

The Estimates Committee convened at 9 am.

Mr CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Estimates Committee hearing for Monday, 21 June 2021. This morning we have Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

I acknowledge this morning that we gather on Larrakia land and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

MINISTER MANISON'S PORTFOLIOS

POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr CHAIR: I welcome the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you.

Mrs MANISON: I was to start with the opening statement and do the introductions as part of that, Mr Chair. Does that work for you?

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

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

Mrs MANISON: I sat here in December 2020 speaking about the unique challenges of the Northern Territory and the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services with what they were facing in the wake of COVID-19.

I sit before you again with the Commissioner of Police, still in a COVID-affected environment. The challenges of 2020 are still part of daily life in 2021 and there are now new COVID challenges as the Territory leads the nation in our post-COVID recovery. The day-to-day work of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services continued extensively across the Northern Territory.

As a government, we had two priorities at the initial onset of COVID-19 and they have not changed. They are even more important now as we accelerate our economy out of these uncertain times.

As the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, it has always been about saving lives and jobs. We listened to the medical advice and closed the borders last year when we had to—a closure others would have rather opened. This is a decision that would have been horrendous for the Northern Territory and deeply impacted the safety of Territorians.

I thank the very hard-working men and women of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services because they have sacrificed a lot since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every day they go above and beyond in the interests of the safety of all Territorians. Again I thank them. Day-in, day-out, they never disappoint. They have demonstrated their utmost professionalism and dedication to duty. For their efforts thus far and into the future, I sincerely thank them.

For context, at any given rostered week, there are up to 124 full-time equivalent roles undertaken by Police, Fire and Emergency Services in support of our COVID-19 operations. This included staffing of the emergency operation centre, compliance and security roles at our sea, land and air points of entry and operations of the Howard Springs and the Todd quarantine facilities.

The Northern Territory Government is extremely appreciative and thankful for the support of the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force personnel. These organisations still continue to support the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services members during these operations as and when requested.

This government invested in keeping Territorians safe. We provided record funding and ensured we have record numbers of police officers and support staff to continue our COVID operations and policing in the community. These additional staff and other operationally assigned NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services personnel are working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Border Force, the Australian Defence Forces, the AFP, the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre and the associated Northern Territory Government functional groups to facilitate the repatriation of Australians via the Howard Springs quarantine facility, which has undergone a transition.

The Howard Springs quarantine facility is a world-class example of best-practice quarantining and will continue to be a national strategic asset going into the future. The Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services staff continue to work closely with the Department of Health to prepare for and conduct controlled exercises to test remote community and urban outbreak plans, including the possible deployment of police and health rapid response teams. These outbreak plans include contingencies for our most vulnerable and Indigenous communities.

The stats highlight the huge year of work of the amazing men and women of the Northern Territory Police Force. To date, during COVID-19, there have been 175,000 COVID-19 tests across the Territory; almost 88,000 border control checkpoint entries; more than 40,000 compliance checks conducted; over 8,000 quarantine people in Howard Springs; and more than 1,000 people quarantined in Alice Springs. It is a great effort and I thank them for this work.

Our Northern Territory Emergency Services volunteers also do an amazing job that, at times, can be taken for granted. Their ongoing dedication and effort is crucial to the safety of all Territorians. Many of these volunteers have stepped up and shared the load during COVID-19 operations. I thank all Northern Territory Emergency Services personnel for all of their hard work to date and for their ongoing work.

I thank our firies. After a few dry years, it has rained across the Territory and we have significant fuel loads. They are proactively burning right now. Day to day, they continue to be on the front line keeping our community safe and attending to people in their greatest times of need, in fires and horrendous events, such as road trauma. I thank the magnificent men and women of the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Services for their work.

There is so much to go through with this incredible agency and only five minutes for an opening statement. I will introduce the terrific executive team before the Estimates Committee, so we can get going through the extensive outputs.

We have the Commissioner of Police and Chief Executive Officer, Mr Jamie Chalker APM; the Deputy Commissioner, Mr Michael Murphy APM; the Deputy Commissioner, Mr Murray Smalpage APM; the Chief Fire Officer, Mr Mark Spain AFSM; the Acting Chief Financial Officer, Ms Sally Blyton; the Chief Operating Officer, Ms Annette Turner-Duggan; and the Director of NT Emergency Services, Ms Fleur O'Connor.

I thank the committee for their important questions today; I look forward to responding to them.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Are there any questions on the statement?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I thank everyone for attending today and also the people behind the scenes, who are eagerly glued to their computer screens. Thank you very much for all the hard work you have put in for the minister, the commissioner and the team, hopefully with all of the answers.

I will start by asking what the efficiency dividend is for police for this year.

Mrs MANISON: Would that be better placed in the output groups, Mr Chair?

Mr CHAIR: It may be, Minister. It has been my practice to allow the minister or the person with the call to answer as they see fit. If you want to answer the question as you see fit, you may. Otherwise, you can direct it to a further output.

Mrs MANISON: I am happy to answer the question because it is one that all agencies get and have to deal with. As a former Treasurer, I am well familiar with efficiency dividends. As we know, agencies have set budgets and it is important that agencies work within the budgets they are allocated. I am delighted that, under this government, the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services has a record budget. We continue to fund our frontline operations to have more Police, Fire and Emergency Services workers because it is an incredibly important agency.

Yes, we have efficiency dividends. The Treasurer has been here. I did not get to listen to his contribution the other day, because I was on my way to the APPEA oil and gas conference in Perth. Every agency in the Northern Territory Government has an efficiency dividend. The Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services is no different and it is unchanged from last year. It is still the frontline agency dividend. I will have to jog my memory to tell you what that dividend is, in terms of the percentage. It is a standard front line, the same that applies to Health, Territory Families and those frontline agencies.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will somebody jog your memory?

Mrs MANISON: From memory it is 0.3, but I will check. If you would like to continue, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the percentage efficiency dividend and what specific dollar figure does it amount to?

Mrs MANISON: Percentage efficiency is 0.33. I do not have the specific dollar amount, but it is the standard frontline agency.

Question on Notice No 5.1

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the specific dollar figure of the 0.33 percentage efficiency dividend for police for this financial year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How will that efficiency be achieved?

Mrs MANISON: Chief executives of agencies have the job of managing their budgets. They make day-to-day decisions about how they go about meeting their budgets. As you know, the Commissioner of Police runs the agency. They are operational decisions that are made day-to-day on how they manage priorities of an agency on any given day. Given the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services has a budget of about \$487m per year, they are some of the decisions they make.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the plan going forward for how that will be achieved in Police? Minister, you may want to hand to the commissioner, if it is an operational issue. Territorians would like to know more about how police are setting out to achieve that dividend.

Mrs MANISON: I will hand over to the Commissioner of Police. I did not tune in to Estimates last week but I assume you are having a conversation with each of the chief executives. Every agency has an efficiency dividend. It makes sure that people are focused on keeping to budget. It sharpens the pencils and on any given day sometimes priorities change.

