

The Estimates Committee convened at 9 am.

## MINISTER BOOTHBY'S PORTFOLIOS

### ATTORNEY-GENERAL

**Madam CHAIR:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Estimates for Wednesday 17 June. Welcome to the Attorney-General's Department.

A reminder for everybody to put your phones on silent if you have one in here. I reminded myself because I did it yesterday.

I welcome you, Attorney-General, and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you today.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Thank you, Chair and the committee. With me I have Leonique Swart, Acting Chief Executive Officer; Brett Roach, Senior Director, Business and Enabling Services; Erin McAuley, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer; and Thomas Winter, Executive Director, Legal Services.

**Madam CHAIR:** I invite you to make a brief opening statement of no more than 20 minutes. I will then 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.

I will invite the shadow minister to ask their questions first, followed by committee members. Finally, other participating members may ask questions. The committee has agreed that other members may join in on a line of questioning pursued by a shadow minister, rather than waiting for the end of the shadow's questioning on the output.

Attorney-General, do you wish to make an opening statement of no more than 20 minutes regarding the Attorney-General's Department? If you do, I will give you a five-minute warning at the 15-minute mark.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I am happy to answer any questions and go straight the outputs.

#### Agency-related Whole-of-Government Questions on Budget and Fiscal Strategy

No questions.

#### OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – LEGAL SERVICES Output 1.1 – Solicitor for the Northern Territory

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output Group 1.0, Legal Services, Output 1.1, Solicitor for the Northern Territory.

Are there any questions?

**Mr PAECH:** How many matters has the Attorney-General's Department outsourced or briefed to an external counsel? How many whole-of-government have been outsourced?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** In the reporting period 92% of outsourced matters went to local firms under the NT LSL (NT Legal Services List). More matters were outsourced to local firms compared with 2024–25, which is an increase of 42 matters, from 422 in 2024–25 to 464 in 2025–26. Law firms on the NT Legal Services List grew from 46 in 2024–25 to 48 in 2025–26, providing government with more options for private legal advice.

**Mr PAECH:** What was the value of that outsourcing?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have with me the answers to the written questions that were submitted about the total dollars that were paid to vendors. I also have the list of them for the reporting period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The Attorney-General's Department's legal fees were \$1,263,907.49. Would you like me to go through each of them?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes, please.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Alice Springs family law, \$32,610; Christopher McGorey of Forbes Chambers, \$9,900; Clayton Utz Darwin, \$878,580; Darwin IT Support, \$33,000; David Alexander McLure, \$5,000; Duggan Family Lawyers, \$600; Fiona Kepert, \$50,000; Foley's List Pty Ltd, \$29,920; Giles O'Brien-Hartcher, \$27,272.73; Helena Blundell, barrister at law, \$2,800; Hubber Legal, \$6,000; Iles Selley \$40,671.24; James Maxwell Lowry, \$6,660; Jonathan Martin Bortoli, \$5,250; Joshua Ingrames, \$13,800; Jude Lawyers, \$41,870; KE Roussos and Associates, barristers and solicitors, \$2,000; KJ Lawyers and Migration Consultants, \$1,000; Lisa Papadinas, \$1,600; Maria Walz Legal; \$73,700, Mary Chalmers, barrister, \$64,000; Meher Gaven, \$3,150; Nicholas Goodfellow, \$25,209.09; Nicholas Papas KC, \$9,013.64; Parnell's Barristers Pty Ltd, \$11,209.09; Patterson Commercial Services Pty Ltd, \$8,000; Paul Howard Crean, \$48,450; Paul Morgan, \$28,000; Peggy Dwyer, \$77,765.59; Piper Alderman, \$25,160.50; Povey Stirk Lawyers and Notaries, \$5,368; Sandra Wendlandt, \$22,000; Simon Lipert, \$500; Territory Criminal Lawyers Pty Ltd, \$6,000; Thomas Andrew (inaudible), \$28,025; and YPOL Lawyers Pty Ltd, \$430,876.61.

There are other agencies that also have services from the Legal Services Unit, but you would have to ask that agency for that information.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

### Output 1.2 – Solicitor-General

No questions.

### Output 1.3 – Crime Victims Services

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 1.3, Crime Victims Services.

Are there any questions?

**Mr PAECH:** Victims of Crime NT ran a two-year pilot intensive case management service to support victims of family violence and support engagement with the criminal justice system. Yesterday, Victims of Crime NT announced it is closing its office in Alice Springs, including service provision to Tennant Creek. Why has it had to close its Alice Springs office? What is the department doing to fill that gap?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The work of Victims of Crime NT has been important, and we value the work that it has done. Its services over many years had become crucial. The work it was doing was very labour intensive. The number of cases and victims it was dealing with over a number of years under the former government was extraordinary. I thank the agency for that work.

I remember each year they were underfunded and having to come back to the Labor government at that time to ask for more funding to ensure that they could keep up with the demand of victims.

Over the last 18 months of our government, we have done a lot of work in terms of being able to reduce crime across the Territory. That also reduces the number of victims. So far it is heading downwards. There is a 10% reduction of victims which is also translating to a reduction of the services, the wonderful work Victims of Crime NT do across the Territory.

I have a number of statistics which show the variation between 2024–25 and 2025–26. In fact, the cleanup resecure program went from 362 cases in 2024–25 down to 175 cases in July to March. The vehicle resecure program went from 1,493 down to 917. The home security assessments went from 327 to 165, and the security improvements program went from 94 to 54, so there is that real downward trajectory.

With the specific case you mentioned of the pilot, that was an intensive case management system. It was a pilot program which commenced on 1 July 2024. It was about aiming to increase engagement and improve the experience of victims of crime to enable meaningful and informed participation in the criminal justice system. It sought to work with victims as close to the time of an incident as possible.

They shared with us some of the key activities as part of that pilot which was case management in a case coordination model. The program introduced two levels of case management, including an intensive level for cases with high needs. They had warm referrals to that pilot program to assist contact with other services, rather than providing the contact details and then relying on the victim to do that. They facilitated Community Corrections contacts with victims as well.

The VoCNT property crime programs are firstly measured by the number of people that support is provided to and, secondly, by the amount of funding provided to victims.

That program pilot was due to wind up on 30 June. With discussions with VoCNT they were still wrapping up and working on the cases they had underway, so we agreed that we would extend that funding to the end of December to finish that pilot program. We need to evaluate the pilot program in the time that we have left to ensure that it is delivering on the things that will support victims to make sure the money can go to where it is most needed.

**Mr PAECH:** Are you suggesting that the Victims of Crime office in Alice Springs is closing because there has been a decrease in victims?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I am explaining about how victims in general across the Territory have reduced, including in Alice Springs ...

**Mr PAECH:** Which has resulted in the closure of the Alice Springs office.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I talked about how the number of cases of VoCNT are declining; the trend is going down, which is great.

The closure of the office of Alice Springs is one that was made by Victims of Crime NT. It was not part of the arrangements that we have with them; they have chosen to do that. I look forward to meeting with them soon, because we are looking at how we support victims through a bigger undertaking of the work that has to happen in that space. Anyone who has become a victim of crime would know that going through the system is arduous and you relive the experiences much more than you would like to, so there is a whole new body of work underway with the department. I am looking forward to working with VoCNT about that.

It is not just about the one provider, who have done an exceptional job; it is about reviewing the whole system for victims, because we need to help them to navigate that system. This goes back to our Reducing Crime strategy. Under the Attorney-General's Department we have a number of action items within the Reducing Crime strategy. The work we are doing for victims across the Territory, including Alice Springs, and helping being informed with VoCNT, will help to implement the Reducing Crime strategy.

**Mr PAECH:** What are you doing, in the face of the Alice Springs office of Victims of Crime closing, to support victims? There will not be a physical office in Alice Springs anymore.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I want people to understand is how much of a crisis the Territory was in when it came to victims ...

**Mr PAECH:** But you are closing the Victims of Crime office in Alice Springs.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** ...when we came into government. There is so much work we have to do, and we have done a lot already in just over 18 months of coming to government. I do not think anyone can underestimate the amount of work which has been done. That work has to continue, and part of our Reducing Crime strategy includes, holistically, what we are doing across the different parts of the justice system, where a victim goes through the ordeal which they have to go through after becoming a victim of crime.

I look forward to meeting with Victims of Crime NT as it has been doing a lot of work over a lot of years. There were many years of underfunding that came to fruition for them, and they had to come back to government each time, under the former government, because the number of victims were increasing and exploding dramatically and kept growing.

As the numbers come down—and there is still so much work to do—I have been vocal about how there is so much work to be done. We cannot just change a few laws, and it will stop. The work now for victims, mapping that whole system across the touch points that they go through, is where we can add better arrangements about how they are dealt with. The work of providers in general—there are other providers—is important, and we want to see them working throughout the Northern Territory.

The decision they have made to close that office is disappointing because there is funding. What needs to happen now is that conversation, like any other provider, is to discuss a multiyear funding agreement. Going forward that could be something that gives that provider certainty. It is a new government and regime, and that particular prior agreement is coming to an end. We have extended that because there is still work to do

in the next six months to make sure we can have in that agreement the things that the government need to deliver for the victims of the Northern Territory. I look forward to continuing that work.

**J DAVIS:** In relation to short-term and ongoing funding, does that mean that you are now looking at a commitment to ongoing long-term funding for organisations like Victims of Crime?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The work we have commenced mapping out the journey of a victim, when they become a victim of crime, is a priority for me as the Attorney-General and also the government. We need to put victims in the centre of the work we are doing.

We were off the back of a huge explosion of numbers of victims and not enough resources in the budget, in the previous government, to deal with. The work I am doing now, which is about exactly what you have just asked, is looking at the ways in which that victim goes through that journey and all the services that are provided to make sure that we can deliver for victims the best service that is available.

The discussion about the multiyear funding agreement has been done in other areas because it gives that organisation certainty. That is why we have extended the funding and agreement to the end of December—it was due to come up at the end of June—because we need to look at that work rather than just signing on again. There have been a lot of change in the Territory in a short amount of time, and we will continue that work.

**J DAVIS:** Do you have a policy or position on minimum timeframes for funding for organisations like Victims of Crime in the future?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Member for Johnston, can you repeat the question?

**J DAVIS:** I am specifically interested in what you are talking about regarding ongoing funding, so there are not the issues that victims of crime are now facing. I am wondering whether you have a position on minimum time of funding for organisations like Victims of Crime into the future.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It depends on the agreements that were in place and the type of service provider it is. I can give you an example of the way in which we approach it. The money from the federal government for the National Access to Justice Partnership is a five-year funding agreement, so my preference is to have long-term agreements with these providers. We are seeing them come up now in our term of government. We have to look at how they are working and work with the provider, but also the work we are doing as a government, for the services and what is required and the need at the same time.

**Mr PAECH:** You spoke about the statistics. I have people from Alice Springs messaging me now saying that this morning the CEO of Victims of Crime was on ABC radio saying that their stats had gone up this year. You have said that they are going down. I am trying to get an understanding for the people of Alice Springs, who are about to lose an office, what the actual picture is.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I can let you know the numbers for Alice Springs. For the reporting period in Alice Springs the cleanup resecure was 121 cases; the vehicle resecure was 461; the home security assess was 47; and the security improvement was 10.

I hope that answers your question.

**Mr PAECH:** I just need an answer, yes or no: have the stats gone up? People in Alice Springs are messaging me now saying that it has.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I understand that there are still huge concerns in Alice Springs because of the nature of what we are trying to undo over only a short amount of time in government, the last 18 months, compared with what it was like and going up.

**Mr PAECH:** It has gone up.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We have been reducing crime across the Territory, and Alice Springs in particular has seen the biggest improvement for the levels of crime. The number of victims is certainly reducing in Alice Springs.

What I do not have for you today, but I can take it on notice, is the comparison from last year or under a previous year to this year

**Mr PAECH:** It would be appreciated if we could do a comparison from this time to the last reporting period.

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**Question on Notice No 9.1**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide a breakdown of the stats for Victims of Crime for Central Australia from this year compared with the same information for the previous reporting period?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I clarify that we are talking about the stats that I have talked about—the cleanup resecure, the vehicle resecure program, the home security assessments and the security improvement program.

**Mr PAECH:** Everything that is Victims of Crime-related services in Alice Springs.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I accept the question.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.1.

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**Mr PAECH:** As part of that two-year intensive case management project, there was a two-year contract. You said that there was an evaluation scheduled. You have extended the funding by six months, I believe to December. Once that evaluation has been done, will that be made public around the efficiency of that pilot?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The pilot program evaluation is underway. There will be a number of recommendations and observations there under consideration for us in terms of making sure parts of that evaluation can be aligned to our strategic initiatives in the Reducing Crime strategy. We will have more information about the work we will do after that time, after we have assessed the evaluation.

**Mr PAECH:** Is there a commitment from you to make that evaluation publicly available so that everyday Territorians can know whether the evidence is there to show that this program is working or not?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I feel that I would be pre-empting what is possible, given that I have not yet seen that evaluation; it is still underway. There might be a number of things in there that could be publicly shared and there might be things that are sensitive to particular matters and could not be. Once I receive that evaluation, I have considered it and my department has done the work—I think I mentioned the broader work that we are doing for victims, which this is part of to make sure it aligns with our strategic initiatives in the Reducing Crime strategy.

**Mr PAECH:** I am not trying to pigeonhole you here, but is there in-principle support, depending on the sensitivity of data?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I think it is important that I get to look at what that report and evaluation are before I make a determination. I cannot pre-empt anything, but our number one priority is victims, so we have done a lot of work in that space already. That has to continue; there is so much more work to be done. I am quite literally dealing with a huge amount of challenges in the victim space, being off the back of what the Territory has experienced over about a decade. I am looking forward to that evaluation and to explaining the work we are going to do based on not only that evaluation but all the other work that other providers provide input to and, of course, the work the agency does as well.

**Mr PAECH:** How much compensation has been provided to victims of crime in the reporting period compared with the last reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** From 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026 the Crimes Victims Services Unit awarded \$3.617m to victims of crime.

**Mr PAECH:** How does that equate to the previous reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have the financial year payment from previous years. I can give you those numbers to help with that. The 2024–25 amount was \$5.5m.

**Mr PAECH:** Attorney-General, what evidence-based programs has your government funded for victims of crime during the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Under our Reducing Crime strategy, we have the initiative specifically for the Attorney-General's Department under 2.1, which is improve support for victims of crime as they navigate the justice system. It is part of the work I was talking about with the mapping. We need to know how it works for a victim by putting ourselves in their shoes and go through the system.

The Reducing Crime strategy has a demand pressures element. That will be the work—it all relates to victims anyway in terms of how they go through that system and if it caused demand pressures on the system which lengthens the time they go through their process.

There is other work done in other agencies for the programs you asked about and so that would have been a question for the Minister for Children and Families. Corrections have other programs, so the Minister for Corrections.

**Mr PAECH:** A Point of Order, Madam Chair! Attorney-General, I am concerned with the last reporting period. Have there been commencement of any new evidence-based programs to support victims. The pilot that you are talking about began under the previous government. Have there been any new evidence-based programs to support victims?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** You know there are initiatives under Victims of Crime NT, which we have spoken about. There are initiatives under CatholicCare NT as well. What has commenced is the mapping of those victims' services because we will then know what is needed and where the money can go to deliver the things that are needed. It might be that it must go to another agency to deliver. That is the work is happening as part of the Reducing Crime strategy.

**Mr PAECH:** I acknowledge that you are undertaking the mapping before any new evidence-based program is rolled out. How long with the mapping take before it is completed?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I want to clarify that those programs we talked about. They would exist in other agencies but the mapping is the part that we are doing under Attorney-General, just to make it clear.

Under our Reducing Crime strategy and the mapping work that we have done, we are looking to have it completed and have information about it to consider by the end of the year.

**Mr PAECH:** Madam Chair, in the interests of time, I am happy to move on from Output 1.3 to other areas.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any other questions on Output 1.3?

**J DAVIS:** Minister, is there policy or a process in place to keep victims up to date with delays in progressing their matter? I have been contacted by many people saying that they are not kept up to date with what is happening. I asked you a question in parliament on this as well.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I too have had that feedback. It is an arduous process, and that goes to the point that I have made about the work that has to happen. The times to have that kind of system play out for a victim are just unacceptable in my mind. That is why I have continued to discuss the work that has to happen in that space.

When you talk about specifics, it probably is a question for the Director of Public Prosecutions as they have a witness assistance program. He will be joining me at the table when we get to that output.

**Mr PATEL:** On behalf of my constituents, what does CatholicCare provide for victim services, and how much funding is available in this budget?

**Mr PAECH:** You should have a meeting with CatholicCare.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, everyone has the right to ask a question. Please do not interfere, and turn your microphone off.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** CatholicCare is one of the providers which provide that victims counselling service. They receive \$575,000 in grant funding because they need to make sure that the counselling service is available to the victims. It is through a grant agreement as well. Counselling is available to a primary, secondary, family

or related victim. A victim can access counselling through the service provider even if they are not eligible for financial assistance under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act*.

The current grant agreement has three elements: crisis counselling services to victims of crime; information support and referral services to clients; and community education and awareness. It is designed to provide services that have a more detailed understanding of the personal impact of crime on victims. They have been around for a long time. Victims can access up to eight counselling sessions delivered to those individuals, families or groups that I mentioned. They are supported by a free-call number for crisis intervention and information.

It is safe to say that is an important service, like the other providers, to make sure that victims feel they have someone to sit down with and to call. A number of people have accessed that service. In this reporting period, CatholicCare NT delivered 1,042 counselling sessions to 339 victims. It is a really important service provided by CatholicCare on behalf of the Northern Territory Government.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 1.3 and Output Group 1.0.

Member for Johnston, did you want to quickly clarify your questions?

**J DAVIS:** I am wondering which output questions against Legal Aid would come under.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Output 2.3.

**J DAVIS:** Also, broader questions about the impact of legislative changes on the justice system.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Output 2.2.

**J DAVIS:** I do not want to miss it.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – STRATEGIC POLICY SERVICES**

### **Output 2.1 – Strategic Policy and Delivery**

**Mr PAECH:** Which Aboriginal Justice Agreement commitments remain outstanding? What is the timeline for delivery before the agreement expires in 2027?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I think you are referring to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement that was signed by both Labor and CLP.

**Mr PAECH:** Yes, bipartisan agreement.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Obviously, that is coming to an end in 2027. There is currently five law and justice groups set up, and under the agreement there was a commitment that we would look at setting up other ones. The number of them is not in the agreement as such, but with the negotiations between the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet and the federal government under the NTRAI funding arrangement, that is where the schedule will sit for the options of the further law and justice groups. They are negotiations that are not part of the Attorney-General's Department; they happen with the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, but we ...

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Chair! I want to provide some clarification, Attorney-General. Law and justice groups are one aspect, but there are other outstanding commitments. Are you able to talk us through the commitments that are outstanding?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There are the Aboriginal law and justice groups, and that feeds into the Community Courts which is a new thing, and I can go through some of that detail. There is also some commissioners for oaths in there, you might remember, Member for Gwoja, to make sure that happened. One of the things with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is that the majority of the initiatives were not funding ongoing. They were arrangements that had been set up by the previous government, but they are not put into the budget.

Upon coming to government, we have had to look at all of that. We have our Reducing Crime strategy which includes how we address the root causes of crime, so when we look at going forward, we must look at the whole picture. As you know, the part of that agreement, which is the law and justice groups, the Community Courts and alternatives to custody are part of that agreement, and they are new in where they have been able to deliver for people. Some of them have been set up for just a year, and so there is an

evaluation process that has to happen for all that so that we can ensure that the money that we are putting into it is delivering the outcomes that we want to deliver. It works hand in hand with all the other parts of the Reducing Crime strategy. I do not see it as a separate thing; I see it as everything working together under the full Reducing Crime strategy.

**Mr PAECH:** Given your conversation about funding, what is the dollar value in funding that your government has allocated towards the Aboriginal Justice Agreement in this budget?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The total amount in the 2026–27 budget is \$8.646m.

**Mr PAECH:** How does that compare with the previous reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The previous reporting period, 2025–26, was \$7.024m.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** How much funding has been allocated to the alternative-to-custody program?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** In the 2026–27 budget, it is \$5.05m. In the 2025–26 budget, it was \$4.346m.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** How many people have completed the program in both Alice Springs and Groote Eylandt?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** For the Alice Springs life skills camp for the women, which has capacity for 10 participants, in this reporting period it was zero. Participants at the Anindilyakwa Healing Centre in this period is two.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** The total budget was \$5m and participants in Alice Springs were zero and in Groote Eylandt it was two; is that correct?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is correct for the reporting period. That speaks volumes.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide some clarity on zero? That is a hard number to consider since courts are sentencing people to them.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, can I remind you to come through the Chair please so that I can give you the call instead of just jumping in?

