number of the skilled staff on site. They have opened and are attracting more younger children than they anticipated; they are engaging in full swing at both locations and looking at other opportunities.

During COVID they did a lot of activities outside, such as BMX—and not on site. You may have turned up one day and no-one was there because kids were off-site doing things. There was feedback about wanting to do things that were not in a building. When I visited there were young people and staff everywhere in the centre. They have invested heavily on local Indigenous staff to provide the activities.

Mr BURGOYNE: What was the agreement regarding the \$1.35m. I have heard you speak on radio about the hours it would be open. I understand that those hours are somewhat less than what was originally understood, in comparison to the youth hub. For the \$1.35m that was committed to the program, what does Territory Families and the community of Alice Springs have in terms of a service?

Mrs WORDEN: I have not had an update for a while because it sits with Minister Moss.

Mr DAVIES: In the context of the two youth hubs, Karnte and Trucking Yards, the funding we gave Tangentyere was over a fixed period. It took them a while, as you know, to gear up and do the recruitment, particularly through the Christmas period. They are hitting their straps now.

We are still assisting them and will continue to do that with our youth outreach teams. The intent is that we sustain and keep the two existing programs going. We are sourcing more data, as we need more evidence on the time frames and number of youths going into the programs. We want to grow at least two more in the town camps.

The Australia Government has put on the table \$20m to support social services in Alice Springs, including funds to develop The Gap Youth hub. We want to work with the non-government sector and the town council to make sure we have a plan on Brown Street, The Gap Youth centre and town camp youth centres.

The evidence base is being built. We are doing the work. We will continue to fund the two existing programs and support their growth. It is fair to say it has not been an easy process for Tangentyere going into the recruiting round during COVID. We can provide some more information outside of here about the hours they are operating and so on. The intent is not to walk away from these programs but to get behind them and continue to grow them, with a view to growing two more, if we can, in the town camps with Tangentyere.

Mr BURGOYNE: What was that fixed period of funding and what are the hours they are currently operating?

Mr DAVIES: The eight-month period was from 14 December through to 18 July, including implementation delivery, then we are working with them on the evaluation. We will continue to keep them open, given that they took a while to gear up. We will do an evaluation, then use that information to grow the work with the Australian Government to make sure it is in the frame—as well about funding the services.

Mr BURGOYNE: They were funded on a fixed period of eight months, operating for how long? That funding of \$1.53m would have had something attached to it in regard to the operating hours. I understand they were not able to operate in the manner in which they wanted to in the beginning. Does that mean funding will run for longer now? How does that work?

Mr DAVIES: Definitely. It means they want to spend all that money. There is a contract supervision process that happens. We will roll that forward, then at the point they commit the funds, we will extend the program for two, while we gear up and do the evaluation work to make sure we get some agreement about where the next hub sites will be. The other thing that is on the back end of this is a massive construction program that is happening in the housing area of those town camps. We need to be working with Tangentyere on its network to make sure wherever we go we will be supporting the expansion of these into the right places.

That is where we are up to. We do not want to walk away from this commitment. Tangentyere will be there for the long haul, as you would know. We want to grow the capacity and we understand it will take some work to get behind them and help them to do it.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many Territory Families staff are assisting Tangentyere to run these programs? Are there any Territory Families staff in the town camps in the evening?

Ms WHITE: Initially we had five of our staff involved across the two town camps, shadowing and on the roster, skill-sharing a lot of our resources and experiences and patching that into what they brought to the table. It was an excellent foundation we built. That was not there before in the way we now experience it. There was a lot of hesitation to work with the blue shirts.

We do not have staff on a roster per se, but we meet weekly with Tangentyere if it foreshadows shortages in its team or there has been a spike in activity for young people. It is a standing arrangement that we can swing in and out as needed, because we are invested in making this a success.

Mr BURGOYNE: What happened with the Territory Families staff who were a part of the youth hub? Where did they end up?

Mrs WORDEN: They are still with Territory Families, having gone back to their lesser role. These are activities not for just kids being challenged, they are supporting the growth and social activities for all town camps. There is an advantage in this way of approaching it. As I indicated before, there are a lot of younger children well as the older group that were going to town.

Whilst we had the hub in the centre, or just off the centre, of town it attracted older young people—that does not sound quite right—who were out in the evening. The hub is attracting those young people and stopping them going into town in the first place. The younger ones are attending as well, which adds a lot of value to the model, plus having local people recruited and employed in this model with all the cultural authority and knowledge that they bring is completely different.