The chief executive meets budgets and ensures that everyone is being as frugal as possible. It is a challenging fiscal environment at the moment and every agency chief executive has that same task. This has been a long-held practice across government.

Commissioner CHALKER: With all budget assessments, once the budget is handed down we commence the process of analysing our budget allocations across our portfolios. That is considerate of the efficiency dividend so that we understand our total budget. That will then wash across all our assets as it relates to our ongoing asset costs.

We review our contracts to ensure any which are coming off—what our flexibility is within those arrangements. Our number of personnel—FTE costs—is an area where costs can be treated. That also extends to classifications of employees. We continue to look at all those areas.

Also the replacement of our fleet—you would appreciate that it is specialist fleet. It takes a period of time to foreshadow and prepare the orders, particularly with our fire appliances. We have a program that is specifically about replacements so we can manage those within a fiscally constrained environment.

We have multiple levers in place ongoing to ensure that our budgets are controlled. One key challenge with the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services is that our operating environment is unique. We literally have events that occur 24-hours a day, seven days a week across 365 days of the year. Despite the best plans being put in place to control and mitigate costs, it will blow out.

We have had any number of examples and COVID, as you would appreciate, was one that no agency across the country was prepared for. All needed significant fund injections to cope with and address those issues. We try to make sure that within our allocation and within as much of a normalised environment that we can control, as much as we can control it, we come in on budget.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You mentioned contracts coming off, FTE costs and classification of employees. Is it likely that you will be recuperating the 0.33% efficiency dividend through changes to staffing, or loss of staffing?

Commissioner CHALKER: We have a natural attrition process that goes on and that affords us an opportunity in that when we lose some people of high rank classification, particularly in the police area, we replace them with a constable rank so there is a significant saving in that environment—when we lose a senior constable, compared to the wage that is paid to a constable that goes through training. We also find that fresh experience coming into the agency helps with a lot of drive and energy to really get out and about and do the job that we all love to do.

When people head off to other jurisdictions, as is the current pressure—every other jurisdiction across the country is employing more police, which is no great surprise against the backdrop of the COVID environment. Equally, we are recruiting more police. It is a competitive environment, but it provides us an ability to take advantage of that so we can control our budget and maintain the number of police we need to do the job on the front line.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you know what dollar figure the 0.33% efficiency dividend equates to?

Commissioner CHALKER: I am waiting on that figure, so I will provide that to you directly.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To achieve the 0.33% efficiency dividend, is police looking to cut staff from the agency?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, not at this point in time. Not on our current projections.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You mentioned attrition, which is a significant issue that is talked about a lot in police, the community and the parliament. Minister, in May we asked about the fact that, in that past month 22 police officers had left the force through resignation, retirement or transfer, including 14 police in one fortnight. The average since the August election is about 10 police per month. I asked if you could you confirm that the 22 police officers in one month was more than three times the national attrition rate. How many police officers have separated from the police force this financial year to date that is from 1 July 2020?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, can I confirm that we are going into Output Group 1.0, if we are going to attrition? That is where it sits.

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition do you want to hold that question until Output Group 1.0?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We can. What questions would the minister like to be asked on opening statement—only COVID-related ones?

Mr CHAIR: I will not direct the minister to ask which questions ...

Mrs MANISON: I am in the hands of the Leader of the Opposition, she is asking the questions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am asking questions ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a question on the opening statement. Commissioner, during the COVID pandemic you have been given the enormous job of being the Territory Controller, which is a job on top of your already

enormous responsibilities. What percentage of time, approximately, are you spending executing the role of the Territory Controller?

Mrs MANISON: Before I hand over to the Territory Controller, the Commissioner of Police, I put on the record, Member for Araluen—I almost called you Member for Arafura, north and south is a bit different country.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Araluen. Eleven years I have been the Member for Araluen, minister. No change.

Mrs MANISON: Monday morning. I thank the commissioner for his outstanding service and work. The commissioner has done a magnificent job in the most challenging of all times and continues to do so. We are nowhere near out of COVID-19—what is happening in other nations and as vaccination programs roll out. It is fair to say that we are not back to a normal life and cannot foresee that until towards the end of this year. We will not even be normal when we get there.

The commissioner has done an outstanding job with all emergency management in all emergency situations. It is the commissioner, who is also Territory Controller and manages those situations—and we have been dealing with the global pandemic in this instance. Commissioner, you have done a great job. Thank you for your ongoing services. I will let you answer the rest of the question.

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, it is a very significant role that has come across, not only in the normal role of Commissioner of Police and the CEO of Fire and Emergency Services. From a percentage perspective, that would sway, as it has from March last year. Almost 50% of my time is dedicated to it, depending on the peaks and troughs of what is going on with the emergency response at the time.

I reassure all Territorians that what occurs in the NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services is not a one-person operation. I have an incredibly talented team and full trust in my two deputy commissioners to be able to run the police portfolio if I am focused on the COVID issue. I have a chief fire officer and director of Northern Territory Emergency Services as well as our public sector. We also have an emergency operations centre that has been ongoing since March last year. I have a Commander of Police constantly undertaking those roles so that is interchanged—two incident controllers who rotate through. We rotate people through those roles to ensure they stay fresh and across the business.

As with every commissioner across the country—and I have frequent conversations with them—all have been impacted and continue to be with the workload that comes through the door as it relates to the emergency response. They should be critically aware we have keen eyes on New South Wales to see what is developing in that space, as well as Queensland and obviously there is still a focus on Victoria.

This world will not change for us. We have our planning well and truly in place for the likelihood this will continue for a significant period of time. We have built models and structures that enable me to provide appropriate Territory Controller duties as well as commissioner and CEO of the agency.

Where we are at when compared to the rest of the country is a testament to everybody involved in this agency and the other agencies which are part of our emergency operations centre. To see where the Territory has gotten to—it has been through a lot of heavy lifting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I thank you for executing your role with enormous professionalism. During the time you have been in that role and the police have had the extra responsibility, we have seen an escalation in crime across the Northern Territory. How have you been able to manage both? You managed COVID very well, but crime has—from most people's perspective and it is reflected in the crime stats—continued to be a major problem and there has been an escalation. How have you been managing both?

Mrs MANISON: I will start with the crime statistics that you touched on.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You did not mention it in your opening statement, which is very peculiar.

Mrs MANISON: No, but you just asked a question ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Territorians are waiting for you to talk about crime in Budget Estimates—25 minutes in and this is the first we are mentioning it.

Mrs MANISON: Okay, nice start.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It could have been better.

Mrs MANISON: Let us go to the point in your question about the issue of crime across the Northern Territory. You mentioned crime statistics and it is important to talk about that COVID overlay. What you will see with the crime statistics is there are declines in property crime, motor vehicle theft and commercial property crime—they are in the numbers.

Alice Springs—your electorate—without a doubt, we still have more work to do, as we do across the Territory because we know any ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is what I am talking about.