**Mr PAECH:** The Attorney-General was really happy ...

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I was reporting that the Alice Springs life skills camp programs completed in the ATC, in that particular facility, is zero. Then the program completed in the Anindilyakwa Healing Centre in the reporting period is two.

**Ms UIBO:** It is not the lack of people being sentenced to the alternative to custody. The number is very different. The Member for Karama has asked specifically how many people have completed a set program, whether the programs are five months, six months or 10 months. There was no detail provided in the response by the Attorney-General. There are people being sentenced to the alternative to custody. It is not two people being sentenced. It is two people having completed a program in that particular ATC, noting that we only have the two ATCs in the Northern Territory. I do not want there to be any misinformation that people are not being sentenced to alternatives to custody and so the government may do cuts in funding in the future. I want to make sure that is not part of the narrative here.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I understand what you mean. That was a different question. In the reporting period for Alice Springs, there were 55 referrals received, but zero have completed the program. For the Anindilyakwa Healing Centre, there were 93 referrals, but of that only two have completed it in the reporting period.

**Madam CHAIR:** If you are sentenced to an alternative-to-custody program, do you have to complete the program or is it something that people fall out of?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is a good question because those numbers that are low in completion does reflect a bit of this. Some of those things are a sentence where they have to stay there for that particular time. There are other parts where it is a referral program from another service provider. Once they are in the centre, that is where the numbers for the reporting period are saying that zero have completed in Alice Springs and two at Groote Eylandt.

**Mr PAECH:** You have described that the court-ordered people have to complete, otherwise it is a breach of their condition and they will then have to go forward. I am just helping with that question.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** You are correct. If it is a court order, they have to complete that. That is the number of 55 for Alice Springs. I do not have the numbers of which ones are court orders or not ...

**Mr PAECH:** That is okay.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** ... but of the court orders and all of them, zero have completed it. Of the court orders in Groote and the others, two have completed it.

**Madam CHAIR:** Is there any way of getting that data of the court-ordered ones? Can I request that?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We could get that data for you, Chair. I am happy to take that one on notice.

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### Question on Notice No 9.2

**Madam CHAIR:** I will repeat the question. Can you provide the statistics of people who have entered alternative-to-custody programs—the difference between those that are court ordered and those that are community-based referrals?

Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.2.

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**Ms UIBO:** In regard to the Anindilyakwa Healing Centre and community justice group initiatives on Groote Eylandt which, of course, is in my electorate of Arnhem, there was an evaluation report released in September 2025. The report found that the exceedingly disrespectful and diminishing interactions between agencies and law and justice group members reflected an ‘astounding lack of understanding of and disregard for, the standing, roles and responsibilities’ of the law and justice group members.

What is your Attorney-General’s Department doing to proactively strengthen relationships and support community justice groups so that this important work can continue?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have been to Groote and seen the facility there ...

**Ms UIBO:** You should let me know next time, minister.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** ... and looked at the operations. DASA runs that. I met with Eloise and her team. They took me through the programs that are available for people who are referred to the facility. There is a lot of infrastructure there. The funding that was provided previously has created the facility ...

**Ms UIBO:** The Anindilyakwa Land Council has put in a lot of that money, just to be clear.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I was able to see the infrastructure and the level of available options for people. When I was there a number of months ago now, there was still plenty to do. There were some rooms that had not been used yet. The opportunity for people to enter into the facility was there. I do not think they ramped up properly at that point. I cannot remember the date; it was last year sometime when I was there.

The evaluation that was done, which you mentioned, was provided and completed by the independent Paul Ramsay Foundation. It is a big supporter of the alternative-to-custody program. My understanding is it was involved in the setting up of these systems. It did that report and took into consideration a lot of different factors in Groote specifically and how that operates as a community. That was done not long after we came into government. There have been many changes across many portfolios to do with reducing crime and harm and all these things.

We are looking at doing those evaluations for Groote, Alice Springs and other law and justice groups to make sure that it is done with many points of view taken into consideration. We definitely need to speak to the police on the ground as well about the things that they have underway.

We have the evaluation that is currently underway based on the data and numbers that we have in statistics and numbers of referrals—people who completed it—which I have already been through. That report is expected to be delivered to me in October 2026.

**Ms UIBO:** I appreciate the minister's response, but you did not actually address the question which was: what is your agency leading in terms of the cross-agency approach? That was the quote that I read out from the report. What is your department doing proactively to improve the relationships across government agencies and law and justice groups—the five; there are not a lot and there should be more, but there is only five. What is your department leading on behalf of government around cross-agency relationships and strengthening of partnerships with law and justice groups? That was the question, but you did not answer.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Just last week we signed new funding agreements with those five to take them through and make sure that those groups in Kintore, Maningrida, Ramingining, Groote Eylandt and Barunga/Wugularr can be fully executed. The department meets with the groups regularly, and there is work that continues. As they are new we need to do that evaluation. The evaluation will also take into consideration how people of the Northern Territory and those groups of communities interact with government and vice versa. I look forward to getting that work done and having that report come back to me so we can look at it in October 2026. Importantly—a bit like what I talked about before—the victims mapping will play a big part in how we deliver the reducing crimes strategy and the work done in those law and justice groups, ATCs, with communities, with different agencies and with police. It will, basically, help inform how we can deliver and measure—obviously the reducing crimes strategy has a bunch of KPIs in there as well. That work continues.

**J DAVIS:** I am seeking more information on—you said you are now embarking on more evaluation of these programs. Can you say who is conducting those evaluations?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The previous one that was just done about Groote was the Paul Ramsay Foundation—very specific. We are now doing one by the Northern Territory Government, and everybody will be able to contribute to that.

**J DAVIS:** As in, it is an internally run evaluation?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Correct.

**J DAVIS:** I want to clarify—I am not sure if I misheard when you were talking about the evaluation of the Groote Anindilyakwa program; you said that it was done by the Paul Ramsay Foundation and they had been involved in setting up that program? I just wanted to clarify in relation to the evaluation of the Groote program. You said that it was done by the Paul Ramsay Foundation and they were strong supporters of that program. I want to make sure you are not saying that, therefore, it was not an independent evaluation.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will just clarify; the Paul Ramsay Foundation funded the evaluation—they called it the Pandanus Evaluation—to undertake a hybrid process to look at those early outcome evaluations and the early implementation of those groups. Catherine Holmes Consulting did the evaluation about that establishment and the implementation.

**J DAVIS:** So, that obviously was not an independent evaluation, and future evaluations will be in-house. Are there any criteria or any guidelines for how that evaluation will be rolled out?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There are terms of reference about the evaluation. There is a working group going through that. It is across multiple agencies because a lot of people are involved with the Reducing Crime strategy, and this forms part of that. That work continues.

**J DAVIS:** Can you share the terms of reference? I am happy to take it on notice.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I can take it on notice.

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### Question on Notice No 9.3

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** Please share the evaluation terms of reference for the law and justice groups.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.3.

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**Mr PAECH:** Attorney-General, there are currently five law and justice groups. How many of those five have you personally met with?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have been out to Groote. Like I talked about before, I went out to see the alternatives to custody. I also attended a session with the Judge (Inaudible) who was running the Community Court, and the law and justice group members were there but the official Community Court, on that day, was not able to go ahead. There were a couple of people who were not there in the community at the time. I sat down around the table with members of the community, the law and justice group, albeit not all of them, and the judge. The department of Corrections and the police were there and other community members to sit down and hear from offenders and victims about the process that they went through and the way in which the law and justice groups interact with Community Courts. That was done at the same time as when I went to the alternatives to custody.

**Mr PAECH:** Attorney-General, there are 76 official remote communities across the Northern Territory. As the Northern Territory's first law officer, how many of those 76 remote Aboriginal communities have you met with to discuss justice and community safety initiatives?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have been to several communities across the Northern Territory.

**Mr PAECH:** How many?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There are many across the Territory, as you say. I have been to many of them. I will try to think off the top of my head while I find my list for you.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Chair!

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, the minister is trying to answer your question.

**Mr PAECH:** I am trying to help her. I am happy to take that on notice in case you miss any.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Member for Gwoja, I was prompted of some of the places that I went to because there have been so many. I went out to visit Limmen Bight in Nathan River and met with the Marra people. That was an incredible experience. You have probably been there; they cooked up some fresh barramundi for us, which was great.

I went to Gove and Nhulunbuy. I went to Yirrkala as well and spent time there. I met with Rirratjingu and Gumatj as well—fantastic Aboriginal organisations that work there. I have already talked about Groote Eylandt at length.

I was in the Barkly, spending time with the traditional owners at the opening of the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Cultural Centre. We also went to the swim school, and there were some communities who had come in to do the school swimming.

More recently, I met some of the great people of Nauiyu at Daly River after the floods, including the Merrepen Arts Centre, which was fantastic. I also met with ARDS. It was great to meet with that organisation to hear about all the work they are doing.

It is important to note that the government has a lot of people in agencies who are out in these communities every day of the week. That is a strong way of getting the information to us. There are ministers as well who live across the Territory and are always travelling around. The minister for Education was out your way recently, Member for Gwoja, and had a great time speaking to a lot of people out there.

I have met with many different communities around the Northern Territory. There is still more to be done. I would love to be able to spend a lot more time out and about. I have been doing a lot of work getting the portfolio back on track after several years of the previous government. The whole justice system was a basket

case. That is where my priorities have been. Whilst I will continue with those priorities, I also look forward to going out and meeting as many Territorians as I can.

**Mr PAECH:** I am concerned that you have not mentioned a single Central Australian remote community that you visited in terms of justice. There are two law and justice groups—Kintore and Yuendumu. Will you make a commitment to engage with those law and justice groups?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The people within the Attorney-General's Department and Warren, who works in the Aboriginal Justice Unit, regularly visit out there. You may know of the West Daly Peace Project. Sorry; that is not in Central Australia. There are a lot of places across the Territory. I look forward to getting out and visiting all those as often as I can. I will look you up when I come down.

**Mr PAECH:** I look forward to it.

**J DAVIS:** I have some questions on behalf of the Member for Mulka. Does the Aboriginal Justice Unit still exist?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Warren Jackson is in that unit. It is doing the work with the five law and justice groups and often meeting with them and working out how to support them. There is \$555,000 allocated in the budget for the Aboriginal justice core unit.

**J DAVIS:** How many FTE staff are employed in the Aboriginal Justice Unit?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I do not have the specific breakdown. I have a lot of data here but not that one. Can I take that on notice?

**J DAVIS:** Sure. There is a series of questions that follow on from that, so you may want to take them all together. I will read them out.

How many FTE staff are employed in the Aboriginal Justice Unit? How many of its staff are Aboriginal? What salary level are they paid at? What are the position titles?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** If we can find them in the meantime, I will come back to that.

**Ms UIBO:** Why not get the director up? He is sitting in the room.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.4

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** How many FTE staff are employed in the Aboriginal Justice Unit? How many of its staff are Aboriginal? What salary level are they paid at? What are the position titles?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.4.

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**Madam CHAIR:** I remind everybody not to interrupt. Please go through the Chair.

**J DAVIS:** This question has partly been answered. On behalf of the Member for Mulka, why has a reference to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement been removed from the budget papers?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The budget papers are strategic policy and it forms part of that; there are many facets.

**J DAVIS:** On behalf of the Member for Mulka, what KPIs exist for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The key performance indicators as per Budget Paper No 3: the number of Aboriginal people referred to alternative-to-custody facilities or programs—the target for 2026–27 is 100.

**J DAVIS:** Is that the only KPI for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement? Can the director address these questions, minister?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I can answer the question. We have in our Reducing Crime strategy document a whole page of measures of success and the next steps. All the things we are doing across government are included in that document.

**J DAVIS:** The only specific KPI for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is the one you just outlined previously.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** In BP3, the KPI we have recorded is about the number of Aboriginal people referred to alternative-to-custody programs, which is 100, as I said. The other KPIs and measures of success we have are all in our Reducing Crime strategy.

**J DAVIS:** I have further questions from the Member for Mulka about law and justice groups which he gave me for under Output Group 3, but can I ask them here?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Do you want to ask the question and I will see?

**J DAVIS:** Yes. Some of them have been asked already in relation to funding. In this 2026–27 budget how much funding has been provided for law and justice groups, specifically in the Mulka region?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Specifically the law and justice groups and after that for the Mulka electorate?

**J DAVIS:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The law and justice groups total amount in the budget is \$1.6m. In Mulka, the Aboriginal Resource and Development Service Aboriginal Corporation provides the law and justice group there. That is \$445,000 in this budget.

I also have a part answer to the question you had before. Did you want me to go through that?

**J DAVIS:** Sure.

**Madam CHAIR:** Was it a question taken on notice?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes. I will check what number the question was.

**Madam CHAIR:** We might wait until you get the answer in whole.

**J DAVIS:** You talked about evaluating law and justice programs. I heard you say that is an internal evaluation. What is the timeline for this evaluation?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have caught up with the Member for Mulka about this, and it is good to hear from him about what his community is up to. The final report is expected to be delivered in October 2026.

**J DAVIS:** How much funding is being provided by your department for community-led programs in the Mulka region?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There are probably many areas of government that have community-led programs. I will take that on notice for us to look at AGD.

**J DAVIS:** The specific information that the member was seeking is a breakdown of funding for each community in the Mulka region and the organisations that receive that funding.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.5

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** How much funding is being provided by your department for community-led programs in the Mulka region? Please provide a breakdown of funding for each community and the organisations that receive the funding.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.5.

**J DAVIS:** You referenced one of the ongoing projects, the West Daly Peace Project. Could you give a brief update on where that is up to?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The West Daly Peace Project and the additional shared working Peacemaking and Mediation Program is funded through the federal government. In the reporting period, there were peacemaking and mediation activities in Wadeye, Nauiyu, Peppimenarti, Nganmarriyanga, Willowra and Tennant Creek. Those communities were supported during the reporting period for specifically peacemaking and mediation support.

**J DAVIS:** So, there is no money from the Northern Territory Government in relation to that project; it is all Commonwealth. Is that correct?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Northern Territory Government, through the department, offers support for the peacemaking and mediation initiatives. The funding itself comes from the federal government.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

### **Output 2.2 – Legislation and Legal Policy**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 2.2, Legislation and Legal Policy. Are there any questions?

**J DAVIS:** Has the government assessed whether the expansion of mandatory sentencing and other sentencing changes have reduced the incentive for accused persons to enter guilty pleas, particularly in relation to serious matters?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The sentencing changes that were made recently regarding murder were recently implemented after we passed it in parliament. It is a bit too early to tell.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, these specific questions might be better suited to Output 2.4, Criminal Justice Research Evaluation and Statistics. If you have more lines of questioning, maybe wait until Output 2.4.

**J DAVIS:** I am happy to do that as long as I know I will be able to ask.

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, we will come to it.

**J DAVIS:** Let me make sure that they are all evaluation questions. Can I check, because I do not want to miss the opportunity, would questions about how many charges have been withdrawn also be under 2.4? Okay.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

### **Output 2.3 – Legal Assistance**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 2.3, Legal Assistance. Are there any questions?

**Mr PAECH:** What is the total Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government spend on legal services, including NAAJA and Legal Aid during the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The amount funded by the Commonwealth under the NAJP to fund legal assistances—I will take you through those numbers—in 2025–26 legal aid commissions received \$10.711m; community legal centres received \$2.095m; women’s legal services received \$6.385m; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services received \$27.744m; family violence prevention and legal services received \$13.960m; and administration funding of \$1.026m. That is all Commonwealth money.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you confirm that the additional funding announced in last year's budget has been provided to Legal Aid NT, and have they signed the multiyear funding agreement yet?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We can all agree that access to justice is important and Legal Aid NT play a critical role in the whole justice system. We came to government and took some immediate steps to rectify a chronic underfunding shortage that Legal Aid NT had for years under the previous government and we were able to provide them a huge injection at the end of 2025. With that came the expectation that there needs to be responsible financial management and sustainable service delivery, and we needed organisational reform within Legal Aid NT.

There were several challenges that Legal Aid had when I became Attorney-General. In the first budget that we announced, we increased their baseline funding by 89%. That moved the baseline funding from \$6.4m—which they had in the last five years—to more than \$12m moving forward. That is ongoing; there is certainty. As you know, we appointed a new board. There were many new board members, and we appointed a new director.

At Legal Aid's request we developed a multi-year funding agreement to provide that certainty and long-term planning. That agreement has been on the table with Legal Aid since May 2025 but remains unsigned. We have been trying to get them to sign that—they wanted it and it has not been signed. They repeatedly asked for greater certainty with funding and we listened to them on that. We provided that multi-year funding and gave them the increase; we provided them that certainty. We are still waiting 12-months later; it remains unsigned. I think all Territorians expect that as a taxpayer funded organisation—with huge responsibilities to represent Territorians who are vulnerable and cannot afford their own lawyers—it is really important they have a funding agreement so money can flow to them.

The agreement also outlines expectations of the service delivery and that we ensure the public money is spent appropriately. Since late last year, Legal Aid has reduced a number of services. This has occurred despite the measures put forward to assist the organisation. My department has been working with them to try and get that reform within the organisation. They still have not signed that multi-year agreement, like I said and this is despite the broader improvements that we have in the entire justice system. They are just not able to get that signed and I do not know why; that is a question for Legal Aid.

I feel it is important to put on the record that, as a government agency we have done everything we can to get that operation running so the service is available to Territorians. The expectation is that they sign that agreement, and part of that agreement is when the department asks for information from Legal Aid; that the information is forthcoming. That has been a real challenge.

I look forward to continuing to have the department engage with Legal Aid to get that agreement signed, for them to resume full services and have Territorians represented.

**Mr PAECH:** Has Legal Aid advised you of the additional dollar amount it would require from you—the Northern Territory Government—to resume its full suite of services?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Sorry, can you repeat that question?

**Mr PAECH:** Has Legal Aid advised you of what dollar amount it would require to resume its full suite of services?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The department has asked what exactly is required for a full return of service to deliver, and we have not heard back from Legal Aid about what is required.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you advise us of how many formal referrals you are aware of that NAAJA has made to Legal Aid during the years of 2023–24, 2024–25 and 2025–26?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is information I do not have with me because we are attempting to get as much information as possible from Legal Aid to determine how we can support them more to make sure they can return to service, and we do not have that information from them.

**Mr PAECH:** You do not have it currently, or you do not have it at all?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** When we have asked NAAJA and Legal Aid for that data, the numbers do not match up. There are some anomalies there, so we have gone back to them and asked them for more data. We do not have that data.

**Madam CHAIR:** It is 10.30 am. We will break for 10 minutes for a comfort break and will come back with the Member for Gwoja.

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The committee suspended.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Welcome back, everyone. We are on Output 2.3, Legal Assistance, with the Member for Gwoja.

**Mr PAECH:** How many criminal legal representation services has Legal Aid provided in 2025–26 so far?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is a great question. I would also like to know the answer, so can I take that on notice to ask Legal Aid to provide that to me?

**Mr PAECH:** Sure.

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**Question on Notice No 9.6**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** How many criminal legal representation services has Legal Aid NT provided in 2025–26 so far?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.6.

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**J DAVIS:** Could you or Legal Aid also provide data on how many criminal law duty law services were provided in that period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We can take that on notice as well.

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**Question on Notice No 9.7**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** How many criminal law duty lawyer services were provided in the same period?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.7.

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**Mr PAECH:** I want to ask you some questions about the government's response to the recent decision in the NT Supreme Court where the full court held that people facing serious criminal proceedings in the Local Court who could not access a lawyer may have their hearing indefinitely stayed or adjourned until such time representation becomes available. Given that we are talking about legal assistance or legal services, has the government undertaken any modelling on the effect that decision will take, including additional delays to the court system, the growth of backlog of cases and the number of persons likely to be affected by that decision?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I need to put on the record that I do not accept that those alleged offenders are without representation. We have a Legal Aid system where those alleged offenders have a right to be represented. Legal Aid is paid through the Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth Government \$24m a year to make sure that our Territorians are represented.

I have instructed the department to look at a plan to make sure that those Territorians will be represented if the providers are not representing them.

**Mr PAECH:** Has the government had conversations with Legal Aid, NAAJA or other frontline services about that to understand? Obviously you handed down the budget, then a couple of weeks later this decision has come out. It will potentially affect their impact.