Mr BURGOYNE: To tie all this together, last year we asked a question about the estimated number of youths on the street at night. This is important because if these programs are working well, we will hopefully have less young people on the street in future. For the reporting period November 2021 to May 2022, what was the average number of youths on the street per night?

Mrs WORDEN: That is captured by DCM, not us.

Mr BURGOYNE: You took it on notice last year. I have the number here.

Mrs WORDEN: I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr BURGOYNE: Thank you, I really appreciate it and then that way we can compare ...

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. I was spoke earlier in the Police space about young people and indicated that I often go out with the YORETs if I am in Alice. They know just about every young person they come across. The interesting part is that they also know when it is a new face. They might say, 'I do not know that person', and they will target the person to understand why they are in town of if they are visiting. They are always building intel through the patrol. The number of people out depends on the weather. I believe there has been a significant decrease in young people out with the cooler evenings.

Question on Notice No 5.22

Mr CHAIR: Member for Braiuling, please restate the question for the record.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the estimated number of youths on the street at night in the reporting period November 2021 to May 2022 in Alice Springs?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, with the proviso that when we understand the data I am reminded that the data is not unique individuals. It is a head count, but it might not represent the actual number. That is the difficulty of data and interpreting it. Yes, I am happy to take the question.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braiuling has been allocated the number 5.22.

Mr BURGOYNE: I heard you mention youth justice in your opening statement. In Budget Paper 3, youth detention staffing is listed as a new initiative; it has \$8m to it, page 157. What does the \$8m fund?

Mrs WORDEN: That is an expanded number of youth justice staff. I will ask Jeanette Kerr to give you a more expansive answer, but this is about getting the staffing numbers right.

Ms KERR: The \$8m is the forecasted operational cost catching up on last year and for the forthcoming year. We have 115 staff in Don Dale for the 24/7 rotational roster and 50 in Alice Springs, which is an increase on last year. We are recruiting additional staff for both locations. The training course is ow in week three. Following this one there will be a training program for Alice Springs, which is a seven-week course. Then we will be building from that the staffing profile in consultation with our staff and the employee representatives in regard to the staffing model.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have a number of people in mind that you wish to employ with this \$8m, and can you break that down by Darwin and Alice Springs?

Ms KERR: I cannot be specific until the staffing model under the model of care is developed. That will look at more expansive roles, including specialist assessment treatment services, youth work, staff—staffing can be more flexible going in and out of the centre, including for the community work program. I cannot be specific, but it is also bringing the youth justice budget in line with where it should be.

Mr BURGOYNE: They are not just youth justice officers; they will also be specialists to deal with some of the more complex issues that young people who come into the youth justice space might have.

Ms KERR: They are not just youth justice officers now; they get a lot of specialist and ongoing training, particularly in trauma and dealing with children with extremely complex behaviours and vulnerabilities. It is about us expanding the program offering that the youth justice officers will be involved in. For example, the community work program now involves a core group of staff, who take specific young people outside of the centre to do restorative and community work.

Some of the work they are doing in Alice Springs and Darwin, is helping elderly people and single parents with yard work—those who do not have the capacity to do that themselves. Initially that happened in a number of Top End and Alice Springs locations. It has been hugely satisfying for the young people and staff involved. That would be the sort of program we want to expand, because we are giving young people work skills as well as opportunities to make choices about their time while in detention.

Mr BURGOYNE: That leads into my next question. Would you call those ‘work orders’? What is the term you use when a young person completes ...

Ms KERR: They are in custody—in detention. It is a community work program; they are not on an order. They volunteer to do it, and the staff support them and do it with them.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many young people have completed those work programs?

Ms KERR: When I say that it is a program, the program is taking young people out to work and to work in the detention centre. It involves them being kitted out with all the work, health and safety equipment; learning how to use whipper snippers, mowers and chain saws et cetera; then going out to do that in the work place with staff.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is a fantastic program. I am trying to understand how many young people are engaging in it.

Mrs WORDEN: This is when young people are in detention. These are programs on offer for them to participate in while in detention. They are not court-ordered. There are programs outside of that, which are part of diversion programs. Those can be court-ordered.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am trying to understand, because we are talking about these. I will also ask a question about work orders, which are ordered by the court and/or police.

Mrs WORDEN: As at 31 March, nine young people were sentenced by court to participate in a ministerially approved program. That is the court process.