Mrs MANISON: ... victim of crime—it is a pretty tough deal. Victims always need to come first. There is an increase in alcohol-related assaults. That is definitely connected to COVID-19 and some of the money that has flowed into the communities. Tragically, there have been too many assaults. I cannot sit here and accept you saying that everything is out of control, when you look at the hard work of Trident, Viper and our general duties police officers and the work they have done in property crime. They should be applauded for that work.

Without a doubt, we are very focused on the issue of alcohol-related harm and assaults across the Northern Territory. Police have done a magnificent job in the COVID-19 environment with all the challenges thrown at them. Police officers have sacrificed personal leave. They have done this to be on duty and do their job. They have done overtime in some of the most remote parts of the Northern Territory, when they have had to be on borders or to help out other shifts and do other duties at the airport and so forth. They have done an incredible job.

I will hand over to the commissioner to answer your question. But I thought it was important to put some facts on the table.

Commissioner CHALKER: I understand perception. For a lot of people perception is real. For the period to 31 March 2020, the stats tell us that offences against the person increased by 18.3%, which is an increase of 1,438 incidents—a comparative 7,848 for that reporting period. However, offences against property decreased by 4,064 incidents, which is a reduction of 18.4%. That was down to 22,136 across the board. Equally, our total victim-based offences—offences against the person and property across the NT—decreased by 8.8%, or 2,626 individual offences.

Perception—if we overlay this to the backdrop of managing COVID, that result is quite exceptional. We also acknowledge, because we are well and truly attuned to what occurs on a daily basis across the Northern Territory, that there were hot spot areas. There is little doubt that Alice Springs and Tennant Creek were hot spots as it related to criminal activity. That went specifically to youth activity and we know that.

As a result of that we raised those areas of concern with the government. You would be critically aware that youth reform bills were passed earlier this year. You can be very well satisfied that nobody has taken their eye off the ball in this environment. Our structures are well-served to maintain as great a service as we can in the Northern Territory.

Because we have done intelligence analysis on this, we know that a large proportion of the increased assaults were related to alcohol. That was directly related to the additional income from JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. We saw that through the trade takings of a lot of our takeaway licensed premises, in the presence of alcohol in the victims and offenders related to those assaults and, unfortunately, it flowed on in the same percentage as it related to family and domestic violence.

There is little doubt that alcohol remains a completely and utterly savage commodity for family and domestic violence unfortunately, specifically in remote Aboriginal communities. There was a lot of activity in remote regions we were interjecting to stop grog running out of there; there was a transition from the usual practice of purchasing beer, to far heavier commodities, such as rum. Bottles of rum were selling for upwards of \$900 per standard bottle. You can understand there was a lot more incentive going on in that market than the associated misery when the alcohol is being consumed in an unregulated environment.

That is the basis of the reality of what was going on there. Any number of reasons can influence these things. For the lockdown period more people were at home. There was a reduction in property crime for that period of time and a bit of a reduction in alcohol-related harm because there was not as much movement for the unregulated drinking environment. When the biosecurity zones lifted a lot of that changed markedly. They were the things we started to plan for and mitigate as best we could.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, do you not agree that when violent crime is through the roof across the Territory—the stats show that is a horrific and prolific issue—and the Police Commissioner has to spend 50% of his role on COVID management, it is more important for the commissioner to be dealing with the serious issues of violent crime, focus on that and have health professionals deal with COVID?

Ms MANISON: I am sitting next to the best Police Commissioner in the country, who does an outstanding job and is very capable of being the Territory Controller and managing issues of community safety and crime. We also have two very highly experienced deputy commissioners at the table, who bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and knowhow. I have full confidence in their ability as well as the abilities of the excellent assistant commissioners, commanders, superintendents, senior sergeants, sergeants, senior constables, constables, ACPOs, auxiliaries and the ALOs. I have full confidence in every man and woman in this organisation, who do a great job. The leadership at this table is outstanding and more than capable of managing these challenging portfolio areas.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Minister, you have to acknowledge that everyone has an upper limit—a point in which they are doing as much as they can. None of us question the integrity of the people in front of us, but the crime stats suggest that crime is increasing, particularly in places like Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, as the commissioner said. Perhaps it is too much for the Police Commissioner to have both of those massive roles as Territory Controller and to be fighting crime at a domestic level across the Northern Territory. I think that the Opposition Leader made a fair comment.

Mrs MANISON: I will continue to back our Police Commissioner and the leadership sitting at this table, any day of the week, because they are outstanding at their jobs and they work their guts out.

Mrs LAMBLEY: We are not questioning the integrity of these people; we know they are outstanding. But you could not cope as Treasurer so you got put somewhere else, which was a sign that you could not deal with ...

Mrs MANISON: Come on, seriously, Member for Araluen. We are at this level?

Mr CHAIR: The minister has the call, Member for Araluen.

Mrs MANISON: I am glad I lasted more than six months.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I did not get kicked out. I left.

Mrs MANISON: I think the leadership here is outstanding. It is important to recognise that there are outstanding members of the team, who have worked across the Health department, including the Chief Health Officer; the senior health professionals; and the very capable people who work in the Department of Territory Families; and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade people, who have done all the business support. This has gone right across government.

Ultimately, the Territory Controller is the lead. I have full confidence in the commissioner in doing that job. But we are talking about a very complex time. COVID-19 has brought in a whole other overlay when it comes to money flowing into the community, anomalies and things we do not usually see in the statistics, as well as different seasonal changes. It has related directly to COVID-19, the welfare stimulus across the country, changes of behaviour and patterns of movement that it had an impact on.

I will not sit at this table and listen to you saying that our leadership is not capable of doing these very important jobs. That is what you are asserting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No-one is saying that, minister. You are not listening to what we are asking you. Everyone has a threshold, an upper limit—you are backing your staff, which is perfectly reasonable. What do you say to the people of Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, who are being subjected to this level of crime and live in a state of fear and anticipation, knowing they will be the victims of break-ins or domestic violence? You have to back Territorians as well as your government department.

Mrs MANISON: I will back the leadership of the Police, Fire and Emergency Services because they do a magnificent job. But I say to victims of crime in the Northern Territory that we are committed to boosting community safety. We have done this in a range of ways and the work will never stop, because the Territory is a complex place. Our hearts go out to victims of crime, which is why we work so hard to deal with it.

Look at the issues in Alice Springs—we put on Strike Force Viper, driven through legislative reform, continue to recruit police and have a record budget in place. They are some of the initiatives we are working on, but it is fair to say that policing is intelligence driven. Police regularly look at the intelligence that comes in and make the operational decisions about where they need to put the resources. We try to be as agile as possible to deal with the changes. Without a doubt, COVID-19 and changes to patterns of behaviour has thrown in some extra challenges, but we are addressing this through making sure we have resources, legislative reform and are reacting and responding to where the resources need to be sent.