Given that Legal Aid is already saying, 'This is the pie and we do not think there is enough of it to do it', have any conversations happened around a shortfall or potential Treasurer's advance that will be required?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The department had many conversations with Legal Aid over the last 12 months. Funding comes up every meeting. In fact, that is where we are aiming to work towards that multiyear funding agreement. The Treasurer's advance you mentioned is part of that. That relates specifically to the expensive cases.

There is a process that exists, which has been that way for many years, where Legal Aid NT can request AGD to facilitate the provision of additional funds to address the impacts of expensive cases and through the Treasurer's advance process. Usually, any decision to provide additional funding occurs towards the end of the financial year—which is not far away—when the forecasted final financial position is more reliable. That financial position has been requested from Legal Aid, and we are waiting to hear from them.

Legal Aid NT invited AGD and the department of Treasury to attend a briefing on its financial position. There were many questions from Treasury and AGD regarding its data and assumptions it was using to forecast the expenditure. All that information has been requested along with the specific details about that service delivery reduction. We are actively following up the additional information that is required so that we can support Legal Aid to support Territorians to make sure they are represented and that the organisation functions responsibly with taxpayer funds.

**Mr PAECH:** You and I do not agree on a lot, but we do share that everyone should have access to legal representation. Are you aware of any Territorian who has currently been through the legal system and who has not been afforded legal assistance or representation?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We have requested information from Legal Aid, including the number of people who are not being represented. The number that we had in the court data did not match, so we have gone back and asked for further detail.

There are about 20 Dietrich applications currently in the Local Court.

**Mr PAECH:** Are they current applications that have not been through the system yet? They have the potential to go through the system unrepresented. Do you have any data from Justice's perspective of people who have been through without representation in the last reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will take the question on notice because I do not have it in the books today.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.8

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide the data on individuals who have been through the court system in the last reporting period who have not had legal representation?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.8.

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**J DAVIS:** In relation to the \$5.5m that was allocated to Legal Aid NT, can you confirm it has not received that money?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Northern Territory funding in the 2025–26 budget was \$12.799m. I can confirm that the remaining amount in the budget to be paid out is \$4.403m.

**J DAVIS:** Was it not the additional \$5.5m that was allocated for 2025–26?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is part of the \$12.799m.

**J DAVIS:** The additional money has been withheld because of delays in the execution of the funding agreement; is that right?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**J DAVIS:** Attorney-General, can you explain what the sticking points are? What is the barrier to signing that agreement?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I cannot go into the detail of that because it is an agreement between the Northern Territory Government and the provider. It is too soon. We cannot talk about the agreement that has been put forward.

**J DAVIS:** Has Legal Aid asked that the government considers amending the agreement before they sign it, or have you asked Legal Aid for additional information?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It has been a lengthy and ongoing project, if you like, with many conversations to get to a point where we have Legal Aid who must sign that multiyear agreement. It has been amended many times to come up with a negotiation point where we were able to get Legal Aid to a point where they could sign it and to continue the funding arrangement going forward.

**J DAVIS:** Can you give any detail on what Legal Aid is requesting or what the Attorney-General is requesting from Legal Aid?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, you are repeating the question. I think the minister has answered the question. She said that it was a process that is being undertaken at the moment so therefore the information cannot be provided.

**J DAVIS:** I think the minister can answer, with all ...

**Madam CHAIR:** I am giving you advice that you are repeating your question. It has already been asked a couple of times now.

**J DAVIS:** I am asking for detail, not broadly.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, as the Chair I have just provided you with the response that you are repeating the same question. The minister can choose to repeat the answer again, if you like, but I would love to move on to a new line of questioning.

**J DAVIS:** You may, Chair, but I am asking questions right now.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, the minister has the call.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I want to make a couple of points, because I have answered the question. It is not just about simply providing additional funding or not and having an agreement or not; there are many areas. There is the fact that we increased the baseline funding by 89% in response to the chronic under-funding that they had requested.

We have offered that multiyear funding agreement. That is the certainty that Legal Aid asked for. When we came to government Legal Aid received almost \$9m in additional funding, and it was largely due to the response of NAAJA's service delivery challenges to provide the first instalment and the ongoing baseline funding increase. That was exceptional circumstances at that time. We needed Legal Aid to step up, and it did. At that time, it was managing the demands and taking on additional services, and I thank them for that.

Since that time, many months have passed, and NAAJA has returned to their full service delivery, so those circumstances no longer exist. It would be prudent to look at all the money they are receiving and ensure that temporary funding does not create another temporary problem. The focus now is on sustainability and accountability for taxpayer-funded dollars as I think Territorians rightly expect that the money used goes

towards an organisation who is receiving significant public funding to operate sustainably and enter into a funding agreement to allow money to flow from government agencies to the service provider. It will also demonstrate how the public money is being delivered for services for Territorians.

I look forward to them signing that agreement. There have been many negotiation meetings; there has been tweaks to the agreement over time to allow for the money to flow.

**J DAVIS:** Minister, the federal Attorney-General recently wrote to you, expressing concerns about access to legal services and reminding the Territory of its obligations to adequately fund legal services. Has the government responded to that?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have indeed responded to the federal Attorney-General on that. I have outlined all of the facts—a lot of which I have gone through today—including the arrangements, funding and models in the past, going forward and of the current situation. I look forward to hearing from the federal Attorney-General, but I know she was in Senate Estimates or some kind of forum they were doing, where she was asked the questions, so I thank her for the attention toward the Northern Territory. We do work together in that space so let us hope that Legal Aid get it signed and we can continue on with the work required for Territorians.

**J DAVIS:** I have one more clarification follow-up in relation to unrepresented people in court. I think I heard you say earlier that there is no-one unrepresented; you reject the statement that anyone is going to court unrepresented. Then, I think—to follow on—you then said you would go and find the data. Is that right?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will clarify that. There are 20 Dietrich applications in the court, and I was going to clarify how many of those unrepresented that Legal Aid had, because we did not have that data at the table. I can let you know—I thought I had the answer, but I have been informed that the data that was given to us is unreliable. I think I said before that the Legal Aid and Court data is not matching, so I do not want to give you something that is unreliable. We will go back and check that, and I think that question has already been taken on notice.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 9.1**

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The cleanup resecure in Alice Springs for 2024–25 was 203; in 2025–26 it reduced to 121. The vehicle resecure in 2024–25 in Alice Springs was 686; in 2025–26 it reduced to 461. The home security assessment in Alice Springs for 2024–25 was 91; in 2025–26 it reduced to 47. The security improvement in 2024–25 in Alice Springs was 35; in 2025–26 it reduced to 10.

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**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of output 2.3.

#### **Output 2.4 – Criminal Justice Research, Evaluation and Statistics**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 2.4, Criminal Justice Research, Evaluation and Statistics. Are there any questions?

**Mr PAECH:** Attorney-General, I asked the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence a question last night about the re-victimisation rate of women with domestic and family violence within two years. I was then referred to you and your statistics team to help respond to that. Minister Cahill said that it was the AG statistics.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That specific set of numbers you are looking for are the women who have become victims of domestic violence and if the victim has been re-victimised in their life? You are asking if that is data that is collected?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That specific—very specific—data is not something that we are analysing at this point in time. It is a good question, and I think part of the work we are doing in terms of victims is to ensure that we have less victims. Having fewer repeat victims is something that we take very seriously.

Whilst I do not have that data and cannot analyse it now, given the mapping of the work we are doing, there does need to be information so that we are informed to be able to continue to reduce the number of victims

for starters and the number of offences on the victim. Then we can use all that work to reduce crime. That work is the mapping part of what we have to do.

I do not have this data because we do not analyse it at this point. The priority is getting on top of the number of victims as a part of our Reducing Crime strategy.

**Mr PAECH:** How many mandatory sentences were heard down in relation to the sentencing Bill changes?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The sentencing amendment Bill for murder was only just implemented, so it is outside the reporting period.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide the data on the number of people who have received a mandatory sentence in line with the government reintroducing mandatory sentencing provisions?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will take that question on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.9

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide a breakdown of the number of people who have received a mandatory sentence in line with the reintroduction of the three mandatory sentencing provisions, and how long those provisions were for?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.9.

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**Mr PAECH:** How many 10-year-old children have been through the justice system in the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** This data is as at 9 June 2026; that is what I have here. Out of the young people who were aged 10 years or 11 years, there have been 24 individuals charged with offences alleged to have occurred when the individuals were 10 years or 11 years. Eleven individuals were charged for offences aged 10 years; 18 individuals were charged for offences aged 11 years; and five individuals were charged for offences allegedly committed aged 10 years and 11 years.

**Mr PAECH:** How many 10-year-olds received an incarceration sentence?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Zero.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide some information on how many 11 and 12-year-olds, within the reporting period, received an incarceration sentence?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have 10 and 11-year-olds, but not 12-year-olds. I will take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.10

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you give me a breakdown of the number of 10, 11 and 12-year-olds who received an incarcerated sentence?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.10.

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**Mr PAECH:** How many DVO applications were there in the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We can take that on notice.

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**Question on Notice No 9.11**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** How many DVO applications were there in the reporting period?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.11.

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**Mr PAECH:** What is the average wait time of a criminal matter waiting to be finalised in the Local Court? That might be statistical, or I can wait till Local Courts if it is easier.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Thank you, Member for Gwoja, that will be Output Group 3.0.

**Mr PAECH:** Thank you. How many family violence matters achieved an early resolution in the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It could be a question with the Director of Public Prosecutions or the courts.

**Mr PAECH:** I can save it for that.

How many ramraid offences have been laid since the Criminal Code amendment Bill was introduced?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There were 38 individuals ranging in age from 12 to 40, the average age being 17.2 years, have been charged with 79 ramraid offences. That is data through to 9 June.

**Mr PAECH:** How many of those have been sentenced?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** What I have here is 27 of the individuals and 57 of the charges have been finalised. Fifteen of the 27 individuals had a finding of guilt recorded on at least one charge, with 13 receiving imprisonment or detention orders; one receiving a good behaviour bond; and one receiving no penalty conviction orders; and six individuals received convictions.

**Mr PAECH:** How many posting and boasting charges have been laid?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** For posting and boasting, 17 individuals ranging in age from 12 to 30, average age of 16.5 years, have been charged with 21 post-and-boast offences.

**Mr PAECH:** How many have been convicted?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The information I have is that 13 of the individuals and 17 of the charges have been finalised, and four individuals with one offence each have not been finalised. Eight of the 13 individuals had a finding of guilt recorded on at least one charge, with two receiving detention orders; two receiving good behaviour orders; two receiving no penalty conviction orders; and two receiving no further trouble orders. The other five individuals had charges withdrawn and/or dismissed and no convictions were recorded.

**Mr PAECH:** Since the government changed the bail laws, how many additional people have been refused bail?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will give you the information I have. There are lots of stats in this area. Let us see if it answers that question.

Since the bail reforms, the use of bail has decreased relatively to remand and offences charged to persons on bail have decreased. The number of people on bail increased by 17% between 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2026, while the number of people on remand increased by 34% between those dates. This means the remand increased faster than bail over a two-year period.

That may help with your question.

**Mr PAECH:** You would have the quantum number of how many people applied for bail and how many people have been refused bail.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Because the number is covered right through the courts, but there are other types of bail as well, we can take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.12

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide a breakdown of the number of people who applied for and were rejected bail through the courts?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.12.

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**Mr PAECH:** Could you provide the committee with the number of people who have entered a guilty plea within the last reporting period? What is that in comparison to the last reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That would be a question under the courts output.

**Mr PAECH:** I will save it for that one.

**J DAVIS:** A couple of brief follow-ups from a couple of things raised there. Can you clarify about the eight people you said had a conviction of guilt on at least one charge—was that a conviction for their post and boast charge?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes, a post and boast. Eight of the 13 individuals had a finding of guilty recorded on at least one charge.

**J DAVIS:** The charge was for post and boast?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**J DAVIS:** Also in relation to figures for 10 and 11-year-olds. Can you give the figure of how many 10 and 11-year-olds and 12-year-olds were remanded in custody?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I ran through those individual charges before. The question from the Member for Gwoja was about those sentenced. I do not have in front of me the numbers on remand. If I find it in the meantime I will let you know. We could probably take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.13

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** How many 10, 11 and 12-year-olds were charged with offences, were remanded in custody and were found guilty?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.13.

**Mr PAECH:** Is there a way to measure if there has been an increase in the severity of offence?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes. The National Offence Index measure can be used.

**Mr PAECH:** Has there been an increase in the Northern Territory in the severity of offending?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We have not assessed against the National Offence Index but there has been a reduction in the number of offences against the person and that data is available.

**Mr PAECH:** Is that data publicly available or would it need to be requested?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The National Offence Index does not publish that publicly. We could provide data on offences against a person in the Northern Territory.

**Mr PAECH:** My question is, within the criminal justice system, offences might be down but is the severity increasing?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The National Offence Index is based on the type of offence, not the specifics of the offending.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you confirm if the Northern Territory has experienced an increase in the severity of assaults against a person or violent acts of behaviour in the Territory?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The way in which we can measure what your question is asking is the total offences against the person. There is a change from 2025 where the total number of offences was 13,591. In 2026, it was 12,364, which is a drop of 9% for total offences against the person for the Northern Territory crime statistics.

**Mr PAECH:** What I am trying to ask here, yes, there may be less matters coming before the courts but is the seriousness escalating? Are there fewer individual charges but higher assaults or violent acts against an individual that police are charging?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We do not track the severity of the individual case for every single offence. We do it at the level of the category which is the same system we have had for a very long time.

**Mr PAECH:** Is there, or has there been, data that is trending to say that there are more violent crimes against the person in the Northern Territory?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I think I have answered that. It is important to note that we are seeing across all categories—I was explaining how our data is category based—those offence numbers are trending down for most of them across the Territory. It is an important distinction because the work that we are doing in the Attorney-General's Department is in line with the Reducing Crime strategy to ensure that we are turning the tide. We are reducing crime and offences. That work continues because it is our priority. It is all part of our Reducing Crime strategy that we all, across government, are working to and all the strategic initiatives are in there.

Our number one priority is reducing crime and reducing the number of victims and offences, which is the data that I have provided to you today.

**Mr PAECH:** Attorney-General, I understand. I can read the crime stats and can see that there has been decreases in some areas, but when I look at the crime stats I see there is an increase in the severity and intensity of violent crimes increasing. Can you confirm, for the charges being laid by police, whether there is an increase in the severity and aggression of crime in the Territory?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Member for Gwoja, I can talk about the types of offences which I think goes to your point on severity, because with the offences against a person—I mentioned this before—it was 13,591 in 2025. In 2026 it was 12,364, which is a decrease of 9%.

Further down from that, which may assist to answering your question, the assault, specifically when it comes to offences against a person, was 11,277 in 2025. In 2026 it was 10,081, which is an 11% reduction.

The DV assaults, going to your point the way in which you are looking for these measures. In 2025 it 7,541, but in 2026 it was 6,588, which is a 13% decrease for domestic violence assaults across the Territory.

When you look at other types of offences, like offences against property, in 2025 was 20,938 and then in 2026 it went down to 18,444, which is a 12% decrease. Burglaries in dwellings in 2025 was 2,737, but in 2026 it was 2,117, which was a 23% drop.

You can see from the types of offending that across all those categories it is reducing. I think that may help you.

**Mr PAECH:** Crime very well can be decreasing, but I am wanting to understand, for the individual charges that are being laid, are they becoming more aggravated? DV numbers might be down, but the charges being laid by the police may be more serious, aggravated and intensified. How do I find that data? You have said to me that DV is down, but we know in places like Palmerston DV is up. I want to understand the severity. Is there an increase—yes, there might be lower numbers overall—and are people becoming more violent?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The question you are asking is about what happens at the end—through the charges. Obviously there is a police file, there is prosecutions that happens and then there is a process through the court and sentencing. Once that has all been through—that is an individual case. I do not have that data. I do not want to talk about individual cases. I think it is important that we know the levels of crime are reducing across the Territory.

**Mr PAECH:** I understand. What I really want to know is—the court will do its process, and I respect that level of independence—are we seeing an increase in what police are charging? Are police making heavier charges because the violence is intensifying?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I went through those statistics which show the charges. That answers that. You can see the charges—which you are asking about—have reduced. We are focusing on reducing crime, offences and the number of victims. All of the statistics recorded reflect that work being done.

**Mr PAECH:** One last question—because I guess we will disagree on this subject. I acknowledge that you are saying that there are statistics trending down. I want to unpack when police are proceeding to charge an individual, is the severity of those offences increasing because people have been subjected to more hostile domestic violence situations. I accept that you might not have that data.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Maybe one way of looking at this that might help you—because I understand, but I am just trying to work out which areas I can provide you information—is to look at the Supreme Court increases. If something is quite serious, it is a matter that ends up in the Supreme Court. If you look at that data, that may help you find severity.

**Mr PAECH:** To be clear—AGD does not have that data, but the Supreme Court might?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The data that AGD collects from police...

**Mr PAECH:** That is just a number of charges?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is correct.

**Mr PAECH:** Not the severity?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Correct. That is the system that we have had for many years. We have not changed that since coming to government. We were trying to assist in answering the question in terms of how you would like to see the information on the Supreme Court matters and how they have increased because the nature of its jurisdiction is where serious charges are heard and dealt with.

**Mr PAECH:** Has the number of Supreme Court matters increased?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is in the other output, but I will have a look to see if I can find it. We have been over this for a while. Otherwise, I can wait until I have my court officials.

**Mr PAECH:** If it is easier to wait for the court, I am happy to do that.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** If we measure two like-for-likes for the reporting periods; the 2024–25 to end of March, the criminal lodgements for the Supreme Court was 457. In the same period to March 2026 was 542. Then, if we look at the criminal finalisations, that may or may not assist. It is similar; it does not have the charges. The criminal finalisations were 441 in the previous period and 481 to March 2026.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you give me a comparison of the property damage offences for this reporting period versus last reporting period for Palmerston?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Palmerston data, which I have—you wanted the comparison from last year to this year?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The comparison I have with me is April 2024 through March 2025 and the April 2025 through March 2026. The offences against the person was 135 in March 2025. It is now in March 2026 1421. That is an increase of 5%.

The assaults were 1082 in March 2024 to March 2025 period. Then in the period to March 2026 it went to 1159, an increase of 7%.

For DV assaults, it was 684 in March 2025 and increased by 13% to 783 in March 2026—sorry, I should say for the full period, not just the month.

The offences against property in March 2025 was 2,307 and in March 2026 was 2,548. That is an increase of 10%.

Burglaries of dwellings in March 2025 was 269, through to March 2026 with 185, a decrease of 31%.

The burglaries of non-residential in March 2025 was 137, and in March 2026 it was 75, a decrease of 45%.

Theft was 1,103 to March 2025 and in March 2026 was 1,222, which was an increase of 11%.

In Palmerston, property damage was 798 in March 2025, and March 2026 it was 1,066, which was an increase of 34%.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, we have a follow-up question from the Member for Johnston.

**J DAVIS:** There are directly following up from the questions in relation to crime stats and court stats. Maybe you can help me understand this. Does the department's crime stats record offences when they have been charged by police, or when findings of guilt are recorded by courts?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The crime stats are recorded when the offence was committed, which is before the offence was charged.

**J DAVIS:** When I look at the most recent Local Court data, it says that the number of criminal offences has increased in 2025–26 and is higher than any other year over the last decade. Are you also looking at that same data?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The data in the Local Court is records of the lodgements in the Local Court, not necessarily crime statistics which is recorded by AGD as those offences committed. Those numbers will not match; they are different.

**J DAVIS:** When you say lodgements, can you be clear for me about what that means?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Lodgements means the new case has started in the courts.

**J DAVIS:** That a criminal offence would be a case started in the court, but someone may not have been sentenced yet. Is that right?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The lodgements may include for one person a number of offences. That is why that data is the way it is. It is not about the number of offenders.

**J DAVIS:** Your crime stats are about the number of offenders or the number of offences?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The crime stats is the number of offences committed, then the lodgements in the court is multiple offences in the court.

**J DAVIS:** Could you explain to me the difference between the number of offences committed, as I do not see how those two figures are different? Initially I heard you say one is about the individual who may have committed multiple offences, but then you said your stats are actually talking about specific offences, not individuals. Is that right?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** To clarify, there are three different things which happen. There are incidents, offences and lodgements, and they all differ because they are at different phases within the system, and those numbers differ.

**J DAVIS:** The crime stats that you are reporting—what specifically are you reporting against. Which of those?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We report on the offences that occur in criminal offences.

**J DAVIS:** Is it when a crime is committed, when the police show up, when someone is charged or when someone is found guilty?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is when police record what has been committed.