Mr BURGOYNE: Did they complete the work program?

Mrs WORDEN: That is an increase of 29% compared to last year—and 24 community work orders. This is through the court process. In detention it is a completely—essentially the ones in detention are our own initiatives to get going. We do not have to do not have to do—the willingness for young people to participate in those programs. They are regarded highly by those young people because they get out and about. They have to meet certain criteria to go on those programs. It is almost a reward.

Mr BURGOYNE: Nine young people were ordered by the court to these work programs. There were 24 community work orders. What was the completion rate? If there is a program to do that, how many young people completed those programs, court ordered and community work orders?

Mrs WORDEN: This is to the ministerially approved programs. They are the ones I provide to the court.

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes. You gave the figures nine and 24.

Mrs WORDEN: There are two components; there is the ministerially approved one and the community work orders. There are 13 completed community work orders. I will have to take on notice the number completed that were court-ordered.

Question on Notice No 5.23

Mr CHAIR: Member for Braiting, please restate the question for the record.

Mr BURGOYNE: Of the nine young people who were on court-ordered work programs, how many completed that work program?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braiting has been allocated the number 5.23.

Mr TURNER: As part of the restorative justice, will we be seeing some of these young people coming out to help clean off the graffiti they have done in our electorate—in Palmerston, for example—so that it is not me and my few constituents who are willing to do it?

Mrs WORDEN: I am reminded by the CEO that we have a waitlist of people in public housing in Batchelor who want the young people out there to help them clean up their yards. Your question is specifically about when young people have exited detention?

Mr TURNER: I suppose it goes back to the community policing field I was talking to the Commissioner of Police about. We know who some of these young people are in Palmerston. We recognise the tags.

Mrs WORDEN: It could be considered as part of a diversion program. You were here for the earlier discussions regarding diversion and the work we are doing across the agencies with Police. That can form part of that. We could add it to the list of projects for young people in detention to be involved in. We can take that under consideration.

We have not started because we have been going for a little while now with the—it was just a nice synergy when I was the minister for Urban Housing, that we could complete within. Housing still sits with the CEO. It is quite complementary. As minister for Urban Housing, I often got complaints about people with untidy yards. It was a frequent complaint. When the reasons are unpacked for that—people with disadvantage, if they do not have access to a mower. If they have a choice between putting food on the table for their kids and mowing the yard, I guarantee you that they will choose food every time.

It is one of those tricky things that we recognise, particularly for seniors—acknowledging that a lot of that work is often done by Corrections but there was a space, and it was identified that Batchelor was a good space to start. That program has commenced and been highly successful.

Mr BURGOYNE: We spoke earlier about victim–offender conferences. How many victim–offender conferences were undertaken in the reporting period?

Ms KERR: With our service provider, not including police-managed victim–offender conferences, we have had 11.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is happening with Jesuit Social Services in Alice Springs? Does it still provide victim–offender conferencing? If yes, when is that contract coming up for renewal?

Mrs WORDEN: That contract has just been renewed, but this time around Jesuit is not the sole provider. ARDS, Aboriginal Resource Development Services, has been around for a long time and has a contract to provide the same program.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many offenders were asked to participate in victim–offender conferencing and refused?

Mrs WORDEN: Is what you are seeking—the decline rate?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, minister.

Mrs WORDEN: In the police space they can decline, but in our space they cannot, so it is 100% take-up.

Mr BURGOYNE: How much did the 11 conferences cost?

Ms KERR: Over the period we had a contract with a total amount, regardless of the number of conferences. It was not particularly cost-effective or value for Territories, so we have moved to a panel contract, where we pay a fixed cost for referrals and conferences. In this reporting period we have been paying a fixed cost of approximately \$11,000 per conference, including all the arrangements leading up to, during and post the conference.

Mr CHAIR: As the time has expired, that concludes our consideration of the outputs for Territory Families, and the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. On behalf of the committee I thank you, minister, for your attendance today and answers to over 200 questions, as I calculated them. There may have been more but I did not pick up on them all.

That concludes our hearings for today.

Mrs WORDEN: I put on the record my sincere thanks to all department staff who made sure we have the right information to answer questions today. Their work is appreciated, as is all the work they do outside of the estimates process. I am very appreciative of that investment, thank you.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. On behalf of the committee and the honourable members, I thank the DLA staff. Thank you all for your attendance and providing the information.

The committee concluded.