Commissioner CHALKER: I say to all Territorians that if at any point I feel I have reached my upper limit, they can be assured I will put my hand up. But I am nowhere near close.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Given that there is a lot of talk about the crime statistics and the violent offending being a result of alcohol, did police not have a \$12m budget specifically to deal with alcohol?

Mrs MANISON: We put significant efforts into recruiting police auxiliary liquor inspectors and placing them in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. We did not think fully sworn officers should be in front of bottle shops. When I go into the Alice Springs and Katherine muster rooms and get the briefings with the PALIs before they set out on their duty, you can see that it is very strategic. A lot of intelligence drives their rostering and where they prioritise on any given day. That was part of that work of additional CCTV deployment as well. We also had resources going into the alcohol policing, which has been very important. That carried on every day through all the different general duties work as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Was there \$12m for specific alcohol harm reduction processes for police, outside of the PALIs?

Mrs MANISON: We increased that, and that included the PALIs. That was part of the PALIs work we did very early last term and built that into the police budget to increase their efforts on alcohol.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Was that \$12m fully spent on alcohol reduction?

Mrs MANISON: That goes into the police budget to target alcohol work and yes, ongoing to this day you see the PALIs out and about and the work with CCTV.

Commissioner CHALKER: That was completely and utterly exhausted. The work we do in respect of alcohol—you would recall many media releases with images of vehicles and alcohol seized out and about across communities—not small seizures, quite significant ones. There has been significant ongoing work with the Director of Licensing related to poor practices with a number of licensees. We have been working with them and a number of interdictions. I recall a prominent one in Alice Springs, where we took action against a licensee who was selling alcohol in a secondary-supply environment.

There has been an enormous ongoing focus on alcohol. As we led into March, there were encouraging signs that our approach to alcohol and the like was showing very good results, with the number of reforms that were in place. The artificial bubble then ensued, with the additional income streams that came in. We saw that immediately go into sales of alcohol and present on the street in unregulated drinking environments. It was a direct correlation to the harms that then flowed.

It shows the enormity of the work that the police are undertaking, because when people came forward and provide reports to us—their reporting has increased and there is a lot of confidence in reporting—we took action and a lot more offenders were incarcerated as a result of the investigation work.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I get a breakdown of how the \$12m was expended?

Mrs MANISON: PALIs, CCTV and police operations day to day.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could I get that broken down? You might need to take it on notice.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I would be happy to take that on notice, Leader of the Opposition.

Question on Notice No 5.2

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Please provide a breakdown of how the \$12m allocated for alcohol harm reduction was expended.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated number 5.2.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, when you were in Western Australia last week, did you meet with the Western Australian Police minister?

Mrs MANISON: No, I was there for APPEA to talk about gas and gas development and opportunities and jobs, jobs, jobs.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As you are not necessarily straying far from your opening statement—if that is okay; I am happy to move to outputs—where will you answer questions that have arisen from the whole-of-government written questions?

Mrs MANISON: It depends on what the question is. I am not trying to be difficult.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have one about victims of crime.

Mr CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition we will move directly after the opening statement ...

Mrs MANISON: I would have thought number one.

Mr CHAIR: ... to whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I can ask it there?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. Output 1.0, Community Safety and Crime Prevention.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am happy to go to outputs.

Mr CHAIR: Are there further questions on the opening statement?

Mrs LAMBLEY: The commissioner mentioned before that he attributed the increase in crime in the Northern Territory to JobKeeper and JobSeeker. Is that ...

Commissioner CHALKER: Alcohol-related assaults.

Mrs LAMBLEY: With JobKeeper no longer functioning or providing people with that income, would you expect to see a drop in crime?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand over to the commissioner to speak about that further. Without a doubt, it was pretty much August/September last year where we started to see some very different statistics and unusual patterns for that time of the year. It is not generally anticipated. We all heard the stories, at the time, regarding additional mobility across the board. There were some positive outcomes where people were able to get access to transport.

Unfortunately, people were getting around—it also aligned with some of the grog busts that happened at the time. I do not think I have seen so many press releases coming out at one point regarding multiple grog runs that were getting busted with lots of rum and other hard spirits and generally a few cartons of wine and boxes of beer.

Commissioner CHALKER: We are already seeing a stabilisation since the reduction in those payments. We have to balance the fact that we are also the highest per capita take-up of the superannuation payments. There were a number of factors contributed to additional money. Unfortunately, a lot of that money went towards alcohol and also gambling. It is a reality for us that gambling impacts on family dynamics because unfortunately, parental and guardian control does not tend to be there for the kids. That flows on to poor attendance rates in our remote schools. There is ample evidence of that.

There is a whole raft of social pressures and issues that continue to pervade the Northern Territory, as you are critically aware. We continue to focus as much as we can on secondary supply and reducing it as much as we reasonably can. With all the other systems we have in place, we are starting to see a stabilisation. However, at the end of the day, it comes down to individual choice and people drinking to excess, who cause harm to those they purport to love. It is a genuine community issue that we are continuing to try and combat.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are there still 12 police dedicated to tackling secondary supply?

Commissioner CHALKER: There are far more than 12 police dedicated to targeting secondary supply. We have now made sure each police division with a frontline division is focused on activities that relate to intelligence that points them in the direction of potential licensed premises that may not be adhering to their licensing conditions. Because of the intelligence we have and our interdictions, it is far more than twelve.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has that team been disbanded?

Commissioner CHALKER: That team has been put across multiple divisions now to make sure that focus remains. There is a superintendent within the Darwin area, for example, who still remains the head of alcohol policing and they have that as their primary charter on behalf of the whole command across Darwin. All the other police environments continue to focus on alcohol as a key target for them in their day-to-day activities.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, your government undertook the Riley review, you brought in the minimum alcohol floor price, the Banned Drinker Register was reinstated and a couple of other things. How do you see that as a reflection on alcohol policy failure?

Mrs MANISON: I do not see it as alcohol policy failure. We were making some really positive inroads prior to COVID-19. I have spoken about it in parliament and in estimates before. Prior to COVID-19, when we had full implementation of the PALIs that was achieved after a remarkable recruitment effort, there were some really positive stories, particularly in places like Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. We talked about empty watch houses and did not see protective custody numbers up where they had traditionally been.

There were some good, solid results and they were reflected in the alcohol-related assaults at that time. There were 10-year lows. There were really positive movements on DV figures. I saw that we were gaining some success. I was feeling positive and buoyant that we could make some positive change in the lives of, particularly, women and children across the Northern Territory. COVID then came and it has changed the dynamic. Tragically, there was a big flow of alcohol across the Northern Territory, particularly towards the end of last year—the Member for Daly is here; there have been some challenging issues in his electorate.

After COVID started there was an increase of alcohol. It is positive that now there is not as much of that activity, compared to last year. It is important that we advocate for additional support for people living in poverty, as that helps with nutrition and helps get them out of poverty. Unfortunately, in some instances some of the lowest of the low—grog runners peddling grog to our remote communities. There was an increase in the consumption of alcohol in our town centres. The tragic reality of what flowed from that because of additional money and alcohol, was an increase in alcohol violence and domestic violence. We are working hard to address this and drive it down.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have the police recommended any changes to alcohol policy?