**J DAVIS:** With the stats that are coming before the Local Court—we also heard now the Supreme Court is significantly higher than the stats you are talking about—do you accept that actually shows that the crime rates are higher. I take note of my colleague saying that many cases actually do not get as far as a criminal justice case or being reported, and we would presume this is an under-reporting?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We have not changed the way in which data has been recorded for many years under any government. As I explained, we capture the information from when the police record the data, there are charges and what is brought before the court as a lodgement.

We know there is still much more work to be done on the whole system. That is why we have a Reducing Crime strategy. Even the statistics I read out for Palmerston were a clear indication of the work which is still required, and we have to focus on reducing crime. We were not seeing those numbers budge. It does not matter how we record them; they are not budging. There is still a problem out there, and no-one can dispute that.

That is why the police—I commend them—set up Operation Ventura and is working together with the different agencies. Having the same sets of data we have had for a very long time, and we are reporting on that, they are different areas that get recorded at different times. I know it is confusing, and it has taken a long time for me to get my head around it, and I am still asking questions, which is the nature of statistics and data.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** Following up on the Member for Gwoja’s request for information on crime stats regarding Palmerston, could you give me the same stats relevant to the northern suburbs, including my electorate of Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We record our stats as Darwin and Palmerston.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** Darwin will do.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will do the same comparison because you mentioned the Palmerston stats. In Darwin from April 2024 to March 2025 versus April 2025 to March 2026, and I will not say those two years every time; I will just have the numbers. Offences against the person, 3,390, were down to 2,971, which is a decrease of 12%. Assault was 2,670, down to 2,319, which is a decrease of 13%. DV assault was 1,470, down to 1,272, a decrease of 13%. Offences against property were 6,291, down to 5,450, which is a decrease of 13%. Burglaries for dwellings were 575, down to 355, which is a decrease of 38%. Burglaries non-residential were 310, down to 159, which is a decrease of 49%. Theft was 3,342, down to 2,811, a decrease of 16%. Property damage was 2,064, up to 2,125, which is an increase of 3%.

**J DAVIS:** You are saying that the data is complex. You also say that the measuring of it has not changed. That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about the data we have in front of us with the court stats and the stats that you are using which—I am not confused, but I am not clear exactly what it is you are measuring when you give your statistics. The court stats are significantly higher than the stats that you are continually repeating.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have just had it clarified. It is a good point. These court statistics also include traffic offences and drug offences which are not in the ones that I read out previously.

**J DAVIS:** Are they not counted as part of your crime stats?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The crime statistics that we record, which has not changed, relates to crime against the victim, not necessarily traffic.

**J DAVIS:** Are victimless crimes not recorded?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** They are recorded but not reported as part of the crime statistics.

**J DAVIS:** I am happy to take this on notice because I am asking about detailed data. Can you provide data on the number of offences charged by police, lodged in the Local Court and then resulting in guilty findings?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Do you have a particular period of time for that? That process in itself has different times, so it goes up and down a lot. Do you have a preference on that?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, it will have to be during the reporting period for Estimates, so up to the end of March.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have another point of clarification. Is it for a particular offence?

**J DAVIS:** No. It is for all offences.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.14

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** For the reporting period, can you provide data on the number of all offences, first, charged by police; second, lodged in the Local Court; and, third, resulting in guilty findings?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.14.

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**Ms UIBO:** In regard to the statistics and reporting, when a car, business or home is broken into and police are called but do not attend a job, is that still recorded in the statistics and, if not, why not?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is a question for Police.

**Ms UIBO:** Does your department keep the statistics for all departments or do Police keep separate statistics and then provide to AGD?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** To clarify, Police record the data and then the Attorney-General's Department analyses the data.

**Ms UIBO:** Are you saying you do not have visibility if police do not attend a job? You do not have visibility in the crime stats division for AGD to see if a job has been attended and that job is recorded or is it not attended and still recorded as a crime?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is a question for Police because whatever data is being recorded the AG Department analyses whatever that looks like.

**Mr PAECH:** Does the Police SerPro system provide anything to the AGD statistical department?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The data that the police record as part of the day-to-day work is what AGD have access to analyse.

**Mr PAECH:** Is it SerPro?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is correct; SerPro.

**Mr PAECH:** We could ask for this at a later date around the question that the Member for Arnhem asked, to interrogate that data for the statistics unit to review or analyse as you have said.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We do not have access into the system; we have a set of data which is provided to do the analysing.

**Mr PAECH:** Does every reported crime to Police get extracted from SerPro and handed over to AG's?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Mr PAECH:** If the police were lodging all these offences, they should be being extracted by the statistics unit.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 2.4 and Output Group 2.0.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – JUSTICE SERVICES Output 3.1 – Higher Courts**

**Madam CHAIR:** I now call for questions on Output Group 3.0, Justice Services, Output 3.1, Higher Courts.

Are there any questions? Member for Gwoja.

**Mr PAECH:** How many people across the Territory are on bail?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I can give you the number as of 31 March 2026.

**Mr PAECH:** Yes, please.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The number of adults on bail is 1,876 and youths on bail is 235.

**Mr PAECH:** How many people are fitted with electronic monitoring bracelets as part of their bail conditions?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Adults on bail with electronic monitoring as at 31 March 2026 is 476. Youths on bail with electronic monitoring as of 31 March 2026 is 106.

**Mr PAECH:** What is the cost of electronic monitoring?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The cost would sit with either Corrections or Police who use those devices.

**Mr PAECH:** Are you aware of the capacity in terms of electronic monitoring in the Territory? How many bracelets do you have?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That information sits with Corrections.

**Mr PAECH:** Do you have the data on how many people have pled guilty this reporting period in comparison with the last reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Can you clarify? Which court are you asking about?

**Mr PAECH:** I am asking for both.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have the criminal lodgement number which I may have read out before for each of the courts, but what you are asking for is the specific number of guilty pleas.

**Mr PAECH:** Yes.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have been informed that the data is available, but we have not split it out in the report. I am happy to take that on notice.

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**Question on Notice No 9.15**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide the number of people who have pled guilty in the higher and lower courts and provide a comparison from this reporting period to the previous?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.15.

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**Mr PAECH:** Could you provide how many matters went through the higher courts in the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** In the reporting period to March 2026 in the higher court, criminal lodgements were 542; criminal finalisations were 481; and criminal listings were 5,683. The criminal pending workload as at 1 April is 781. The jury trials are 61. The jury sitting days to 31 March 2026 are 324.

**Mr PAECH:** Thank you. How many are currently before the higher court?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The criminal pending workload is 781 as of 1 April.

**Mr PAECH:** How many listed matters are before the court?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Is that the criminal listings?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** As of 31 March 2026 there are 5,683.

**Mr PAECH:** How far do the listings go?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Please clarify your question, Member for Gwoja.

**Mr PAECH:** How far do the listings go? What are you listing for at the moment?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** As in when the next one would be slotted into the system?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes, if someone goes to court and the matter has to be listed, how far?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes, I understand.

**Mr PAECH:** I might provide some context, because I have been in your situation. That is for a jury and non-jury.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Do you want both?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The non-jury trial can be heard straightaway, but the jury trial is February 2027.

I will add to that because it might help with an earlier question. If we compare 2025 with 2026 the criminal listings, which goes to the jury trial timings, in 2025 to 3 June, there were 7,178; then to 31 March it is 5,683.

**J DAVIS:** This may be a follow-up or repeat what the Member for Gwoja just asked. I think I asked earlier if you analysed whether there were any changes in the proportion of murder allegations resolving by guilty pleas since the mandatory laws came in. You said it was too early to tell. Is that right? Do you have any data

on whether the sentencing reforms more broadly are contributing to an increase in Supreme Court trials and increasing time and costs?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** My answer remains the same. It is too early to tell in terms of the sentencing that we amended this year.

**J DAVIS:** Has the legislation amended in 2024 and 2025 had any impact into this period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** What you are asking about in regard to those specific cases and matters—not individually but broadly—there are so many factors involved with how a person is and does and how it is impacted. I do not have an answer for the specifics of that; there is so much involved in that.

The point is that under our Reducing Crime strategy there is already a number of initiatives that are being rolled out and still being worked on. It takes into account all of the things as a community that are expected of the government to work on. That is the priority of how we are dealing with reducing crime.

**J DAVIS:** Are you doing any trend analysis over that time?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Through the Reducing Crime strategy, the measures show every target we have and what success looks like for every target. We also have the reporting for each of those targets.

Specific to what you are asking about, target 4, which sits under my portfolio, is improved access to swift, fair and rehabilitative justice. The measures show improvements in progressing criminal matters and access to offender programs.

What does success look like? The Territory justice system is faster, fairer and provides more rehabilitation opportunities. The way we are reporting on it is time to finalise criminal cases; pending court caseloads; time on remand; offender program completions; offender training and education completions; and present capacity. Bear in mind that this is everybody's agencies together, so some of those do not fit under the Attorney-General's Department, but the work we do informs the reporting for that measure to be addressed.

**Madam CHAIR:** We will break for lunch and return at 12.30 pm.

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The committee suspended.

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**Madam CHAIR:** We are still on Output 3.1, Higher Courts. Are there any further questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

### **Output 3.2 – Lower Courts**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 3.2, Lower Courts. Are there any questions?

**Mr PAECH:** How many matters went through the lower court in the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I thank all the members who work in the courts. It has been a full-on last decade, particularly the last 18 months because when we came to government we took on a view that we would not only rectify the justice system but there would be increased demand on the system. I thank every person who works in that area, and there are many of you and you all have done an amazing job. It is a tiresome but important job. There is a lot of work to do, and it continues, especially in our reducing-crime strategy. It is about the swift access to justice and swift justice that demand pressures.

Over the past 12 months the court has maintained strong throughput, with high volumes of criminal and domestic and family violence matters being managed efficiently. There have been significant improvements in the performance of the Local Court. We have had a 12% increase in finalisations compared with 2024–25 and a 38% increase in finalisations compared with 2023–24. There has been a reduction of 19% in the Local Court pending workload and a 13% in reduction in youth court pending workload compared with last year, which means that there are fewer outstanding matters.

There is a 19% reduction in listings per finalised matter in the Local Court and a 31% reduction in the youth court. There is a 17% reduction in persons on Local Court remand and a 24% reduction in youth court remand

since 1 July 2025. For the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026 the Local Court criminal lodgements were 11,823; the youth court criminal lodgements were 1,748.

**Mr PAECH:** How many are currently before the lower court?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Local Court criminal pending workload is 4,357 as of 31 March 2026.

**Mr PAECH:** How many listed matters are before the courts?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** When you say listed matters, do you mean the Local Court criminal listings?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Local Court criminal listings for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026 is 56,924.

**Mr PAECH:** How far do the listings go?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** For a plea you can get on the listing straightaway. For a contested hearing in custody it is November 2026. The non-custody is February 2027.

**Mr PAECH:** Leading into that, I know I asked you a question previously about the higher courts. Can I ask you to provide the number of people in the youth court who have pleaded guilty over the past 12 months or the reporting period. I asked you for the high and low courts, but I was not specific enough, I do not think, about the youth court as well.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I am happy to take that on notice to add to the other one.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Chair! Do you need us to add that or just be added to the original question?

**Madam CHAIR:** Another question.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.16

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide for the reporting period the number of young people who have been through the youth court who entered a guilty plea, and how that compares with the last reporting period?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.16.

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**J DAVIS:** The High Court of Australia has just ruled that the NT Government is liable for damages in the case of the four boys who were gassed in Don Dale 12 years ago. The Binsaris, O'Shea, Webster and Austral v NT Government case was appealed all the way to the High Court. Can you provide a breakdown of costs over the 12 years at all court levels? How much has the NT Government spent defending this case?

**Madam CHAIR:** Are you asking for data for outside the reporting period or just for the reporting period?

**J DAVIS:** I presume it would cover outside the reporting period, but I will take whatever I can get.

**Madam CHAIR:** I will leave that with the minister to confirm.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I understand it is a longstanding case over multiple governments. Therefore, if you want specifics I will have to take that on notice. It probably would have been under a different output earlier. I do not have that information at hand.

**J DAVIS:** Are you happy to take it on notice?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The challenge I am working through is it is well beyond the reporting period because it spanned over such a long time.

**J DAVIS:** I understand.

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**Question on Notice No 9.17**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** Please provide a breakdown of costs, including at Supreme and High Court levels, the NT Government has spent on defending the Binsaris case.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.17.

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**J DAVIS:** I am seeking information on funding to the Community Justice Centre into the future.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There has been no change to the budget for the Community Justice Centre, but it does not have its own line.

**J DAVIS:** If there is no change to funding, can you say how much the funding is?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Under the budget outputs there is a number of areas that the Community Justice Centre works across, so it is not specifically split in the way you are asking. We will try to get that data for you before the end of Estimates, but if not I can take it on notice to make sure that it does not get missed.

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**Question on Notice No 9.18**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** Can you provide the total funding to the Community Justice Centre?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.18.

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**J DAVIS:** What is the current average wait time for a lower court matter to be heard?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It goes to what I was saying before about the wait times. For the Local Court as a contested hearing of someone in custody is up to November 2026 and the non-custody is February 2027, but if you want to enter a plea there is not wait for that.

**J DAVIS:** Can you tell what the longest time is that someone has had to wait for their matter to be heard?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We look at all the data together, but if you want to know the longest that it has been in that reporting period, I can take it on notice.

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**Question on Notice No 9.19**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** What is the longest time that someone has waited, in the reporting period, to have their matter heard in the lower courts?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.19.

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**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 3.2.

### **Output 3.3 – NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 3.3, NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NTCAT). Are there any questions?

**Mr PAECH:** Attorney-General, how many NTCAT applications have been brought against social housing tenants by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development and community housing providers retrospectively in the last two years?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Against social housing tenants, by social housing tenants, by the department of Housing? You want the total number?

**Mr PAECH:** It is in two parts. How many NTCAT applications have been brought against social housing tenants by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development and by community housing providers retrospectively in the last two years?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have the reporting period data. I can go through that with you. If it is okay with you, I have a breakdown of the community housing group and the cases filed by the community housing group against the tenants. I can run through those: the community housing group is six; Gundjeihmi is one; the CEO of Housing is 100; St Vincent is three; Venture Housing Pty Ltd is 48; Mission Australia is 22; Top End Mental Health Service is two; and Yilli Rreung Aboriginal is 15.

**Mr PAECH:** Could you provide a breakdown of the orders against the social housing tenants by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development in the reporting period? That is terminations, termination for antisocial behaviour—compensation of that nature.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I can take you through each one that I have. The orders against social housing tenants sought by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development and community housing providers between 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026 for Community Housing Central are compensation granted, nil; compensation dismissed, nil; compensation withdrawn, one; compensation consent order, nil; and compensation not finalised, nil. For compensation, termination and possession, granted was nil; dismissed was nil; withdrawn was four; consent order was nil; and not finalised was one.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you provide the number of matters that were brought against the department from the applicant, being the tenant?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** For the community housing data for 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026, the cases filed by the tenant against the Community Housing group was one; the CEO Housing was four; Venture Housing Pty Ltd was one; and Yilli Rreung Aboriginal was one.

**Mr PAECH:** Is that just for the reporting period or the year?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is for the reporting period.

**J DAVIS:** Is that an increase in numbers for NTCAT?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have the number of new proceedings commencing in NTCAT for the year 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. Then we have another set of data for 1 July 2025 to 16 April 2026. That may be helpful. I also have residential tenancies as a class type, but it does not break it down between private residential tenancies or agents and community housing providers and public housing providers. The case type under residential

tenancies for July 2024 to June 2025 was 578 cases, and for July 2025 to April 2026 it was 517. I hope that is helpful in answering that question.

**J DAVIS:** Can you give me the global numbers for NTCAT?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Can you clarify what you would like regarding global?

**J DAVIS:** All cases coming before NTCAT, not just in relation to housing.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There are many types of cases. The total brought before NTCAT for 1 July 2025 to 16 April 2026—slightly outside the reporting period—was 1,747.

**J DAVIS:** Do you have data on the previous period available?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The previous period—1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025—was 2,178.

**J DAVIS:** Does the department keep data on how many terminations through that mean eviction to homelessness?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** What is the data you are looking for?

**J DAVIS:** If a matter comes to NTCAT and the outcome is eviction, how many of those cases are eviction into homelessness?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** NTCAT records the outcome of the case but not necessarily the other components around the case.

**Mr KERLE:** In the reporting period do you have any numbers or percentages of outcomes that you can share regarding those brought by the department and the various CHPs, whether they adjourned indefinitely or tenancy terminated or whatever the outcome was?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I gave the Member for Gwojra the Community Housing Central Australia data. There are other sections, the Housing CEO—you mentioned public housing. I have the data for public housing, and I am happy to go through each of the providers where we do have those outcomes, including with Housing.

**Mr KERLE:** It is the outcomes. We have the numbers initiated, but if we can get an idea of the outcomes?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Whether they were granted, consent orders given or they were dismissed or withdrawn. Is that important as well?

**Mr KERLE:** Yes.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I just wanted to clarify because there is a lot of data.

Orders against social housing tenants sought by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development and community housing providers between 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026 are:

- Community Housing Central Australia: compensation granted was nil; nil dismissed, one withdrawn, nil consent order and nil not finalised. Regarding compensation, termination and possession, nil granted, nil dismissed, four withdrawn, nil consent orders and one not finalised
- Gundjeihmi: compensation, termination and possession for granted, dismissed, withdrawn and consent order was all nil and one not finalised
- CEO Housing: compensation, two granted, one withdrawn, one consent order and one not finalised; entry to premises and inspection, 38 granted, nil dismissed, 23 withdrawn, nil consent order and nine not finalised; and for compensation, termination of possession, eight granted, one dismissed, 14 withdrawn, two consent order and nil not finalised
- St Vincent: compensation, termination and possession, two granted, one dismissed, nil withdrawn, nil consent order and nil not finalised

- Yilli Rreung Aboriginal Corporation: compensation, termination and possession, seven granted, one dismissed, four withdrawn, nil consent order and three not finalised
- Venture Housing: compensation, termination and possession, 24 granted, nil dismissed, nine withdrawn, two consent order and 12 not finalised; and entry to premises and inspections nil granted, nil dismissed, one withdrawn and nil order consent and nil not finalised
- Top End Mental Health: compensation, termination and possession, two granted, nil dismissed, nil withdraw, nil consent orders and nil not finalised
- Mission Australia: compensation, termination and possession, nil granted, one dismissed, six withdrawn, 11 consent order and four not finalised.

**Mr PAECH:** How many applications dealt with by NTCAT relate to bond disputes?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I talked about the case type being residential tenancies and the numbers, but I do not have the breakdown of the ones related to bonds. I am happy to take that on notice.

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**Question on Notice No 9.20**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** How many applications dealt with by NTCAT relate to bond disputes?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.20.

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**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 3.3.

**Output 3.4 – Registrar-General  
Output 3.5 – Parole Board**

No questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 3.5 and Output Group 3.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS  
Output 4.1 – Director of Public Prosecutions**

**Madam CHAIR:** I now call for questions on Output Group 4.0, Director of Public Prosecutions, Output 4.1, Director of Public Prosecutions.

Are there any questions? Member for Johnston.

**J DAVIS:** What are the current staffing levels, vacancy rates and staff turnover rates within the DPP?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I thank the staff of the DPP because they have certainly done a huge amount of work over the last 18 months on the back of the crime crisis that we inherited and that we needed to turn around. I thank all staff. They continue to deliver strong results and prosecution outcomes which is what Territorians expect.

I put on the record that the conviction rate remains at 97%, exceeding the target of 95%.

We have just spoken at length about the Local Court and the DPP work in that space. The Local Court matters are being finalised efficiently, with 88% complete within 12 months. Those prosecutors continue to manage their increasing numbers of serious and complex matters.

Regarding the staff at the DPP, we have on record 62 prosecutors as at 31 March 2026. Total number of staff for the period 2025–26 was 119.74.

**J DAVIS:** What is the vacancy rate?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The vacancies are 18.

**J DAVIS:** How many full-time employees of DPP are there in Katherine?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The number in Katherine is two.

**J DAVIS:** Is that full-time staff?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes, full-time.

**J DAVIS:** In Katherine, how many criminal matters have been adjourned multiple times over the past 12 months?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It was under Local Courts, but I am happy to locate it if you give me a couple of minutes. If I cannot, then I will take it on notice. I am sorry, but the officials are not with me anymore and that is who I would have asked, so it should have been asked back then.

**J DAVIS:** I can put it in as a written question.

How is the DPP's conviction rate measured? You mentioned 97%. Is that 97% of all charges laid?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I can share with the committee that the key performance indicators are as per Budget Paper No 3. The way that we measure them is that there is a target. As at 30 June 2025, the target for matters finalised with a guilty verdict is 95%. For Supreme Court criminal matters finalised within 12 months, it is 75%. For Local Court criminal matters finalised within 12 months it is 80%.