Mrs MANISON: The police work closely with the alcohol policy arm of government, which sits with Licensing and within the Attorney-General and Justice. They do a huge amount of work, but I will ask the Commissioner to speak more about those efforts. There is no doubt that our government looks at reform and changes. A critical agency which is always consulted, is the police. As Police minister, I always follow up to make sure the police have their voices heard. Ultimately, they are on the front line seeing the direct impact of the harm that alcohol causes across our community.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They might be consulted, but whether anything they request is implemented is an entirely different beast. We have seen that with youth justice and on a number of occasions.

Mrs MANISON: The police have a well-respected voice across government, everyone fully understands and appreciates what they deal with and that their purpose is to serve and protect the community—and their level of expertise. They are listened to.

Commissioner CHALKER: We have been doing an enormous amount of work with the Director of Licensing, the AHA and other key stakeholders. Deputy Murphy has had the lead online that. I will hand over to him to give you a clear line of sight on all the activity we have undertaken last year.

Mr MURPHY: Alcohol is a harm enabler in the Northern Territory. Crime statistics at the end of April would indicate that 36% relate to assaults. We are committed to examine where the source is and working closely with Licensing and Hospitality NT. There have been significant inroads in how vendors operate.

We put in a submission to the commission through the Director of Licensing on how better governance can apply at the point of sale. Previously, vendors might have traded in the same amount in a remote location as they do in an urban location. We are focusing on that and making sure that secondary suppliers are monitored by police licensing inspectors to ensure that people, women, children and Aboriginal communities are not hurt or assaulted—there are also health issues with beer. The 36% which is accountable to assaults in the crime statistics is a solid indicator, but it reaches further than that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is the submission made by Police to the Liquor Commission public?

Mr MURPHY: Not at this stage. At the moment it is before the commission. The commission will make a determination when they have an inquiry. As the commissioner and the minister stated, we have a good relationship with Hospitality NT. We work closely with them. Obviously, we have differing views. Theirs is a business model and ours is a crime prevention model. We have a pretty good relationship. There will be an undertaking that it is a fair process where voices are heard so the commission can make the best decision.

Going back to that governance piece, it is about looking at PALIs. They interact with 50,000 people in Alice Springs every month. They do a good job; the commissioner said that it points to intelligence. We look above and beyond the investment of 12 officers for secondary supply, it extends past that, even to our level because it goes across jurisdictions. It stretches into South Australia and Queensland jurisdictions about people purchasing alcohol there.

The bigger picture reform is about the technical review of the *Liquor Act*, which is coming up. We will make a number of submissions about that, about how we can do our job better and work better with government agencies to prevent and deter alcohol-related harm.

When we look at the governance and how the BDR works with inventory, sales and the amount of alcohol being distributed, that is where we need to interdict because when the biosecurity zones were lifted, a significant investment in spirits and rum travelling to communities like Gunbalanya, Port Keats and Peppimenarti, with 100 bottles at a time—a massive harm injection in the community.

One of the recommendations we would like to see is the sale of alcohol into remote communities and alcohol protected areas restricted and minimised with better controls. That is CCTV monitoring over the point of sales so licensing inspectors, not just police, can invest in monitoring DIP samples to make sure the right thing is being done at point of sale to minimise harm. The on-premises is a controlled environment and a lot safer.

Going back to the question about the 12 officers, every officer in our 64 stations has an obligation to keep their ears and eyes open for alcohol-related harm and provide information to their command and us so we can influence and guide the best decision for community safety.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Just confirming there are no dedicated task force for secondary supply? It has been devolved into the ...

Mrs MANISON: We have a superintendent, PALIs every day, teams across all of our operational stations. Every officer is responsible for alcohol across the Northern Territory.

Commissioner CHALKER: The clear move we have made to make sure alcohol supply is targeted by all our police areas is demonstrated by the number of seizures we have undertaken. Then that flows on to the work we have achieved with the relevant licensees we have taken action against through Licensing. I am very comfortable with the model we have in play.

As it relates to alcohol, this is not a new issue for the Northern Territory. It is one we have been speaking about for quite a period of time. I often hear the rhetoric about the fact that people are impacted by crime. Unfortunately, the reality of what we tend to see, as it relates to the fear of crime, is more about people and their homes and property, which is all very reasonable. But there is a national tragedy that has unfolded in the Northern Territory, and continues to unfold, which is the harm against an Aboriginal female. Until the

community, including licensees at point of sale, anybody who sees groups of people drinking alcohol in an unregulated environment, starts to give us a hand by reporting that activity—you can be very reassured that if you take the time, as a conscientious community member, to let police know about criminal activity where alcohol may be consumed in an unregulated environment, there is a strong likelihood you will save harm to an Aboriginal female. That is the message we all have to collectively get shoulder-to-shoulder on to try to turn this around, because it is insidious to this part of the jurisdiction.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are you saying that domestic and family violence is being under-reported?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, I am not saying that at all. I am saying that the numbers tell us how insidious it is, and it is a shame.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the Liquor Commission looking at that you guys have been able to put in a submission to? Is it undertaking a review of the *Liquor Act*?

Mrs MANISON: There is always constant policy review into what we are doing. When different parts of government are responsible for licensing, or ways in which we manage alcohol, police will always provide feedback. There is an ongoing raft of work at any given time. Given the time lines and different bodies of work, the questions are better placed for the Minister for Alcohol Policy, Minister Fyles.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Police has made a submission to an inquiry, which includes how alcohol can be restricted, particularly into communities and how liquor inspectors can be better used. You must be able to ...

Mrs MANISON: There are other bodies of work happening internally and regular points of review. I will ask police to go further into the work they have been providing information on. I cannot stress enough how serious police's views are taken, given their level of expertise in dealing with the issues of impacts of alcohol and the ways they can assist in reducing alcohol-related harm.

Commissioner CHALKER: We have worked very closely with Licensing, not only with the Director of Licensing but the Licensing Commission. Whenever there is an opportunity for us to provide information we do that, which has been the case on this occasion.

Mr MURPHY: What is vitally important is that the commissioner, Deputy Smalpage, the team and I get out to the stations and listen to our officers, who have worked incredibly hard over the last 18 months. Pre-COVID November 2019, DV assaults sat at around an average of 60 per day across the Northern Territory. It dropped significantly when we went to biosecurity zones early 2020 to July. People stayed at home or in community, people connected with culture, family groups reunited and alcohol was minimised in the communities which made significant harm reductions.

When the biosecurity zones opened alcohol entered communities and people were exploiting those with secondary supply. As the commissioner highlighted, we took action and continue to take action. Sadly the amount of assaults increased significantly higher than they were—daily up to between 90 and 100 domestic violence assaults across the Northern Territory.

Across the whole-of-government, the child safety framework, the family safety framework, domestic violence work, our police officers—alcohol and addictions. That is the picture we saw. When people were in lockdown, air, marine and road traffic was minimised, so there an accumulation of funds. Those funds were expended predominantly on white goods, alcohol and second-hand cars. The alcohol purchased led to harm and we are obligated to act on that in the interests of the community, women and children.

That is the substance of the submission, to have a discussion at the table with multiple interested parties to see what the best things are for the community to reduce these harms in the future.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are we still seeing figures like that in the Territory—90 to 100 domestic violence or alcohol-related assaults per day?

Mr MURPHY: No, they decreased again significantly, which is good. But when you travel around the stations remotely and the urban areas our officers can feel it and see it. Some respite has been offered in the accounts and the amounts of DV assaults being reported.

Mrs LAMBLEY: To what levels, do you know?

Mr MURPHY: I could not tell you right now but it is down around 50 to 70 per night again.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The pre-COVID level?

Mr MURPHY: Yes, that is right.

Commissioner MURPHY: Because of the income that was injected into community—I think that all of you have second-hand car yards in your electorates and would have seen most of the camp car yards empty. A lot of those vehicles were heading out to remote communities. There was a great increase in mobility, which was linked to family movements and the movement of alcohol and other commodities.

This was an artificial bubble that—while we were concentrating across the board for the Northern Territory—occurred and people were making choices that, unfortunately, had detrimental impacts on their loved ones.

Mr SLOAN: Do you think there may be an argument—in a place like Port Keats, for example—to allow alcohol in a regulated manner and perhaps that might put the grog-runners out of business because they would not get their \$900 a bottle if it is regulated at \$50 or \$60 per bottle? Is there an argument for that?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. We have long held the view that communities should have a say on what happens in their communities, including whether they have regulated clubs for the responsible service of alcohol. If that is something a community supports, then we think it should be able to happen.

We have worked over time to make representations to the federal government. I am not the right minister to go into the details of these questions. It would be one for Minister Fyles—was last week's sessions.

We have long advocated for local community decisions on the responsible service of alcohol. Grog running is a horrendous activity targeting the most vulnerable. It takes a lot of money out of families. That money would be better placed in the family unit to support kids, food, nutrition and activities for the family.

Instead there are predatory people, particularly throughout COVID—one story I heard was a bottle of rum going for \$1,500; it was in your electorate. It is some of the most disgusting and abhorrent behaviour. Police worked incredibly hard to intercept a lot of grog in that time. They did a very good job, but unfortunately, they could not get to everyone.

We support communities that do want a regulated club, having the ability to do so.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Police servicing now has PALIs, because it is recognised that there needs to be some sort of intervention at the point of sale and Deputy Commission Murphy mentioned liquor inspectors. Do police want to see liquor inspectors being reinstated in more of an enforcement way, so that police can use their finite resources doing other things? Would police like to see the other interpretation of the Riley review, where Riley said that they should be uniformed officers, not police officers? In Police's view, should liquor inspectors play a much bigger enforcement role in bottle shops, borders—or whatever it might be—so this all is not left to police?

Mrs MANISON: There is a technical review of the amendments, changes and reforms we have done the *Liquor Act*. Police are having a big say in that. Without a doubt, police do a huge amount of work to tackle those who are not doing the right thing in the community and the responsible service of alcohol.

We have given the Commissioner of Police the power to shut down premises if they are doing the wrong thing; that has been exercised multiple times. This is to send a very clear message to licensees who have done the wrong thing in the past. It is not acceptable not to comply with your licence conditions and then create more work for police in community harm afterward.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sure, but my question is about liquor inspectors. What is Police's position on liquor inspectors?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to comment, but Police works very closely with licensing and legislative reviews on alcohol. We invested a lot more into police to help tackle alcohol issues. We will always strive to do better and work with the other agencies when it comes to tackling alcohol.

Commissioner CHALKER: Liquor inspectors have a strong working relationship with us. Part of the complexity with looking to expand them from an enforcement point of view is moving them to the areas you just spoke about. The issue of the power of arrest and their ability to do something with somebody at that point in time is a bit more challenging across the scope of the land mass we provide services to.

We have a very strong working relationship with Licensing as it relates to targeting licensed premises. Whenever we have taken action, they swing in and provide support. As I understand it, they are still out and about, inspecting licensed premises and listening to our intelligence when we identify it. We ensure they get a good information supply from us.

The PALI model has made a significant impact; there is little doubt that point of sale is in place. We have to turn our minds to what point of sale will look like in the next 10 to 20 years in the Northern Territory. Do we want to still be the only jurisdiction to have that necessary interdiction in place to reduce harm to members of our community?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is it the police's position that there should be liquor inspectors in bottle shops instead of PALIs?

Commissioner CHALKER: I would have to do a deeper dive on that, but we need to understand where we want the Territory to be in 10 to 20 years as it relates to alcohol policy and the presence of people at takeaway licensed premises, because it is clear that if we go to those steps—there are elements of our community who do not understand the harm they are causing by their actions. That remains a community-related issue. With what we have at the moment, by having PALIs and other police interdictions in place, we are reducing more harm than if we were not there.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The PALIs have been in place for years. They started in 2011, under the Henderson government, then you took them away for a couple of years in Alice Springs and then brought them back because you realised you had made a mistake. They have always been effective. Are they still as effective as they used to be?

Mrs MANISON: Before I hand over to the commissioner, can I just say how wonderful the PALIs are. They work off a lot of intelligence briefings. To go to the muster room and see the work that goes in before they go out on duty every day—it is a significant body of work and there is support for them to do their jobs to the best of their ability. They do an amazing job.

Since we started recruiting PALIs, I am very pleased to see how many have transitioned to become constables. It is wonderful to see that transition throughout the police organisation. As well as having great people on the front line, it is wonderful for us to see their capability on the job. It has led to a lot of successful recruitment outcomes.

Commissioner CHALKER: The PALI model as it currently stands has only been in place for a bit over four years. Prior to that it was police officers doing point-of-sale interdiction. Police officers initiated that activity in the 2011 period because of the continual attendance at violent assaults and harm being perpetuated. In the initial model they were doing ad hoc days that trend lines would tell them were busier.

When I was there as the assistant commissioner of regional operations, we put in a program to have coverage of all takeaway licensed premises in Alice Springs for a five-week period. To compare it to the five-week period of the preceding year, there was a 51% reduction in alcohol-related assaults and a 50% reduction in trauma-related hours per hospital bed. There was no way we could walk away from that model.

It demonstrated that point of sale is clearly effective in reducing harm in the community. The model, as it remains in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, continues to show very positive interdiction. The mobility issue it then caused—there was more mobility in South Australia, Queensland, Darwin and a number of roadhouses where secondary supply had become a major issue and we responded.