**J DAVIS:** How many charges were, first, laid by police; second, resulting in guilty findings; and, third, were withdrawn by prosecutors?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We can take that question on notice. It will be a lot of work to dig up the data from the different parts of the system, but we can do that.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.21

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

**J DAVIS:** How many charges were, first, laid by police; second, resulting in guilty findings; and, third, were withdrawn by prosecutors?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.21.

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**Mr PAECH:** I asked this earlier and you directed me to the DPP. How many family violence matters achieved early resolution in the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The TIG-ER team is probably the best that I can point to in terms of those guilty pleas. There is a lot of work that has gone into that space. There are 893 where there has been an early guilty plea. I do not have what each of those charges were. A high proportion of them are domestic and family violence-related. Of the 893, it is a large proportion of the cases.

**Mr PAECH:** Can you take that on notice and provide the breakdown?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We can, but we would have to individually count those 893 cases if you would like the DPP to do that exercise.

**Mr PAECH:** No. That is okay. I want them doing other things.

**Mr KERLE:** Can you comment on how many matters the TIG-ER team has helped to resolve faster than it would take through the courts? What impact has that had on timelines through the justice system?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have talked about this a lot throughout the last couple of months and at sittings. The TIG-ER team has been such an important part of what the Director of Public Prosecutions has been part of. Over years it was not just the whole justice system; it was the way in which matters were being dealt with. At times, they sat around for too long because the leadership and ministerial focus was not there. We have changed that and put the TIG-ER taskforce to work.

The whole idea is to have a faster justice system and earlier resolutions for victims so that they do not have to continue the time it takes to go through the system. Quite often, with the right amount of evidence available and information going to a team of people who can work on a case—many cases at once—they can determine if something can be resolved earlier or not. That is exactly what this team has done. They can identify them and triage them in the system. It allows for those cases, if they can, to be dealt with much quicker to early resolution.

I am pleased that the results are showing great signs of improving the whole justice system, with 68% of matters having been resolved early or being on track to resolve early. There were 893 finalised during the reporting period. There were 699 new matters that were received in 2026, and 282 of those matters were resolved early through appropriate guilty pleas. That matters because we want victims to spend less time waiting for those outcomes.

Of course, the court resources are impacted as well if it continues to be adjourned or waiting for months—sometimes much longer than that under the previous government. We did not want that to continue. We wanted to have it all looked at. The TIG-ER team was stood up.

I thank the team. There is a lot of work that goes into it, but it is worth the work the TIG-ER team is investing.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – INDEPENDENT OFFICES**

### **Output 5.1 – Anti-Discrimination Commission**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now move to consider Output Group 5, Independent Offices, Output 5.1, Anti-Discrimination Commission.

**Mr PAECH:** Madam Chair, I might make it easier. The opposition does not have any questions for the Anti-Discrimination Commission.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions?

**Mr KERLE:** I have some.

**J DAVIS:** Welcome, commissioner. Attorney-General have you consulted with the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner on any of your Bills or policies during the reporting period? Can you outline what that consultation consisted of?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** As you can imagine, I have many independent statutory commissioners, bodies and boards. I could not tell you exactly who I have met with, when and what the reasons are. Quite frankly, I meet with different people daily. I can say that the department regularly catches up with all of our commissioners. That work could be done through those mechanisms as well.

**J DAVIS:** In relation to the Bills that have been presented and passed over the reporting period, have you received any advice on any of those Bills from the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There have been many Bills we have put through the parliament in the short time we have been in government. Many of them have different ways in which they are discussed with whoever is involved in them. When we came to government off the back of the resounding election win, our priority was the election mandate; to make sure we could pass all of those pieces of legislation, which we have done.

The work that is done is different for every piece of legislation. Obviously, many go to the scrutiny committee, so there are plenty of opportunities for everyone to be involved in having their say and answering the questions of members of that committee and making submissions. There are many opportunities for every Territorian to get involved with legislation.

That will continue. We are implementing our election commitments for the term of this government, and we are going through the process under my portfolios to ensure we pass the legislation.

**J DAVIS:** I am not asking about general consultation; I am asking about consultation and advice from your commissioner around antidiscrimination in relation to laws that you have brought before the parliament over the reporting period. What I understand from what you said is that you have not met with the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and you have not had any specific advice from the commissioner in relation to any of those Bills.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** When we are going through legislation in my department there are staff who work on legislation and policy. They go through a process of looking at different elements and impacts, for instance human rights, and they ask different questions to different people, and they do.

I do not have the details exactly—maybe you could point to something specific—but there have been occasions where the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner has spoken to my department and asked for information or provided information, but it would depend on what it was that we were working on at the time.

**J DAVIS:** I am asking for a forensic answer of whether you have had specific advice, you or your office, in relation to any Bills from the commissioner. You may not be able to answer that; I am not sure.

**Madam CHAIR:** We are getting into a repetitive question, and I believe the minister has answered it. Do you have a different line of questioning, Member for Johnston?

**J DAVIS:** In relation to specifics, in the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner's report, the commissioner stated regarding the justice reform that this government has made:

*These reforms risk criminalising children earlier, exacerbating contact with the justice system and increasing long-term harm, leading to an increase in recidivism rates: increasing, not reducing crime.*

That is an example of the work of the commissioner attempting to inform your government—I understand that is part of their role. Can I ask the commissioner whether he has been given the opportunity to give you advice?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I am the minister, and I will answer the questions. I can throw to the officers or I can choose not to if I do not want to, so it is up to me. If you want to finish your question I am more than happy to determine if I am answering it or if I throw to the commissioner.

**J DAVIS:** Have you been provided explicitly with that advice, and have you responded to it?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is the same question, but I will try to clarify. There has been many pieces of legislation that fit within the period we are discussing. Everybody, including the commissioner, has an opportunity to put forward their feedback once it has been provided. That could be in various ways as well, I might add; sometimes it is earlier, and sometimes it is during parliament and during the scrutiny committee. They are different, depending on what it is.

What is not different is that the legislation that we put forward, as part of our election commitment to reduce crime, is unapologetic and maybe people do not like that, but the majority of Territorians want to make sure that legislation is brought forward to reduce crime because it is what they voted for. I do not make any apologies for the legislation that has gone forward in the way it has and the good outcomes we are beginning to see in the trending down nature of crime. I have always said that a caveat around this is that there is more work to be done, and there are areas that need improving. I know that all too well, Member for Johnston. What nobody can question us on is what we said we would do it is exactly what we have done.

**J DAVIS:** Understood, but that is not what I am asking about. My very specific question is: can you please provide the committee with all the advice the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner has provided you during the development of any Bills during the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I feel like you have asked me the same question over and over again. There are many different avenues of input to legislation.

**Mr KERLE:** My question is regarding the number of complaints the Anti-Discrimination office has received from people—this is related to the previous line of questioning regarding NTCAT and Housing—going through NTCAT housing proceedings, if he has those numbers.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** No, but I can take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.22

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Blain, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr KERLE:** Do you have data during the reporting period of housing-related complaints received by the commission and if their outcomes are substantiated or not substantiated?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.22.

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**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 5.1.

#### Output 5.2 – Children’s Commissioner

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move on to Output 5.2, Children’s Commissioner.

Are there any questions? Member for Johnston.

**J DAVIS:** Can you table all advice that you have been provided with by the Children’s Commissioner over the reporting period?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will go through it all again because, like I said, I have many commissions and commissioners, many statutory boards and independent ones. Many different people would like to get involved in the legislation. I meet with lots of people and get lots of information coming into my office. I do not have my diary or my correspondence in front of me. You can see a lot of correspondence is here, but I do not have that information, but if any of those bodies, groups, independent commissioners or any Territorian has input into the legislation there are processes in place for that to happen.

**J DAVIS:** My understanding is that your Children’s Commissioner—the Northern Territory Government’s Children’s Commissioner—part of their role is to make recommendations to ministers, public authorities and other bodies on matters relating to the rights, interests and wellbeing of vulnerable children. I am not asking about just anyone who might consult but about the commissioner, who has the specific role and what advice you have received from the commissioner in this period in relation to their role.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Lots of different legislation has been introduced and passed, and they are through various agencies. I do not have all those answers for you because it is about multiple agencies.

**J DAVIS:** I am asking about one agency and one commissioner.

**Madam CHAIR:** If we keep going through this cycle of repetitiveness, I will make a call to cut this line of questioning and move on to any other questions you have about Output 5.2, Children’s Commissioner.

**Mr PAECH:** Could you provide how many own-initiative inquiries commenced during the reporting period and if they were or were not published?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.23

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Gwoja, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr PAECH:** Could you provide a list of own-initiative inquiries for the reporting period and if they were published or not and the reasons behind why they may not have been published?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.23.

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**Mr KERLE:** Are there notifications that go to the Children's Commissioner's office that would then inform those own-initiative investigations? I want to know how many notifications are coming in which would then inform the number.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** When you talk about notifications, you might be talking about a different department. Is that what you mean?

**Mr KERLE:** When the Children's Commissioner starts an own-initiative investigation it would be based on something; I assume it would not be based on a media report. There are probably people making independent reports ...

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Chair! Minister Cahill spoke last night about the substantiations and notifications that they would deal with and what the commissioner would deal with.

**Madam CHAIR:** That would go through the Minister for Children and Families.

**Mr KERLE:** No. It is about the information received by the Office of the Children's Commissioner that the commissioner then uses to determine whether they initiate own-initiative investigations.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** If you could be specific in terms of what you are looking for, I can take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.24

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Blain, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr KERLE:** Can I have the number of information reports to the Children's Commissioner's office that could provide the basis of an own-initiative investigation for the reporting period?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.24.

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**J DAVIS:** In relation to all the independent officers, does the minister have a formal structure to engage any commissions during the development of legislation?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I feel this is repetitive, because I have been clear about the way in which legislation is formulated and put to parliament. I have answered that question, but I could go through it again.

**J DAVIS:** It could be just a yes or no. There is no formal framework; is that correct?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The formal framework that I adhere to is the one that Territorians elected us to do on the back of our reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle strategies.

**Mr PAECH:** We love all the independent officers, but we know there is an hour and a half left. We will not ask any more questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 5.2.

### **Output 5.3 – Consumer Affairs**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 5.3, Consumer Affairs.

Are there any questions? Member for Karama.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** Can you tell us what you are doing about fuel price monitoring, which I think comes under Consumer Affairs?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Fuel prices have really impacted Territorians. It has been like that for a few months now. Consumer Affairs is our independent body which protects Territorians from price gouging and across many areas. I will just focus on fuel.

On the back of some world events that have been happening, there has been a huge increase in fuel prices across Australia. Because the cost of living remains such a critical issue for Territorians, we made sure that we could take steps to beef up what Consumer Affairs has been able to deliver for Territorians. It plays an important role in monitoring and protecting fuel pricing and supporting the fair trade in fuel.

We increased our monitoring and compliance activity with the Consumer Affairs team. Between July and March, we had 347 fuel compliance checks that were undertaken. A further 244 checks were completed in that short three-week timeframe to 19 April because we had to make sure that the fuel stations were doing the right thing and that Territorians were not being price-gouged at the bowser.

We have put in place pieces of legislation, one of which we dusted off from a very long time ago and appointed the Fuel Controller. Fuel was declared a good that could be dealt with under the Act. We had enforcement action, including infringement notices. There have been two so far where petrol stations were not doing the right thing. Those infringements have been issued.

I thank the Consumer Affairs team for its work. It is a small team. We helped it ramp up to be able to do the extra compliance work. It has worked effortlessly and tirelessly to help us with the legislation as well. I get weekly reports from the commissioner who has been keeping all of us up to date with what is happening.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 5.3.

### **Output 5.4 – Liquor Commission**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 5.4, Liquor Commission. Are there any questions?

**Mr KERLE:** How many licences do we have in Palmerston?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The commission is not the keeper of the licences. It does the application. That would be best directed at the Licensing NT which is under hospitality.

**Mr KERLE:** Okay. So all of these questions regarding numbers would be under hospitality.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Do you want to go through them and I can double-check?

**Mr KERLE:** My next line of questioning would be if they have been part of Ventura in Palmerston and the local ...

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is sounding like it is hospitality related.

**Mr PAECH:** The quicker we get through this, we can get on to hospitality.

**Madam CHAIR:** Call them out, Member for Blain, and we can find out where they sit.

**Mr KERLE:** How many liquor licenses are currently in Palmerston, broken down by category—takeaway, hotels, restaurants?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is all under licensing.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 5.4.

### **Output 5.5 – Public Guardian and Trustee**

No questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes Output 5.5 and Output Group 5.0.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – NT WORKSAFE Output 6.1 – NT WorkSafe**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now move to Output Group 6.0, NT WorkSafe, Output 6.1, NT WorkSafe.

Are there any questions? Member for Karama.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** As you know, last year there was a big hullabaloo about fireworks getting to Darwin. I can guarantee many Territorians want to know if you have sorted everything out for this Territory Day.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes, you are right. What did you call it—a hullabaloo? Last year was stressful. First, the NT WorkSafe team—I have Grant with me today, and I thank him for all the work that has been done in the last 12 months to make sure we do not experience what we experienced last year with the fireworks. Territory Day is a huge celebration for Territorians.

Last year we had all sorts of challenges with getting through other jurisdictions. The Chief Minister had to speak to the Premiers of Queensland and New South Wales to get them to work with us to get those trucks through that were full of fireworks. They did an amazing job, and we got the fireworks for Territory Day last year.

This year—for which we started work last year—we were not going to go through the same thing. The department team has worked tirelessly to ensure that we could get our fireworks through the Port of Darwin instead of having to go through other states. I am pleased to report that we are close—the ships have arrived; they are sitting there; the different checks and securities and the way it all works is happening now. We will be close to having that signed off and then, of course, there will be enough fireworks to celebrate Territory Day. We are excited by that.

**Mr O’GALLAGHER:** Well done.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Thanks again to WorkSafe. Honestly, it has delivered when it comes to fireworks, which is important. I think you guys even were finalists in one of the awards because of the fireworks that we had. Thank you very much.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output Group 6.0. Thank you, Mr Hastie.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES Output 7.1 – Corporate and Governance Output 7.2 – Shared Services Received**

No questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output Group 7.0.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 9.10**

**Ms BOOTHBY:** This was about youth incarceration. The question asked for the breakdown of the number of 10, 11 and 12-year-olds who received incarceration sentences in the reporting period. The answer to that is none.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 9.11**

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There were 3,208 DVO applications in the reporting period.

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**Madam CHAIR:** This concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Attorney-General's Department.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the officers who provided advice to the Attorney-General today.

Attorney-General, did you want to quickly thank your team?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I do. I thank every member of the Attorney-General's Department and all the spin-offs from it as well. They had a mountain of work over the last nearly two years, but in particular the last 12 months, in this reporting period. I want to make sure that even though I sometimes get a bit grumpy when things are not going the way I want them to, it is not on them; it is because I am trying to deliver hard for Territorians. It has been a privilege to be able to work with you and I look forward to delivering the rest of work we have underway, especially under the Reducing Crime strategy I spoke about.

It is nice when you walk down the street and people stop you and say, 'Keep going. We know you have more to do. We do not expect you to fix everything overnight. It took a long time for it to get as bad as it was.' I always say that there are a lot of hardworking people in our public service who do a fantastic job. Thank you so much to all of you, and for the work to get the Estimates prep done. That is a mountain of work. I appreciate all of it, although I did not get to answer questions because we did not get to those outputs to go through them. You are all valued, thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** We will take a 10-minute break to change over and be back at 1.50 pm.

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The committee suspended.

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## TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

**Madam CHAIR:** Welcome back. We are here now with the Department of Tourism and Hospitality. Attorney-General, I welcome you as the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, the Minister for Major Events, the Minister for Racing and the Minister for Parks and Wildlife. I invite you to introduce officials accompanying you and make an opening statement of no more than 20 minutes regarding the Department of Tourism and Hospitality. I will give you a 5-minute warning at the 15-minute mark.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will introduce my officials with me today. I have Suzana Bishop, Chief Executive Officer; Valerie Smith, Deputy Chief Executive Officer; and Muhammad Waqas, Acting Chief Financial Officer. I have many other department staff also behind me or in the room next door. I am happy to take on those questions.

I am pleased to appear before the Estimates to discuss the 2026–27 budget and the work being undertaken across my portfolios of Tourism, Hospitality, Major Events, Parks and Wildlife, and Racing. This budget continues our governments focus on reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. Those priorities work together because when communities are safer, people travel. When businesses have confidence, they invest. When our lifestyle is strong, visitors want to experience it and more people choose to call the Territory home. Tourism sits at the centre of that story. Tourism supports jobs, drives investment and helps sustain businesses right across the Territory from Darwin to Alice Springs and from our regional centres to our remote communities.

To the year ending December 2025, the total visitation increased by 17% and visitor expenditure increased by 35%. That means more people travelling to the Territory and spending more whilst they are here.

International visitation increased by 19% and expenditure increased by 37%. Growth was recorded from key markets including the United States, France, Japan, the United Kingdom and China.

Domestic visitation also increased by 18%; the strongest growth-rate of any Australian jurisdiction. This means hotel rooms filled, tours booked, restaurants were busy and businesses were employing Territorians. Importantly, confidence has been returning to the visitor economy, with many operators reporting stronger forward bookings and growing optimism about the future ahead.

Our government launched the Visitor Economy Strategy 2032. The strategy is an economic-growth strategy for the Northern Territory and more than a Tourism document. It sets a clear target to grow the visitor economy to \$3bn by 2032, attract 1.7m visitor trips and support around 6,000 additional jobs across the

Territory. Importantly, it provides a long-term roadmap developed alongside industry, regional tourism organisations and key stakeholders. The strategy is already guiding our work on aviation developments, along with the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations under my colleague, Minister Cahill's leadership. The strategy also guides our major events, destination marketing, tourism infrastructure, workforce development and investment attraction. It provides the certainty industries have been calling for and a shared plan for visitor economy over the next decade.

We also know that growing visitation relies on access. That is why our government continues to advocate and work closely with the Commonwealth and Parks Australia to support improved access to Kakadu. Kakadu remains one of Australia's most iconic tourism destinations and one of the Territory's most important tourism assets. Restoring certainty around access is critical for local operators, visitors and the broader Top End visitor economy.

We will continue advocating for practical solutions that support tourism whilst respecting cultural and environmental values. We are focused on growing new visitor markets.

Earlier this year we launched our military tourism initiative, recognising the Northern Territories unique role in Australia's military history. From the Bombing of Darwin through to the modern Defence presence across Northern Australia, the Territory has stories and unique experiences like Pitch Black that cannot be experienced anywhere else in the country.

Through new partnerships, marketing initiatives and our AI-powered military tourism planner, we are creating new reasons for visitors to travel throughout the Territory and stay longer. However, I recognise that tourism conditions remain challenging in light of the current headwinds. There is no question that global uncertainty has affected travel behaviour for this season. Fuel prices remain higher and impact every part of daily life. Our extended flooding has taken its toll on businesses, infrastructure and roads. Many communities are still in recovery phase. Consumer confidence is mixed and travel patterns continue to evolve on a daily basis.

The Territory is increasing relevance in both domestic and international markets. That is why we are now undertaking the first comprehensive review of the Territory's tourism brand positioning in almost a decade. This is about making sure we continue to attract the right visitors and position the Territory strongly for the future. It is not just about changing a logo. We know that travellers from 10 years ago are different from travellers of today. It is about ensuring the Territory's story evolves to remain relevant, compelling and competitive in an increasingly crowded global marketplace.

A strong visitor economy relies on strong assets, and nowhere is that more important than our parks and reserves. For too long, investment in park infrastructure failed to keep pace with visitor experiences and expectations and the needs of our tourism operators. This budget addresses that.

We have committed \$10m to upgrade parks infrastructure across the Territory. This includes improvements to visitor facilities, walking trails, campgrounds, signage, access roads and recreational infrastructure.

We have also committed an additional ongoing \$5m annually to strengthen the operations of the Parks and Wildlife Commission. That funding provides certainty. For too long, this agency has operated without funding certainty. It supports our rangers and ensures our parks remain open, safe and accessible for Territorians and visitors to enjoy.

A key example is the Silkwood acquisition. Our government has purchased 30,000 hectares adjoining Litchfield National Park. This represents the largest expansion of recreational land opportunities in more than two decades. We did this because it secures future opportunities for camping, four-wheel driving, fishing, hiking and hunting. Most importantly, it protects the Territory lifestyle and provides new opportunities for tourism and recreation.