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

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2021–2022) Bill as they relate to NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

That concludes consideration on agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

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

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 1.0, Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Output 1.1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention. Are there any questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like to discuss police attrition as this is a significant issue. The police and the community talk about this and there have been some staggering numbers. If we continue on this path, it is unsustainable. We tried to move a motion in parliament to have the issue thoroughly and independently investigated for there to be a clear understanding of why our attrition rates are so horrific—in May, 22 police officers left the force; there were 14 in one fortnight.

How many police have separated from the police force this financial year to date, from 1 July?

Mrs MANISON: As the Police minister, I give a lot of time to the attrition rates as we need to ensure we keep as many people in the job as possible. Knowing the nature of policing and what they have to deal with day to day, it sometimes takes a toll on a person and it is not the job for everyone. There are also generational changes. When my father joined the police force it was a job for life. It was a career; you joined the force and retired from the force. In this world, people often change their careers.

We put in time and effort to ensure we recruit the right people for the job, who are able to cope with the day-to-day demands of policing and those we can retain. I will talk about some challenges before I go to the numbers and some of the reasons people leave the police force.

I have no doubt the commissioner will comment further, but other Australian jurisdictions are aggressively recruiting and increasing their numbers in the police. There have also been big efforts from the Australian Federal Police. Commissioner Kershaw, former Commissioner of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services, has his eye on Northern Territory recruits.

It is important to acknowledge that people make different life decisions, after last year. Many reassessed their life, family situation and priorities. Some who left the organisation noted that reunification with family had been a part of their decision-making.

The year-to-date figures are a total of 95 separations. It is important to understand that there were 12 retirements and six dismissals—there is a high bar within the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services and some people unfortunately were dismissed.

There have been many efforts on recruitment. I attend many graduation ceremonies with the deputy leader and can see the level of recruitment we have been doing. There have been separations of nine constable recruits and one Aboriginal community police officer. There have been 15 police auxiliary resignations.

It is important to understand is that we have more police and auxiliaries than ever before. We are increasing the number of Aboriginal employees to increase Aboriginal liaison and community police officers. Other jurisdictions are wanting to recruit NT police, because they are the best police in the nation. The first two years of experience that NT police get on a job—I always get the advice that in most other jurisdictions it would take many more years in the job to gain that experience and insight into what we have in the Northern Territory.

Our attrition rate is at 5.25% as of 31 March 2021, compared to the previous financial year of 4.92%.

We try to understand the reasons that police officers leave. It is not mandated, but we try to ascertain the reasons members leave. Exit interviews are conducted with members willing to do those questionnaires—and to speak to officers.

Commissioner CHALKER: Whilst I know that there has been a fair bit of public commentary on this and arguably a level of catastrophising about the attrition rate, in real terms it is a 0.33% increase. Against the backdrop of COVID and what we know as it relates to all the other jurisdictions seeking to attract NT police officers, that number is not significant in the scheme of things. Nor will I apologise for raising the bar to the level I have. We have moved on more recruits as constables than previously, because the standard in the college has increased and we are holding that bar very high.

You would be aware of the dismissals; a number of them attracted fairly significant attention. Nobody wants police officers who use illicit drugs whilst on duty or who has stolen a police-issued firearm and the like. In

respect of that I am comfortable with the approach that we have undertaken. More to the point we have had a heavy focus on ensuring we get our numbers up to what our true capability and capacity was funded to be.

At the end of pay 20 this year, compared to 30 June last year, we have an increase of 72 FTE—sworn police. The Northern Territory community can be assured that we have actively recruited and will continue to actively recruit people who are ready, willing and able—and being produced out of our college—to work in the communities.

The vacancies in our remote communities have been treated and are nowhere near as significant as they used to be. I set a very clear mantra within the agency that remote policing is an important part of a person's career. They are joining the Northern Territory Police Force, they are not joining the Darwin police force. For the officers who put their hand up to go out there, they are realising very quickly that what I am saying rings true. It is a great career. To experience life as a police officer in remote communities is fantastic.

Encouragingly, a number of the attrition rates have dropped. There was the one you referenced before, where in one month we had a significant number. Those numbers were attributable specifically to AFP recruitment and Tasmania police recruitment. Across the board we are very comfortable with our recruiting process and the number of police we have on track to continue to serve and protect the Northern Territory.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I get a breakdown on numbers, please? We have 95 separations for the year to date. Is that correct?

Ms MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is it from 1 July?

Ms MANISON: That is the year to date.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is from 1 July this year?

Ms MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How are those 95 broken down? Can you give me the split into resignations, dismissals and retirements?

Ms MANISON: There were six dismissals, 77 resignations and 12 retirements. Several of those were recruits.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Out of the 77 resignations, nine were recruits and one was an Aboriginal community police officer recruit?

Ms MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 77 resignations, how many went to the AFP and how many went to an interstate police force?

Commissioner CHALKER: We do not know specifically how many, because the person has a choice to do an exit interview or not, to let us know where their future employment is. We do not actively track where they then go to. It is up to them to advise of us of the role they take on. We do not have that breakdown.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is it not important? If you are wanting to understand why people are leaving, is it not important to get that information? If they are transferring to another police force, I imagine that there is some level of referee checking or some sort of internal inquiry where, for example, WA police send a memo over and say, 'What do you reckon about this bloke?'. There must be something.

Commissioner CHALKER: It is up to the individual whether they advise where they are heading. Ordinarily checks would come through but that does not always necessitate that someone will go because referee checks will occur prior to that. The reality is that people are afforded the opportunity to provide an exit interview then they choose to stay or go. Our focus is on people who are committed to the Northern Territory and want to be here. We have ample evidence to show that plenty of our people are here for the right reasons and want to continue to serve and protect the Northern Territory.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The government has been running a very hard line that the reason we are losing police is that they are moving interstate because of aggressive—I think you called it, Minister—interstate police

recruitment. How do you know that if you are not capturing the information on how many of the 77 are moving interstate? You do not know that police are leaving to join other police forces. How can you make the statement that it is because of aggressive recruitment?

Commissioner CHALKER: Leader of the Opposition, with respect to that, the question I could not answer for you was the specifics of that 77 broken down because I do not have those figures. We do know that a large number of them have gone to law and enforcement agencies. We have an awareness from some who have taken part in those interviews but to be able to give you the specific answer to the breakdown of 77, I do not hold that figure.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 77, how many do you know have gone to AFP and interstate police forces?

Commissioner CHALKER: We will take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.3

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 77 resignations this year to date, how many people—that Police is aware of—left the force to join the AFP or an interstate police force?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. I am happy to accept the question. Off the top of my head, I could start rattling off some names that know of. Yes, we will take that.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.3.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of the 95 separations undertook the exit interview?

Mrs MANISON: There has been more work within Police to understand some of those factors. I will get the commissioner to talk about the process of the exit questionnaires and interviews because we try to why people are leaving. We want to understand those reasons.