We are also continuing to develop new tourism experiences across regional and remote areas. One exciting opportunity is dark sky tourism. The Barkly region offers some of the clearest night skies anywhere in the world. We are working with industry and local stakeholders to better position the Territory as a world-class destination for stargazing and astrophotography night sky experiences. This is also in the lead-up to the total solar eclipse that will sweep directly over the Barkly region on 22 July 2028. This creates opportunities for regional communities while diversifying our visitor offering.

We are also continuing to strengthen crocodile management. Today I announced the new headquarters secured for the crocodile management team in Palmerston. Additional rangers have also been employed,

and new equipment, including new trucks, has been deployed. Our teams continue their important work keeping Territorians and visitors safe while managing one of the world's largest crocodile populations.

Events remain one of the most powerful drivers of visitation and economic activity. Events bring visitors, fill hotel rooms, support local businesses and showcase the Territory to the nation and the world. Independent analysis of events delivered and funded by Major Events during 2024–25 shows more than \$210m in economic stimulus, which is more than 560,000 visitor nights and over 1,100 jobs supported across the Territory.

This year is also shaping as one of the biggest event years in history. Parrtjima delivered record attendance in Alice Springs, including the second-biggest opening night in the festival's history and more than 22,500 visitors overall.

The Dolphins attracted a sellout crowd of 2,500 in Darwin for their first official home game. Around 2,500 attendees travelled into our town from interstate, contributing directly to our economy.

BASSINTHEGRASS continues to demonstrate its strength as the Territory's largest music festival, despite many music festivals across Australia facing significant challenges.

The Finke Desert Race again captured national attention for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

This week we will welcome the Darwin Triple Crown Supercars at Hidden Valley, bigger and better than last year, with new exciting attractions like the Monster Trucks.

The Territory is continuing to strengthen its reputation as a screen production destination. Major screen productions such as *Kangaroo* the movie, *Top End Bub* and *Deadloch* have also allowed us to share the NT's stories with the world. Working with Studiocanal, the producers of *Kangaroo*, we were able to secure 35 pieces of global media coverage highlighting the Red Centre's epic outback landscape and vibrant community.

*Kangaroo* has been a winner, injecting \$4.3m of Northern Territory spend into the economy across employment and goods and services. The film itself attained number one spot in 2025 as the highest grossing film at the Australian box office, generating over \$5.5m in cinema revenue. *Kangaroo* is also the highest grossing Australian film in Germany in 25 years.

Our landscapes, our people and our stories continue to attract national and international productions. Screen production not only creates local jobs and opportunities, it also provides long-term tourism benefit by putting Territory locations in front of global audiences.

This week I announced that three baby bilbies have emerged from their mother's pouches at the Alice Springs Desert Park. This offers a rare chance to see one of Australia's most iconic threatened species in their infancy up close. Whether it is a bilby in Central Australia, a crocodile in the Top End or a kangaroo on the big screen, these are experiences and stories that strengthen the Territory brand and encourage people to visit.

Looking ahead, the Territory will host international test cricket for the first time in 22 years when Australia takes on Bangladesh in Darwin this August. Tickets are now on sale, and this event will place Darwin firmly on the national sporting calendar.

We are preparing for the return of the MXGP, the Alice Springs Masters Games, Red CentreNATS and many other major events across the Territory.

Along with that, our latest event funding program round saw \$1.5m allocated to 25 more events secured for our famous events calendar, including several new elements in Darwin Mindil Beach Go Slow Picnic Race, NT Games Showcase and the Sister Cities Cup, adding fresh experiences for locals and visitors.

These events support our local jobs, local businesses and local communities. They strengthen our regions and they are all part of our unique lifestyle. They will help tell the Territory's story.

Finally, I acknowledge all the staff across Tourism and Events NT, the Parks and Wildlife Commission, Licensing NT, the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and all of those who support the delivery of these portfolios. Their work contributes directly to jobs, economic growth and the Territory lifestyle, and our focus is about growth, certainty and security. It backs what grows our economy. It invests in what keeps the Territory so

unique. It supports local jobs, strengthens our visitor economy and it helps ensure the Territory remains the best place to live, work, visit and invest.

I am happy to take questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Are there any questions on the opening statement? Member for Nightcliff.

**Mr SMELT:** What was the total budget for Tourism NT prior to the merger with NT Major Events?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That would have been a question for last year's Estimates because it is not in this reporting period.

**Madam CHAIR:** It was outside the reporting period, and the minister will not have that information available.

**Mr SMELT:** The merger occurred in 2025–26 financial year.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you have the date of the merger?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That question is related to last year and is not part of this budget process.

**Mr SMELT:** I believe the reporting period is 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026. The two organisations must have both had a budget at that point in time prior to the merger.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** For clarification, because Major Events was merged and changed part through the year, we do not have the old data for.

**Mr SMELT:** You do not have the data for the two organisations prior to merger—can you take that on notice?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes, Member for Nightcliff, we will take that on notice so we can get you the right data for the right years that you are referring to.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.25

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nightcliff, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr SMELT:** What was the total budget for Tourism NT and NT Major Events, the two separate organisations, prior to merger?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 9.25.

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**Mr SMELT:** With a revised budget with the merged entity, can you provide a breakdown of tourism events and screen that compile the current budget?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** For tourism industry development the budget is \$21.979m—sorry, that is for last year.

**Mr SMELT:** I am happy to take last year and next financial year.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The destination marketing, which includes screen is \$35.406m. For Events it is \$42.308m

**Madam CHAIR:** Before you continue, Member for Nightcliff, I welcome to the gallery participants in the Public Sector Governance program. Welcome to Estimates today.

**Mr SMELT:** The revised 2025–26 that has just been read out is the sum of those \$99m?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** They are in different sections in my folder, so I am getting the calculations done for you. The answer is yes.

**Mr SMELT:** Could we get a breakdown of the \$35m for the destination marketing in screen? Can we get a breakout of the screen budget for that?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is all part of the one budget item and I do not have the breakdown. Because we are all together under the one portfolio and department, we are not doing things in silos anymore. If there is a marketing activity that is happening, screen is involved in that as well and other areas of the department as well. The advice I have been given is that it is all being absorbed together.

**Mr O'GALLAGHER:** Following on the question from the Member for Nightcliff talking about the merger between events and tourism, what are the actual benefits of that merger?

**Mr SMELT:** Madam Chair, I think this is a definite, different line of questioning.

**Madam CHAIR:** You mentioned the merger and it is a follow-on question from that. I will allow it.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It has been a big project in terms of the merger of the two entities. It was one of the things we wanted to do to make sure we could create a more mature tourism and events industry for the Northern Territory, besides the fact that we are now not operating in silos and we can actually leverage the resources we have further to promote and make sure everything is aligned.

There are also employment cost savings, estimated at about \$2.58m, which were achieved through that integration. We had incredible staff who were in the old department, Tourism NT, and Major Events and through the process and natural attrition, we were able to save that amount of money.

The people we have now in that area are phenomenal, and their work over the last nearly couple of years is a credit to them. If you think about our day-to-day life as an employee of any organisation, we are doing things and then it changes, but we have to do the same amount of work. It is a credit to them to take on that change, and change of management, that was needed.

I would like to put on the record that there were no job losses beyond the CEO and the board, which was a separate piece of work. Because of that design efficiency, which was basically leveraging the dollars we had, there was a combined estimated savings. We had two boards, operating two different organisations, which we changed into an advisory board, which had different skill sets, a matrix of the people who were on that board. They are an amazing group who come together to advise me. That was savings of approximately \$395,165 per year and also an alignment.

Instead of Major Events making decisions that were impacting them and Tourism making decisions that would impact them, we have them working together.

There were also some other savings through software of \$147,510. Compared to some other costs the government had, it might not seem a lot but every dollar counts when we are in the fiscal position we have been in and inherited.

The total quantified cost savings, which is only part of the whole benefit from the integration, was \$3.12m. When it comes to being cost effective, it has delivered. The most important part is having the two teams operating together under the one roof. The things that can be leveraged to ensure that a major event is now being promoted across the leisure market are untold.

For example, this year, for the first time, Top End Tourism is advertising our events and tickets can be booked through Top End Tourism. That could never be done before because it had never been thought of and no-one had implemented it even if it was an idea. We have done that. It is a big thing. More ticket sales are making it easier for people when they stop at the Visitor Information Centre. They can see the Supercars are on this weekend and they can buy a ticket.

That is another good example of why this integration creates a mature model for the Territory. We are grown-up now. We are known around the world for the right reasons instead of a lot of the negative attention we were getting for a lot of years. There is still so much more work to be done but I am proud of the department and the work that has been done so far.

**Mr SMELT:** In terms of the destination marketing and the screen production, can you identify the grant component of that \$35m for the current financial year?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Under destination marketing, which also includes screen, the grants awarded in 2025–26 was \$7.378m. That is unchanged from previous years.

**Mr SMELT:** Could we get the same breakdown for the 2026–27 budget for the tourism, destination marketing and events?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The 2025–26 expenditure to March 31 for grants is \$3.774m and the budget for 2026–27 is \$6.962m.

**Mr SMELT:** I was looking for the breakdown of the three headline categories. Before, you gave me \$42m, \$35m and \$21m. That adds up to \$99m. I am looking for the numbers that add up to the \$103m.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I just gave you destination marketing. Are you also after the other ones?

**Mr SMELT:** Yes. The same three.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The 2025–26, the grants for industry development was \$10.47m. The expenditure to the 31 March 2026 was \$6.621m. For Budget 2026–27 it is \$9.349m. The grants for events ...

**Mr SMELT:** Sorry; I just talking globally, not for grants, just the breakdown of the \$103m across the three main categories.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I thought you asked for the grants.

**Mr SMELT:** No, we moved on from the grants. This is just the 42, 25 and 21 that add up to the 99. That was the 2025–26 revised. We are trying to get those same figures for 2026–27.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** In the 2026–27 budget, industry development is \$19.127m; destination marketing is \$33.596m; and events is \$52.664m.

**Mr SMELT:** There been a reduction in destination marketing and in the tourism industry and an increase in events for next financial year.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Part of what I was explaining before is that bringing them all together means we can use that money we have to do more things across all of those areas. They all interconnect in a great way to make the most of the money we have.

**Mr SMELT:** Have there been cuts to the screen grants?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** With Screen Territory there has been no change to the way in which those allocations happen. There will be an application process for grants in the future timeframe. We will go through that process.

**Mr SMELT:** Will the base level funding for the screen grants be unchanged in 2026–27?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That whole program remains the same.

**Mr SMELT:** It remains at \$7.378m, which it was for 2025–26.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That figure you quoted is for the total of marketing, not just for screen. Now it is all together.

**Mr SMELT:** Can you give me the screen grants for 2025–26 and 2026–27?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Going back to my earlier point, we do not break it down for screen grants in a total amount because screen sits across all of the different budget outputs, if you like. Tourism, events and screen is all under one now.

**Mr SMELT:** Can you give a breakdown just for the screen grants?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is a bucket or source of money. You access that money when it is needed for the different activities, including the grants.

**Mr SMELT:** From year to year the tourism grants could go up and screen grants could go down, depending on who applies and accesses from that central pool.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** You hit the nail on the head. It is about the application process for that.

**Mr SMELT:** Is there a budget specifically for aviation attraction within this budget?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The aviation portfolio sits within the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations and the question can be directed to the minister responsible.

**Mr SMELT:** Does none of it sit with you?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The aviation portfolio sits squarely in Trade, Business and Asian Relations.

**Mr SMELT:** I am asking about the funding. Does the funding sit with you?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** For clarity, the aviation portfolio definitely sits with a different area, so it can be directed to them, but I have been advised that the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations through their systems provides \$3m to the Department of Tourism and Hospitality to do cooperative marketing through the different channels that are available to us to help support the aviation industry.

**Mr SMELT:** In the budget papers it noted there was an \$11m increase from the 2025–26 budget to the revised from \$88m to \$99m, can you explain how much of that was attributed to the NT Major Events Corporation coming in; how much was to aviation attraction marketing; and how much was to department realignment? They were the three aspects in the notes of the budget papers. I am after the breakdown of the \$11m.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The \$3m is for the aviation support, the cooperative marketing, and the vast majority is for the merger of Tourism and NT Major Events.

**Mr SMELT:** Can I get breakdown between those final two categories?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The vast majority of all that funding is the merger NTMEC.

**Mr SMELT:** The budget has only increased by \$11m with the merging of NT Major Events. Given the budget was well above that in prior years, where did the rest of that funding go?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will hand over to Suzana Bishop, chief executive officer, because it is a myth and needs to be broken down. There have been a lot of moving parts in the Tourism and Events NT department with the merging of all the different areas but also NT Major Events.

**Ms BISHOP:** The merger of Tourism and Events NT started through the change of the Act and the movement of the staff in November, and the movement of the budget is still occurring. The Events budget—we are getting clarification—was in the vicinity of \$40m prior to coming into the department. If anything, that amount is increasing—we will give you the exact numbers—but the integration has not disadvantaged the amount of budget of Major Events; if anything, we are moving into a greater amount of budget, but we will not have clarity throughout this year because there are so many different parts moving.

Whilst the company is being de-registered and there is still a board in place there is an element of budget that needs to remain with the organisation to be able to close any accounts. We will be able to have more clarity of exactly what moved and how towards the end of this financial year.

**Mr SMELT:** With the \$40m by deduction, is there \$30m still sitting with that holding company, basically?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will hand over to Suzana Bishop to explain how that money works.

**Ms BISHOP:** Some of those line items have moved with staff and some of those activities, but not everything. It is not a straightforward number at the moment. Some of the procurement has moved to the department and some of the procurement that was initiated stayed. We will not have a reconciliation of exactly the amount until the end of the financial year. We know, for a fact, that there has been reduction on the budgets and the ability for the teams to continue to purchase for all the events that they are responsible for.

**Mr SMELT:** Is that funding reported somewhere else, or another output group?

**Ms BISHOP:** Major Events funding is reported through an annual report. You would find the annual report outside of this process up to the last financial year. Towards the end of this financial year, that would be a report of what remained with the Major Events company and the rest would be reflected in the department's annual report as well.

**Mr SMELT:** In terms of the operation model, one of the operations that came into the new organisation, Major Events as an entity still exists?

**Ms BISHOP:** It still exists. I think it started the process of deregistration last week.

**Mr SMELT:** How will you judge the success of the merger. What are your KPIs?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** You heard in my opening statement, that we have a Visitor Economy Strategy for 2032, which I launched earlier in the year in Alice Springs—it was fantastic at the Desert Park where those bilbies have just been born. Everything we do in tourism, hospitality, parks and wildlife and major events, are all based on the Visitor Economy Strategy. There is also the goal in there of that \$3bn economy and the increase in visitation. That will be the measure of success when we achieve those numbers.

**Mr SMELT:** What funding is in the 2026–27 budget for your seven action plans in the Visitor Economy Strategy?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Our Visitor Economy Strategy is the basis of everything that we do across the various portfolios. That now sits with one minister and the department is also under one with Suzana Bishop who heads up everything.

One of those big areas that is important and had been neglected for a long time as an amazing asset is our parks. In the budget, parks are receiving a \$10m increase, which is much needed because we need to them conserved which requires rangers doing that work. It also needs a tourism lens as well so that people can have access to visit parks.

Everything we do and every dollar we spend and use, that is a part of the budget, will be on the Visitor Economy Strategy and it is that goal of that \$3bn. I will hand over to Suzana Bishop to explain in more detail about how it all works.

**Ms BISHOP:** When we put together the Visitor Economy Strategy, we made sure to sit down and collaborate with all the different elements that enable benefits for the visitor economy and tourism. Whilst our department is heavily focused on destination marketing and support to increase a lot of the products through our industry development programs, there are elements such as infrastructure, road (inaudible) We have put a lot of work to align to KPIs that we can hyper-coordinate through this process.

We have specifically looked at objectives one and two of the Visitor Economy Strategy; objective one is about perception and it is very much in the element of destination marketing. The KPI and the big piece of work is the rebrand. Number two, being experience, is about all the great value propositions the Territory has to offer in aligning a lot of our grants and a lot of our programs to support development of adventure, Aboriginal culture, fishing, military tourism and a lot of those other elements through grants and industry development capability increase. We are measuring the delivery of those grants as ways to see that we are moving the needle.

We then have collaborations with other departments to make sure the priority roads for visitation are being assessed through the department of Infrastructure activities and planned. We are now part of their strategy.

We are also working hard around developing opportunities in parks. We are using the new funding that came to support the visitor economy through parks for the capital investment as well as operationally so that we have more rangers out making sure the facilities of parks—and we will use the framework of the visitor economy to ensure that we are looking at that.

Events is also a big part of the experience, so we have a specific line-up of strategic events throughout our calendar so that we can measure the visitation growth, which we often do, when events are on to continue to support the visitor economy.

**Mr SMELT:** Is there no specific funding against each of the seven plans?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** As you heard, the chief executive officer outlined everything that is being done is around the visitor economy strategy and the budget that funds that.

I will pass that specific question to Deputy Chief Executive Officer Valerie Smith to provide further detail.

**Ms SMITH:** There are some additional line items which have come into the budget which will assist and support the visitor economy strategy. The minister has already spoken about the \$10m additional for parks infrastructure which will come in over two years.

There is an additional \$5m going to support the ongoing operations of the Parks and Wildlife Commission NT. The vast majority of that will go towards ensuring that we have enough rangers out and about to support the great work in our parks and reserves across the Territory.

**Mr SMELT:** Is that new money, the \$5m?

**Ms SMITH:** That is an additional \$5m, new money ongoing, which is important to help support that phase of budget funding. We have an additional focus in the teams in opening up new visitor experiences and products across the Territory. That includes \$3m of funding for the NT Experiences Fund which helps support tourism operators to develop new or improved existing products.

We have an ongoing program with the Australian Government around the Strategic Indigenous Tourism Projects which will help to develop new Indigenous tourism experiences across the Territory.

We were also very fortunate in receiving some additional new money in the events space, so \$4.8m for some new major event acquisitions for the AFL, the NRL and international cricket, which will be played over this year.

**Mr SMELT:** Thank you for those updates. Would it be possible to take on notice the actual allocation to each of the seven plans?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I have been through how that all works. The chief executive officer has been through how it all works. The deputy chief executive officer has been through how that works, so you want me to get that all written down in a question on notice to come back to you?

**Mr SMELT:** We have heard about specific initiatives, but we have not heard what the dollar amount is for each of the seven plans.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Did you want us to go through those dollar amounts again that were just described?

**Mr SMELT:** They were specific initiatives. I can see how they align, but for each of the seven plans, can I have a breakdown?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nightcliff, the minister has advised that it is grouped together and it is not broken down into those seven plans.

**Mr SMELT:** That is what I am asking for, yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** She has already given that answer.

**Mr SMELT:** We have not had an answer to each of the seven plans, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you have something different to say?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Just for clarity it is five in the visitor economy strategy.

**Mr SMELT:** Does that include the Top End and Central Australia?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We can take that on notice, but I will preface it with: when the answer is collected, it may sound similar to what you are already hearing and what is in our budget papers because it is all together now. It is all one agency and portfolio working simultaneously together. I am just prefacing that it may sound familiar.

**Mr SMELT:** That is okay.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is all one agency and portfolio working simultaneously. Just to preface; it may sound familiar.

**Mr SMELT:** That is fine.

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**Question on Notice No 9.26**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nightcliff, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr SMELT:** Can you detail the specific budget allocated in 2026–27 to each of the seven action plans?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question for the five action plans?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes.

**Mr SMELT:** You do not count the Top End and Central Australia as separate plans?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Is that another question?

**Madam CHAIR:** I do not think so. The question has been allocated the number 9.26.

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**Mr SMELT:** Can you detail what the specific KPIs are for each of those plans for the 2028 key priorities?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will ask Valerie Smith, the deputy chief executive officer, to go over those for the committee. Then if there is anything further to add, we will have a look at what that might be.

**Ms SMITH:** The visitor economy strategy is an integrated plan. It outlines the framework of action across the department, as the minister has spoken about. We are quite integrated, and we do not have a siloed approach; one action that you take may well touch several parts of that plan.

The plan itself outlines a set of KPIs which will be achieved, and you will note—as you read the budget paper—that they are linked back to the KPIs in the budget paper. As we go through and monitor those on an ongoing basis—most of those are followed quarterly—you will be able to track progress against those KPIs. Overall achievement of that strategy will be based on when we achieve the KPI targets, which are outlined within it.

**Mr SMELT:** Sorry; are we talking about the KPIs within the budget papers or KPIs in the strategy?

**Ms SMITH:** The KPIs in the visitor economy strategy are also the tourism KPIs in the budget paper.

**Mr SMELT:** For each of those key priorities listed against the strategy—you know, if you have a key priority like, ‘identify and prioritise the audiences most likely to drive sustainable visitor growth’—there will not be a specific KPI that sits behind each of those key priorities.

**Ms SMITH:** Internally there are, and they are monitored at an internal department level. We know if we are achieving, but ultimately, we will need to achieve all of those subsets, and the progress will be achieved based on those aggregated ones at the bottom based on visitor targets and expenditure levels.

**Ms BISHOP:** Because it took us six months of consultation with not only industry but also other departments to enable tourism outcomes, we tap into several different strategies that have already outlined KPIs and outcomes. For example, the department of Infrastructure will have their own strategy that outlines the importance of tourism and the priority for roads that lead to visitation areas. It was an exercise of hyper-coordination; it is all documented. We did the consultation to understand where those strategies already exist, like the Aboriginal tourism cultural strategy is a strong strategy that already has KPIs. All of them feed into the visitor economy strategy, not so we would double up but would create better coordination.

We then fed back all those outcomes in how we structure that to the tourism industry, and we have also launched that material which is available through our website. It is quite detailed and will continue every year to outline what the KPIs have delivered and where we are in the journey of delivering those activities.

**Mr SMELT:** There are only four KPIs in the budget paper. Will this whole strategy be evaluated just on those four KPIs?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The whole strategy's measure of success is the \$3bn visitor economy strategy. That is important. I will ask Rachel Telford, Executive Director, Industry Development, who was part of that visitor economy strategy preparation, to add some contributions to this regarding how the KPI matches with the KPIs of the entire department.

**Ms TELFORD:** The visitor economy strategy has five objectives and two action plans. We have worked collaboratively across all departments as well as industry. When it comes to the two regional action plans, we are working with Tourism Central Australia and Tourism Top End, and the regional coords involved in those regions.

We have enshrined as much as possible other items of measures and KPIs which we are monitoring. By way of example, we worked closely with the TBAR, which has the aviation portfolio, on projection of how many aviation seats would be required in order to meet the demand objective of the \$3bn visitor economy. Regarding accommodation, we also have a supply-side estimate of how many accommodation rooms are required to meet the objective that we have set out. We are monitoring those sorts of things. We aim to publish annually how we are tracking against the progress.

We have enshrined in the budget papers—you asked about the time horizon of 2028 and the time horizon to 2032—we have looked at what the targets are to the different time horizons and then broken those down into the annual KPIs.

On 24 June, we will receive the latest tourism visitor statistics. That gives us the best opportunity to monitor how we are tracking and that information is published quarterly. At an internal level, I can assure you that, when we break it down into events, destination marketing and industry development, every part of our agency has actions and outcomes that we have been charged within the plan to ensure we are all accountable to that framework. It comes down to a performance basis as well for individuals within the organisation.

To give you an example from the destination marketing perspective—you asked about the specific audiences—we look at who the target audiences are. We set our own KPI in terms of the growth against the segments. We will be tracking that ourselves to make sure we get that return on investment for our marketing dollars.

It is quite a complex framework. We do not own all the outcome, but we are working as much as we can, particularly on the first two objectives where we own the majority of the actions, to achieve the KPIs and then working in partnership with other parts of government and industry across the others.

**Mr SMELT:** Can you share the KPIs that are directly relevant to the strategy? You mentioned there are some internal KPIs that are directly linked to the strategy.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We have some detail regarding the KPIs which we can read out. I will hand over to Suzana Bishop, Chief Executive Officer.

**Ms BISHOP:** There is published material that will outline those KPIs, but when we look at perception, for instance, the first one it is a strong distinctive Territory brand that increases preference and drives demand in priority markets; compelling storytelling that inspires people to visit and turns interest into bookings; events that grow high-value year-round visitation, Territory profile, encourage visitors to explore more of the Territory. Those will then be broken down, let us say, in events. All those events will have KPIs for visitation, net promoter score, the type of events, the compelling storytelling—they will break down into the types of campaigns and activities to reach market growth. The distinctive brand breaks out into the new strategy, the rebrand that we are doing, and that is just on the first one.

The second one in experience is a broader and more diverse range of experiences, creating connected itineraries that encourage visitors to stay longer; Aboriginal tourism thrives, led by traditional owners and majority Aboriginal-owned businesses, offering deeper cultural experiences for visitors; the strong visitor satisfaction with consistently high rating across tours, events, accommodation, attractions, business events and hospitality. That would then be broken down into the different programs and activities. The NT Experience Fund is one of the programs that co-contributes investment into those areas that we want to grow in the NT. The Aboriginal tourism program has a series of sub-programs that support upskilling, development of business plans, education, a new product in tourism into the market.

We also have industry development programs which are business development and support tourism products on their journey of becoming export ready. We then continue into people and workforce where it is a skilled and stabled tourism workforce with more people working in the sector, fewer vacancies and stronger year-round employment; industry capability grows with more business participation; training, upskilling, digital programs to improve service quality operations; and Aboriginal participation increases with more Aboriginal employers, trainees, Aboriginal-owned tourism businesses. Those again would be broken down into the programs that exist within the department. Some would be in the Aboriginal tourism program, some would be in the business development program in industry development but also collaboration with other workforce agencies and activities.

We have already this year had a series of workshops to coordinate outcomes and include the KPIs into the wider program. Infrastructure and investment—tourism infrastructure supports year-round visitation, it strengthens regional capacity and improves event readiness; visitors and residents enjoy better experiences with higher satisfaction driven by quality, accessibility and amenity; private investment growth supported by co-investment that expends accommodation (inaudible). Those not only will go back to a lot of the activities and programs in industry development, but also in activities that we do, for example, with the trade investment department, NT Investment Summit, a lot of the work that we do to bring investment to the Territory, new hotels, new walking companies and activities.

For access and connectivity, success looks like air access grows with stable year-round service connecting the Territory to key markets and destinations; improved direct route support stimulus; touring with safer and more reliable travel across the Territory; stronger digital connectivity allows visitors and businesses to stay connected across the Territory. This connects to work in partnership with the department of corporate services where they are putting different connectivity in areas of tourism visitation.

Also, there is the work that we do with the department of Trade and aviation, selection of the different routes, investment into campaigns. We provide discount in aviation to support not only the shoulder periods but also the higher visitation periods.

**Mr SMELT:** Great, thank you. One final ...

**Madam CHAIR:** I just wanted to remind people that we have five minutes left of this session.

**Mr SMELT:** Yes, one last question?

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, use your time wisely.

**Mr SMELT:** Can you guarantee there will be AFL football played in Darwin and Alice Springs next year?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** In the Territory we love our AFL.

**Mr SMELT:** We do.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We really do. I can let you know that there has been \$9m allocated in the budget for AFL games, which is amazing. Of course, we had recently come off the back of the games with the Suns in Darwin. That was phenomenal. We know that it is not just about the hype of having AFL in the Northern Territory; it brings people together. The Suns got out and spent time with all of our schools and were in the community doing sign-ons and training sessions. It is fantastic that they embraced the Territory in the way they have.

I was at both of those games, and I thank AFL NT for the work they have done. They are pretty good at lobbying the Northern Territory Government. They do a good job and we have a strong working relationship with them and I look forward to continuing those conversations.

**Mr SMELT:** We are particularly interested in guaranteeing if there is going to be AFL Football next year.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes, well with the \$9m over the next three years; that is the cost of the games. Therefore, those negotiations with AFL—that is the national body, not the local body, where those discussions occur. We are going through that process. We do not negotiate with the teams themselves and once the contract has finished, then it becomes a negotiation with AFL as to the teams they want to put forward to the Northern Territory Government—those that want to play in the Northern Territory.

It is great for Territorians who are local players and starred front and centre when they have played here in the Northern Territory. Staff like Ben Long, Daniel Rioli and Joel Jeffrey—watching them play in front of all their friends and family is pretty special. AFL to us is very special. We will not have Melbourne Demons back in Alice Springs, they played their last game. We are really grateful for the work the Demons did in Alice Springs. That was a contract that has ended and that has been coming for the whole time.

We are negotiating with AFL that we will have games in Alice Springs and games in Darwin because it is important we give Territorians our beautiful and unique lifestyle. Sport is a really strong part of that. You only have to look at the participation rates of not only local footy that we have here and local sports like cricket—I think the Southern Districts Cricket Club is an example of sport in the Territory. They are like the fastest growing cricket club that we have in the nation, which is incredible. It is huge.

I do not want to forget about our women as well, because we also have AFLW that comes to Darwin.

**Mr SMELT:** Will they be part of that deal?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes. That game will be coming up as well, which is really exciting. It will be coming to Darwin in August. It is really great to have the girls and women that play Aussie rules in the Territory—that has absolutely exploded over the last couple of years. Our own Member for Fannie Bay, the Chair Laurie Zio, I do not think you will mind me saying that you played in the AFLs Masters. That is incredible to do that. It goes to the point of how much Territorians love their AFL. The girls and women are coming up through the ranks, I go out to the clubs locally myself looking at all the juniors running around and there are a lot of girls playing a lot of sport which I think is amazing. They have AFLW. To be part of that whole arrangement is fantastic.

Like I said, we are committed to showing those sporting events are happening and that AFL is happening. Getting the women AFLW on board as well is really great.

**Madam CHAIR:** We have hit three o'clock. I thank the Department of Tourism and Hospitality for being here today.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister for appearing and the agency officers who have provided information today.

Minister, would you like to thank your staff?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Thank you to my entire Departments of Tourism and Hospitality, Parks and Wildlife—which we did not get to them—and Major Events. Licensing is also here, although we did not get to them. I am sorry, Member for Blain; you will have to look at those questions another time. I have an incredible department, and they do amazing work. I am grateful because a lot of really cool things happen in the Northern Territory to restore our beautiful lifestyle. I get to be a part of that with this amazing team which are not only here with us but also in their offices and out and about, grinding it out all the time. Thank you so much.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thanks to the Public Sector Governance Program for coming to listen to our exciting Estimates.

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The committee suspended.

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## **SPEAKER'S PORTFOLIO**

### **DEPARTMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**Mr CHAIR:** The committee will now consider outputs relating to the Department of the Legislative Assembly. Welcome, Madam Speaker. It is great to see you here.

I note that while the Administrative Arrangements Order puts responsibility for the Department of the Legislative Assembly with the Chief Minister, by convention the Speaker administers the department and will answer questions relating to the department.

Madam Speaker, I welcome you and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you today.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Accompanying me today is the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Russell Keith, and the Chief Financial Officer, Diem Tang.

**Mr CHAIR:** I invite you to make a brief opening statement of no more than 20 minutes. I will then 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.

I will invite the shadow minister to ask their questions first followed by committee members. Finally, other participating members may ask questions.

The committee has agreed that other members may join in on a line of questioning pursued by a shadow minister rather than waiting for the end of the shadow's questioning on an Output.

Madam Speaker, would you like to make an opening statement of no more than 20 minutes. I will give you a five-minute warning at the 15-minute mark with the bell.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The Department of the Legislative Assembly enables the effective and efficient functioning of the Northern Territory parliament. We provide operational support and professional advice to the 25 members of the Assembly. We facilitate meetings of the parliament and support its committees to deliver public inquiries as we have today.

We help Territorians wherever they live to access their representative and their parliament and manage and maintain the parliament building in line with its status as the Territory's seat of government. Like for most government agencies, when we are doing our job well, the Department of Legislative Assembly goes unnoticed.

On the odd occasion when something does not go well, the lights go out, the microphones do not work, the clock stops, the machinery of the Legislative Assembly kicks into action and operations are restored. What the Department of Legislative Assembly does best is look after the needs of the 25 members of the Assembly so we can do our jobs to the best of our ability.

In terms of risk, we have identified two current risks that has the potential to interrupt sittings, one being air conditioning and two being the state of the lifts. Parliament House was built with four air conditioning chillers; it requires two chillers to effectively cool the building. For many years now it has only had three chillers and for most of the last year, one of those has been out of operation so there has been no redundancy. Days where it has got warmer than usual are when one of the last two have problems.

Other key elements of the air conditioning are the cooling towers; the air handling infrastructure and the water pipes connected to them. The cooling towers on the roof need replacing and the water pipes are worn to the point of occasionally leaking which caused the flooding of two ministerial units a few years ago. The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure has done significant work planning how to fix these problems with minimum cost and disruption and we are renewing conversations with those who will be affected and the best way ahead. There will, nevertheless, be considerable costs and disruption as this planning is implemented.

Concerning the lifts, Parliament House lifts break down quite frequently over the last couple of years with prompt repairs and good fortune saving us from significant disruption. The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure has a project to tender to replace or renew the lifts as we speak.

Regarding parliamentary committees, the Department of Legislative Assembly provides critical secretarial services for these committees like this very committee, the budget Estimates committee hearings. This parliamentary term has seen a high demand for committee support, with several substantial inquiries undertaken such as voluntary assisted dying, the ship lift inquiry, Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum, the Acacia inquiry as well as 16 Bill referrals completed during the reporting period.

This surge in demand has been managed through returning staffing levels to that in the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly, using expert consultants where required and through the commitment of committee office staff.

The department's community engagement work was recently enhanced with a memorandum of understanding with Y NT for the delivery of Youth Parliament. Youth Parliament has been held at Parliament House for several years now. This MOU will provide a more effective framework for the department to support Y NT in delivering Youth Parliament. The next Youth Parliament will be held this year in September.

As members will remember, the State Library moved out of Parliament House in early 2025. The Department of the Legislative Assembly has continued developing the former library space for events and other community-focused parliamentary purposes. The Atrium—which we now call that space—is proving to be our most popular event space, and the project is progressing to create an adjacent area for parliamentary education programs. Hiring out space in Parliament House for appropriate events and functions draws people to parliament and is a source of income.

Next week, we are hosting the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Members Residential Academy. This is being organised out of the UK with 30 members from 15 countries across the Commonwealth coming here to Parliament House for a week's professional development. This is a fantastic opportunity to keep the Territory on the world stage and for us to learn from our colleagues across the Commonwealth.

The Northern Territory is the smallest parliament in Australia. The Northern Territory Department of the Legislative Assembly works very hard to ensure excellence in our Assembly and to make our Parliament House a powerful and attractive symbol of democracy for the world to see.

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight some of the work of the DLA, and I welcome your questions.

**Mr CHAIR:** Are there any questions relating to the statement?

**Mr BROWN:** Can you outline costs associated with the Administrator's swearing-in ceremony covered by the DLA?

**Madam SPEAKER:** I will refer that to the Clerk.

**Mr KEITH:** That would be nil because most of that is organised through Protocol. It happened at Parliament House. We have staffing costs, but I cannot think of anything that falls under the DLA. That is all managed by the Chief Minister's department.

**Mr BROWN:** Were costs for additional security from somewhere different?

**Ms TANG:** Any costs for security for such an event organised by Protocol within the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, we pay the bill but we on-charge. We recover that amount from the department of the Chief Minister.

**Mr SMELT:** To clarify, the DLA pays additional costs to CM&C for that event. Presumably there were extra staff rostered on or staff had to do overtime or something of that nature.

**Ms TANG:** In general, for events such as the function organised by Protocol, we pay the bill for costs such as security which is additional to our usual activity. We recover that amount from the relevant department. In terms of staffing costs, it is part of the Assembly's functions, so we just rotate and support one another.

**Mr KEITH:** I cannot think of any overtime. It would happen during business days and hours. We can double-check, but I cannot think of any overtime that would have been involved with that.

**Mr SMELT:** Can you share, Madam Speaker, what the quantum of that Bill was for the extra security that was charged to CMC?

**Madam SPEAKER:** We will take that on notice, Member for Nightcliff.

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#### Question on Notice No 10.1

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

**Mr SMELT:** Can you outline the additional security costs charged to the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet for the occasion of the swearing-in of the Administrator?

**Mr CHAIR:** Madam Speaker, do you accept the question?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Yes.

**Mr CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 10.1.

**Mr BROWN:** What other costs were associated with this swearing-in? Is that final or are you guys ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** You are talking about additional costs?

**Mr BROWN:** Yes, additional costs.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I think we have answered that. There were none to the DLA apart from what we have already explained.

**Mr BROWN:** Can you advise whether there is a formal policy or guidelines in relation to the use of Parliament House front lawns?

**Madam SPEAKER:** You are talking about where the Chan Building was?

**Mr BROWN:** Yes, the front lawn in front of ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** I will refer that to Mr Keith, the Clerk.

**Mr KEITH:** The lawns out there are no longer under control of the department, nor within the precinct. We do not have rules or policies for that; it is not under our control.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That is the waterfront? Is that correct? We had probably best not to go there in fear of getting it wrong. It is another government agency that has responsibility for that piece of land you are referring to out the front.

**Mr BROWN:** What is the process of requesting to use that? Is that through DLA?

**Madam SPEAKER:** No, it is not. It is not a part of the Parliament House precinct.

**Mr BROWN:** Madam Speaker, you rejected a request for a rally outside of Parliament House to coincide with the swearing-in ceremony of the new Administrator. Can you confirm if concerns were raised by the Governor-General or the Governor-General's Office in relation to this rally?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The Governor-General of Australia had nothing to do with the request that came to me, nor was she consulted because there was no reason to consult her regarding that request.

**Mr BROWN:** Was there other advice given to you in regard to declining that rally?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The advice that was given to me was provided by the Clerk at the time. This swearing-in ceremony for the Administrator was the first time I had been involved in organising this specific event. Prior swearing-in ceremonies had involved the front forecourt being partitioned off for the ceremony to take place. That was used fully for the swearing-in ceremony. There were soldiers marching and various official parts of the ceremony that took place directly out the front of Parliament House.

The fact that we did not allow the public on that space was consistent with previous swearing-in ceremonies for Administrators. It was not anything new; it was just part of the need for that ceremony.

**Mr BROWN:** A decision for that was based on historic events and just between the Clerk and other members?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The whole ceremony involved a lot of people. Maybe the Clerk is better to describe the extent of who was involved and how that decision was derived. Ultimately, it was my decision because I have control of the whole Parliament House precinct. I was advised clearly that the forecourt was required to be a part of the official ceremony and, therefore, the public could not access that.

**Mr KEITH:** For the opening ceremony there was the parading on the forecourt and the Liberty Square area was being used for those parading through to the staging area. Those areas were being used, so it was not possible to have demonstrations there. The policy administered by the department, set by the Speaker, is generally you do not say no to protest; it is just when it is not possible to do things. For the opening of parliament when there are things out the front and for the swearing-in of the Administrator where there is the marching out the front, having protesting in that area is incompatible with that.

To facilitate demonstration, we had discussions with police and other agencies about where people can safely demonstrate and things still occur. We are always trying to both have parliament safe and secure and to maximise public participation within the parliamentary process. The area for that was identified as being in Bennett Park, and that was communicated by the Speaker to the media. This was not because that was within the control of Parliament House, but just to coordinate so that people understood where it was safe to protest so that both the swearing-in and protest could happen with minimum disruption and maximum safety.

**Mr BROWN:** The Chief Minister's department, the Northern Territory Police or the Administrator's office did not have a say in rejecting the rally.

**Mr KEITH:** A rally was not rejected. The forecourt was unavailable, and that was a decision of the Speaker under the advice of myself, because that was going on. There was liaison with police and the Chief Minister's department on how to communicate where people could safely demonstrate without interrupting proceedings.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The police were involved in that decision beyond Parliament House. They expressed to the Clerk a preference of where people should and should not go in terms of providing security for the dignitaries who were attending.

I actually stepped beyond my realm of responsibility by suggesting that the protest take place in the park, but I thought they cannot protest on the forecourt. The police did not want them protesting across the road in the park. It just made sense to direct people who wanted to protest to the park.

That is the first time I have ever rejected a request for a protest outside Parliament House. It did not sit well with me that I had to do that, but given the circumstances that was necessary.

**Mrs CARLSON:** I need to reconfirm that one of your responsibilities is the safety and security of those entering Parliament House, which is obviously members, staff and their guests. Can I confirm that the boundary is now the forecourt and that the Chan Lawns has been separated from your responsibilities?

**Madam SPEAKER:** I am not sure when it was actually separated. I am not sure that it was ever a part of the Parliament House precinct.

**Mr KEITH:** It was.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That was not during my time. That is correct, Member for Wanguri; at some point before I came along that piece of land was given to another government agency to manage.

**Mr KERLE:** Can you advise how many events were hosted by the Opposition Leader's office and what was the total cost in the reporting period? I am happy to take that on notice if you need to.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I am not sure that comes under the DLA—Mr Clerk?

**Mr KEITH:** What was the question?

**Mr KERLE:** We had a line of questioning around the swearing in ceremony and events at Parliament House. How many events were in the area of Parliament House that DLA administer were hosted by the Opposition Leader's office, and what was the total cost passed on to another agency?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The opposition has an independent budget that we do not preside over. The Department of the Legislative Assembly has nothing to do with the opposition's budget and how they manage that. As to how many functions they held in Parliament House during the reporting period, I do not think we can answer that. That is like a question—how many functions has the government held here. That is information that we do not keep, and there is a certain amount of confidentiality about that, which is up to the government or the opposition to share.

**Mr CHAIR:** We will move on from that question.

**J DAVIS:** The DLA is responsible for any kind of whole-of-government events and paying for them—is that right? If there are events that are run by the opposition or run by the government—no, incorrect.

**Madam SPEAKER:** There are lots of different arrangements.

**J DAVIS:** What are taxpayers paying for via the DLA for events in Parliament House?

**Mr KEITH:** There are a number of function rooms in Parliament House, and the department does not charge for the use of government or members to use those rooms, whether it be government, opposition, Independents, they can book rooms and use them and not charged for that. If there are additional costs like security costs, we will pay that and on charge the users. When it comes to the catering that gets done through the Parliament House caterer, but that is a transaction between the user and the caterer, so the department is not directly involved in that.

**Mr BROWN:** What was the cost to the Legislative Assembly of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee into voluntary assisted dying, including consultancy fees, staff and travel costs?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The total cost was \$175,000, being \$57,000 for members' travel to remote communities; \$41,000 for committee staff travel to remote communities; \$42,000 for consultants; \$15,000 for Hansard services; \$13,000 for interpreter services; \$5,000 for mental health services; and \$2,000 for catering.

**Mr BROWN:** Earlier this year you told the media that you have no jurisdiction to investigate an MLA, only to ensure parliamentary staff are protected. Have you had to put in place any additional measures to enhance protection for parliamentary staff against bullying in the workplace?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The conduct of members is laid out in the *Legislative Assembly (Members' Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards) Act 2008*. The enforcement of this code is through the Assembly, which says:

*The Assembly may refer an alleged breach of the Code to the Privileges Committee to inquire into and report on the alleged breach.*

*If the Privileges Committee finds a breach established, the Assembly may punish the breach as a contempt.*

In terms of the Speaker's role in addressing the conduct and ethical standards of members, I do not have a formal role at all. It is the Assembly that is supposed to deal with that. I do not have a formal role, but, as the Speaker, I take an interest in making sure that all members are treated fairly and that complaints about members are addressed in a way which is fair and transparent. In terms of my formal responsibility, I do not have one which is very interesting.

**J DAVIS:** Regarding committee inquiry costs more broadly, following on from the VAD inquiry, first of all, I want to say a huge thank you to all the committee staff for the amount of work that I have witnessed them doing over the last two years, and in relation to Estimates it is wonderful. On everyone's behalf, thank you so much.

You gave an outline in your opening statement about the costs of the committee. I am interested in what the FT is of the committee staff and what the budget and breakdown are—you mentioned consultants as well—over the reporting period. I am specifically interested in overtime costs for committee staff for both inquiries and for Estimates.

**Madam SPEAKER:** During the reporting period the committee office was funded for six positions: two SAO1 positions; two AO7 positions; one AO4 position; and one AO2 position. I think I will refer the issue of overtime to the Clerk. Was the first part of the question, how much was spent on overtime?

**J DAVIS:** Yes. I am also interested in other parts of the budget, like consultant costs for committee work.

**Mr KEITH:** On overtime, I will check if Diem has the precise figure, but it will be fairly small because the surge work for committees tends to be the senior research officer and SAO1, which are not generally entitled to overtime. For the senior officers we employ flex time within the committee office to do the best to manage the peaks and troughs of committee work. There have not been a lot of troughs in the last 12 months, but they do come. Part of the professionalism of having a senior job is you manage those surges. We do what we can to give people time off in lieu. The time off in lieu does not make up the time that is spent on managing the surge, as happens in many senior positions.

**J DAVIS:** Is there any record of the amount of not paid overtime but the extra hours that have been spent?

**Mr KEITH:** I do not have that to hand. Individual officers on flex time will have time sheets. We could go through time sheets to actually get hours, but I do not have to hand accurate figures.

**J DAVIS:** I certainly do not want to give anyone any more work to do that.

**Mr KEITH:** As you know, there are times when they do not get weekends because when a report needs to be written, it needs to happen. The whole of Parliament House would not work without dedication of staff to make things happen. We do what we can to make sure people are remunerated, thanked and accommodated. I am grateful for the work they do.

**J DAVIS:** As are we all, I am sure. Is there no kind of quantification regarding the amount of unpaid work that committee staff are doing to support our work?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Unpaid work? No.

**J DAVIS:** That is not quite the right expression. Work in addition to—I cannot quite find the right words. Leave that with me. I have another question. What was the cost for recalling parliament in April for one day, noting that this is outside the reporting period? I have a question regarding this because ...

**Mr CHAIR:** If it is outside the reporting period, no-one is obliged to answer that.

**J DAVIS:** In which estimates do we ask about the period between April and June? I cannot ask it this year and I could not ask it last year. I am only allowed to ask it up until March for this year.

**Mr CHAIR:** Estimates is limited to the reporting period. That is all I can give you. If it is outside the reporting period, there is no requirement to talk about it. We need to keep focused on other questions.

**J DAVIS:** Maybe I can ask the Clerk for advice on whether there is someone I can ask that question. It has come up for me several times in estimates. There appears to be this three-month period every year about which we cannot ask estimates questions.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That is news to me. I have always found estimates to be a bit more fluid than that. I was not aware of that. Mr Keith, are you happy to provide a response?

**Mr CHAIR:** I will leave it up to you, Madam Speaker, whether you respond.

**Mr KEITH:** Formally, the cost on our books would not be great because a lot of the cost is on the staff we have here. The bulk of the cost would be member travel. We would be able to tabulate the cost of that. I am not sure how late that went but there would be some cost. It would be the cost to the members' travel.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That would be one additional night's accommodation. It would not affect the flights or travel that much. In the scheme of things, not a huge amount.

**Mr BROWN:** Still on the investigation of the allegations and your answer earlier regarding your role, was there a process for how to deal with it in the interests of protecting staff? Is there a process for how we deal with it or has the Chief Minister briefed you on how she dealt with it?

**Madam SPEAKER:** When you say how we dealt with it, which part? Which aspect?

**Mr BROWN:** Regarding the whole investigation. What was the outcome of that period when two staff members left?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The issue was resolved. One of your members was a part of the committee in which you are referring to and where the incidents occurred. He was a part of that resolution process. I will not go into any details regarding exactly what the resolution was. I made the decision to assist in reaching a resolution in my role as Speaker. I did not have to; I felt that the situation was peculiar in that it involved allegations made against a member of parliament who was sitting on a committee, of which he was one of five people on the committee.

Through a process that I facilitated, a resolution was reached. The Chief Minister was not involved in that process. I cannot speak on behalf of her.

I see my role as being literally the mother of the House. When the kids are misbehaving the mother steps in and provides a bit of guidance and makes a decision about how things can be resolved. That is how I saw my role.

**Mr CHAIR:** A follow-up question from the Member for Nightcliff.

**Mr SMELT:** Two questions. Speaker, does Parliament House have a policy requiring organised groups to disclose whether attendees are subject to parole, electronic monitoring, community-based orders or other justice arrangements?

**Mr CHAIR:** Sorry, Member for Nightcliff, is this a follow-up on the question of the Member for Arafura?

**Mr SMELT:** Not that one specifically, no.

**Mr CHAIR:** I give committee members first, then the crossbench on the committee and then the other members. That is the process.

**Mr BROWN:** I am done with my line of questioning in this section.

**Mr CHAIR:** Member for Johnston, any questions on the opening statement?

**J DAVIS:** Do you have the daily cost of running parliament? Is that something ...

**Mr CHAIR:** During sittings or just ...

**J DAVIS:** During sittings.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Mr Keith, do we?

**Mr KEITH:** This is something that has come up before. A cost has never been given because it is, to an extent, an academic exercise of how much you include. You have to specify the question a lot to get hard figures. There is the additional cost of late sittings which varies according to how late the sittings are. I do not have that to hand.

It is a little tricky to give a clear cost because what do you include—the depreciation on Parliament House, the staffing costs, the members' travel? There are lots of different elements.

**J DAVIS:** I could be more specific if that is helpful. What I would like to include is the aggregated cost of members' salary for the time we are there; the cost of any DLA staff in the building; and if it is possible to have the cost of actually running the building during the time we are there.

This might be a tricky job for the CFO, I do not know. Not the depreciation costs of the building et cetera, but the actual costs of running parliament sittings for a day—personnel, any person who is involved—us, you, security et cetera and any infrastructure we are paying for on that day.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It gets a bit murky when you add travel into that for one day.

**J DAVIS:** I am thinking more broadly, not just for one day, just in general having some kind of aggregation of the cost.

**Mrs CARLSON:** Is that more of a hypothetical because sometimes it is different from day ...

**J DAVIS:** I am happy to take a baseline. I can give you, rather than a hypothetical, how much did it cost for running parliament on a particular day ...

**Mrs CARLSON:** Some days we finish late, some days we finish early ...

**Mr CHAIR:** Okay, through the Chair, one at a time please. Is there a specific question you want to pose?

**J DAVIS:** Yes, how much it cost to run parliament for a day?

**Mr KEITH:** This is a question that has come up a few times before. It is always difficult to answer, other than adding up the total cost of the budget and dividing it by the number of sitting days because for a sitting day,

if it is a single day, you have members' travel for one day. If it is for two weeks, the travel is spread across a number of things. When it comes to the building there is the electricity and the water and the different elements, and exactly what you put in or what you put out it becomes a bit academic. There is \$40m roughly budget for next year for everything to do with Parliament House and 30 sitting days a year, but then do you include Estimates as sittings days?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Then it becomes less meaningful. The budget for 2026–27 for the DLA is \$41m. Divide it by 365 days times 11 weeks, would that be ...

**J DAVIS:** People ask me this question, which is why I am asking. How much are we paying for every hour that people sit in parliament? What does an hour of parliament sitting cost? I know that is a granular question and will be difficult to answer.

**Mrs CARLSON:** There are too many variables to answer that kind of question, because some sitting days we might finish at 1.30 in the morning and on some sitting days we finish at ...

**J DAVIS:** Through the Chair, perhaps I could give you ...

**Mr CHAIR:** I appreciate the question. I think we have been given a sense that it is complicated. I want us to move on because there are other questions people want to ask. I am conscious of the time, with only less than 20 minutes to go, so I will give other people the chance to ask questions.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Mr Chair, what we could do is provide you a very crude figure of \$41m divided by 365 days times 11 weeks, or the number of parliamentary days and then down to hours.

**J DAVIS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker; that would be great.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Someone could sit there for five minutes and do that fairly quickly, but it will not be particularly meaningful, I do not think, but if that is what you want, we can take that on notice.

**Mr CHAIR:** On that basis, Member for Johnston, please restate the question along those lines. Do you want to put it on notice?

**J DAVIS:** Do you want me to put it on notice? The question I put on notice is a rough figure, which is what you are proposing you could offer ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** I am getting some feedback from Mr Keith and Ms Tang that it is not probably a great piece of information to come up with how I suggested. Can we have a think about this ...

**J DAVIS:** Sure, I am happy to move on, given the time.

**Madam SPEAKER:** ... and then at some point down the track we will get back to you with how we can best calculate.

**Mr CHAIR:** That can be taken offline and dealt with elsewhere.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Yes, and I undertake to do that, Member for Johnston.

**Mr KERLE:** This building has a lot of heritage. It was built in the 1990s, and it is starting to show its age a bit. Can you advise what the total cost of maintenance to Parliament House was in the reporting period?

**Madam SPEAKER:** I have an answer to a question. Should I provide that now?

**Mr CHAIR:** Yes.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 10.1**

**Madam SPEAKER:** The question asked was about the extra security attached to the swearing-in ceremony for the Administrator earlier this year. The amount is \$1,021.86, excluding GST, and that was passed on to the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet.

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**Mr KEITH:** We have a repairs and maintenance budget which, off the top of my head, is about \$2.2m for the year, and most years we spend most of that. We have a minor works budget part of which is used to—we like to put things on repairs and maintenance because we have money for that, but if the accountants think that you are not just fixing something, you are making it better, they will say, 'No, that is not repairs and maintenance; it is minor new works'. There are things like the lift which is a major project; that is a major work. We have \$2.2m repairs and maintenance budget, but we are spending more than that for maintaining the building because it falls into other categories as well.

**Mr KERLE:** Do you want to take that on notice? What do you prefer, reporting period or financial year? You say it is the financial year in the \$2.2m figure?

**Mr KEITH:** The answer that I gave is we have a \$2.2m budget—I do not have the figure here before me, but I think we spent \$1.8m of that in this financial year. However, that is repairs and maintenance budget; that is not everything we spend on maintaining the building.

**Mr KERLE:** That is all right. I am happy. I have other questions but I am sensitive of time. This should be a simple one, hopefully. How many school tours visit Parliament House. You could either do that reporting period or financial year, whichever is easier.

**Madam SPEAKER:** We have that information.

**Mr KEITH:** There have been 69 school tours with 1,386 students. We have a Step Up, Be Heard program. We had four classes with 90 students come through. This is in Parliament House. I had Assembly seminars. They include a tour. We have done four of those in Parliament House in the last year totalling about 140 people. We have done a condensed Know Your Assembly seminars, Discover Parliament NT—we have done one of those with 30 participants.

We had 12 adult education tours—First Circles group, Youth Works, U3A, Nungalinga College, Mates4Mates and a few others. There are general tours for guests of the Speaker and members. Community groups have done 16 of those. We do public tours every Friday between April and October and had 15 of those with 318 people. We have self-guided tour booklets and 1,700 of those have been taken.

**Mr CHAIR:** I am trying to give everyone questions on the opening statement. I will go to the Member for Wanguri and then I will go to the Member for Gwoja as well.

**Mrs CARLSON:** I have a couple of quick ones. Back on to the maintenance. I understand the lighting in the building is replaced regularly, obviously with its age. Are you able to provide the total number of light replacements in the building during the reporting period?

**Mr KEITH:** I do not have the number of lights. I do not know if we would have that. The way the lights are managed, there is one person in the building team will go out and replace the light if something needs to be fixed urgently. Then we have a contractor come in every Friday to replace the flickering lights around the building. If there is a more complicated light that needs to be fixed in a hurry, that is urgent minor work. That is three categories of ways light bulbs are fixed. We do not aggregate that under light bulbs.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is a good question, though; how many light bulbs.

**Mrs CARLSON:** On lights again. When Parliament House is lit up outside to mark special occasions or events, is there a cost breakdown of how much the costs are for the reporting period and how is that procured?

**Madam SPEAKER:** This is an interesting question. The lighting up of Parliament House is done by a private contractor, separate to government. Requests come through the ministers' offices. Only ministers can direct the DLA to light up Parliament House. We have done a lot of work on this policy. The cost of lighting up Parliament House is then put on the agency that the minister represents.

It is a cost to the agency, the portfolio. For example, for the Minister for Police, the cost of lighting up Parliament House goes to the Police portfolio.

**Mrs CARLSON:** Is it similar to what you previously answered; is the cost borne by you guys and then you...

**Madam SPEAKER:** No. It is billed to the agency.

**Mrs CARLSON:** Billed directly—excellent.

**Mr PAECH:** Madam Speaker, you are team Central Australia; I am team Central Australia. Have we done costings on what it would cost to have regional sittings in Central Australia?

**Madam SPEAKER:** A lot of money.

**Mr PAECH:** A lot of money?

**Madam SPEAKER:** You know this. It is a lot of money, and it has been prohibitively expensive for many years. The last one was in 2011; it is now 2026. That is 15 years that we have not had a Sittings in Alice Springs. I have not revisited this because I know how expensive it is. Do we have a recent costing for that, Mr Clerk?

**Mr KEITH:** As you were saying, the last time was 2011. It cost a lot back then, and we have not looked at it again recently. It is not a cheap exercise.

**Madam SPEAKER:** But, you know, Member for Gwoja, some of the expenses attached to having a sittings—a parliamentary sittings in Alice Springs—could be less now than what it was 15 years ago because of technology. That is something we should look at, without any promises on following through, because it cost many millions of dollars, even back when I was part of the former CLP government.

**Mr PAECH:** The only reason I ask is if we have had significant technical advantages and innovation with Hansard and the ability to do things—if that could be revisited, would that be a matter for the Speaker or would I write to the Chief Minister given that they set the agenda.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I think you should write to the Chief Minister.

**Mr CHAIR:** If you bear with me, I would like to actually ask a question myself.

**Madam SPEAKER:** We will bear with you.

**Mr CHAIR:** As the Member for Karama. I am aware that the department is doing upgrades of various security, various electorate offices and so on, including my own. Can you give us an update on what that strategy is, what the progress is and when those upgrades that I know of—including my office—will be completed?

**Mr KEITH:** As you have said, there is a strategy. Last year we went and visited all of the electorate offices to do an assessment of priority areas to fix those offices. Your office, Daly and Goyder have been identified for some upgrades. The decision was made to put those three offices out to tender simultaneously, and they are out to tender right at this moment. We are hoping—well more than hoping; we are expecting that to be running out in the coming months. I am not quite sure if the tenders are closed, but soon it will be assessed and then done.

**Mr CHAIR:** As part of that strategy, are we trying to get all offices up to a common level of security at some stage? What is the timeframe for getting them all up there?

**Mr KEITH:** Yes, we are. We do not have a timeframe. We are prioritising, and the high-priority offices have been identified. We are looking at what the next tier will be when those three and the one relocation—we were given major works funding a couple of years ago and we are working through the priority offices. Four will be finalised in the next few months and then we will work on the next round.

We will apply most of the security funding to improving CCTV at electorate offices to improve security there, including a back to base facility so that it can be monitored from Parliament House so that when alarms go off in the middle of the night or a duress alarm goes off, we can have an awareness of what is happening there.

**Mr SMELT:** Does Parliament House have a policy requiring organised groups to disclose whether attendees are subject to parole, electronic monitoring, community-based orders or other justice arrangements?

**Madam SPEAKER:** No.

**Mr KEITH:** There is the Speaker's determination saying:

7.1 *Persons serving a custodial prison term are ineligible to work in the parliamentary precinct. 'Work' means to be engaged in voluntary or paid employment of any kind.*

7.2 *A serving prisoner may only enter the precinct with the prior approval of the Speaker if the Speaker is satisfied that the prisoner(s) are subject to appropriate control and the security of the parliamentary precinct is not compromised.*

That is the standing determination that we do not require certification from people when they are visiting here and that there are no prisoners.

**Mr SMELT:** The final discretion sits with the Speaker. Has Parliament House refused any groups or organisations due to those kinds of provisions?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Not to my knowledge nor in my time.

**Mr SMELT:** Have you seen any rise or major issues relating to the Member for Karama's question regarding security issues in electorate offices?

**Mr KEITH:** I would have to get figures. My impression is that it was increasing before COVID and post-COVID. Incidents have not gone away but my anecdotal impression is it has eased a little.

**J DAVIS:** Can you give an update on the research service and, in the reporting period, how long has a researcher been available to MLAs? Not librarian. Researcher.

**Mr KEITH:** The research service has undergone a redesign, and we have just advertised to fill the manager of the library service and the senior research officer for that service. The senior research position has been vacant since October, and the parliamentary librarian position has effectively been vacant since December. During that time, we have time we have been taking research requests and trying to deal with them from elsewhere within the department. We have maintained a level of service through that. Our intention is to have a more substantial service up and running very soon.

**J DAVIS:** Will that be a full-time researcher for all MLAs? Is that what the new structure will look like?

**Mr KEITH:** Yes. There will be a manager of the service as a SAO1 position who manages the library and the research service. There will also be a senior research officer working to that. They are providing research and information and library services for all MLAs.

**Mr CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of the Department of the Legislative Assembly. On behalf of the committee, I thank you, Madam Speaker, for appearing before the committee. I also thank the departmental officers who provided advice.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I thank the Department of the Legislative Assembly staff for the spectacular work they do in keeping us functioning and happy and keeping this building looking immaculate. Thank you so much, and thank you to budget Estimates.

**Mr CHAIR:** That concludes the Estimates hearings for today. Hearings will recommence at 9 am tomorrow, Thursday, 18 June 2026, with questions for the Power and Water Corporation.

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The committee suspended.

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