Commissioner CHALKER: For the 2020–21 reporting period, 10 members out of that group completed the exit interviews. We do not tend to have a high take-up on exit interview participation. It is voluntary. We tend to get feedback from people who leave for family work-life balance, personal reasons, relocation interstate for family, age retirement and to pursue their career. The questions we go through in the process are:

- Could your employer do something to retain you?
- In the right circumstances, would you consider reapplying for the Northern Territory Police?
- Are you continuing to reside in the NT?
- Would you like a face-to-face interview?

And the like.

All of those questions remain voluntary. We respect an individual's choice that if they do not wish to undertake an interview, that is their choice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Ten members completed it for last financial year. Is that correct?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct. This current financial year concluding.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is that of the 95? It would be more than that?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, correct. Ten out of the 95.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Ten out of the 95 completed an exit interview. Has Police reviewed how it conducts its exit interviews to get better information? It is such an important thing to understand. It costs a lot of money,

obviously, to run the college and train police. In every minute of every day they are in the job they are learning more, so you are building that corporate knowledge and experience on the beat and on the ground. It is one thing to say that we are recruiting more than ever before and we have streams of police coming out of the college at the moment. That is one thing, but it is the bucket full of holes. You guys are just pouring water on top hoping to keep filling it back up as people leave. It is critically important that we understand why they are going. If we only have 10 out of 95 people giving any indication of that, how is government fully understanding this issue?

Mrs MANISON: It is important to restate that there will always be a level of turnover in an organisation as large as Northern Territory Police. We have increased the numbers and put more officers on the job than ever before, which is fantastic. With that, when you grow your organisation, it would be natural to think that you will see some increases in turnover, because there are larger numbers of people in that organisation.

In 2019-20, the figure was at 4.92% and we are at 5.25% this year. Police are working to improve the ways that we obtain information. It is not mandated. You cannot mandate someone to have conversations with you, because when they leave the police, they leave the police. They have endeavoured to ascertain more of that information, but generally, it is fair to say that while Police is a larger organisation than it used to be, it is still a much smaller organisation than the interstate police forces. It is the Territory; it is a small place. People understand the reasons people leave.

I will get the commissioner to speak a bit more about that, but we make efforts to try to obtain that information because we take it seriously. We want to be competitive with our recruitment, but also retain the best and brightest.

Commissioner CHALKER: We have no issue attracting people to join our agency. I will be upfront—0.33% increase is not a catastrophe for me in any way, shape or form, balanced against the backdrop of COVID-19 and the impact that has on people. Many of the people we recruited previously were not from the Northern Territory. We know they probably had an eye to return to their home jurisdiction. Now, many of those home jurisdictions are re-employing them. Others have not gone to policing, but to returned home to their places.

There is no legislative authority that enables me to mandate that an employee takes part in an exit interview. We are very comfortable as it relates to our current environment. The number of police we recruited is above our attrition rate and continues to be for a significant period of time. We are very comfortable and assured that our community is being served.

We turned our promotion system back on after it had been in somewhat of a stay for a while. I have taken a number of steps to get opportunities for people there. We have new superintendent, senior sergeant and new sergeant promotions. There is a lot of hype and activity in the agency where people are stepping up to take charge and be able to lead in the organisation going forward. The Northern Territory can be very assured we have more police on our books than we have had previously. We managed to ensure that we still attract a lot more people. We have started to attract a lot more Territorians to become Northern Territory police officers to protect ourselves into the future.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: With the 10 exit interviews that were completed, what did they say?

Commissioner CHALKER: It was a mix of family and work-life balance, personal reasons, age, retirement or pursue another career.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are there any proactive measures that the police are taking to try to get more people leaving the force to undertake these exit interviews?

Commissioner CHALKER: We actively encourage their supervisors by speaking to them and encouraging them to undertake those interviews. But that is as far as we can go, and I am quite comfortable with that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How do police know that the majority of the 77 resignations are from interstate recruitment?

Commissioner CHALKER: We have a general awareness of those who have gone on to other police forces. I will get you those specific numbers as per the question on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I get a breakdown of the rank or designations of the 95 separated?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, there is one executive; 49 constable and above; nine constable recruits; 15 police auxiliaries; two Aboriginal community police officers; and one Aboriginal police officer recruit.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you break down the 49 of constable and above into those ranks?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have that data. That will need to be taken on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.4

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 49 members who separated from the police force with ranks of constable and above, please provide a breakdown of the numbers of police for each of the rank levels, which have been described as constable and above.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.4.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many recruit squads have commenced at the college this financial year?

Mrs MANISON: We should be incredibly proud of the wonderful work being done by NT Police recruitment to promote careers in policing in a very competitive world with interstate jurisdictions and the different career choices people have in life.

I have been encouraging—and am pleased to see that the commissioner believes in this—creating pathways for people within police to work their way through the ranks. We need a police force that reflects the community it serves. Without a doubt, we want to see more Aboriginal people within the Northern Territory Police.

I commend the commissioner for his vision and leadership when it comes to the recruitment of Aboriginal liaison officers, to get more Aboriginal people engaged in policing and ensure stronger relationships in remote communities, stronger cultural ties, understanding and knowledge. It is a very important program and we have seen significant increases, as well as the ongoing efforts of recruitment of Aboriginal community police officers and recruitment of constables, police auxiliary liquor inspectors and auxiliaries in general.

With every recruitment squad we are seeing more ALOs becoming ACPOs, ACPOs becoming constables and auxiliaries becoming constables. This is a wonderful thing because they are people who have already gone out on the job with a couple of years of experience under their belt and are ready to join the ranks of constable and further their career in the Northern Territory Police Force.

Because of the additional funding and numbers we have put on, the college has been doing a remarkable job with recruitment in a very competitive environment. I thank the hard-working members of the police college—because they do a magnificent job—and all the officers who have been working with the different squads, for the time and commitment they put into it.

It is a was a proud day to stand on the parade grounds and see the graduation ceremonies and the pride of the graduating officers. I think even you get excited by it, Leader of the Opposition. It is always a wonderful day. We love going there and seeing the rewards of all their hard work at the graduation.

Commissioner CHALKER: Squad 137 graduated on 23 October 2020 with 15; squad 138 graduated on 23 October with 11; squad 139 graduated on 19 March with 28; squad 140 graduated on 9 April with 25; squad 141 graduated last week with 26; and squad 142 is due to graduate on 13 August with 52. ACPO squad 27 graduates on 13 August of this year with 11; and we graduated 12 during the course of last year. We have had a number of auxiliary squads, specifically for those who graduated ...

Mrs MANISON: It is important to recognise that the auxiliary squads sometimes go to the JESC or the watch house. Police auxiliary liquor inspectors can be quite broad—the different auxiliary squads.

Commissioner CHALKER: Squad 64 graduated at on 7 June with 10 call takers; on 13 July last year 10 of those were for our watch house and PALI duties. Squad 65 graduated on 21 June with 10; squad 66 graduated on 18 December with 10; squad 67 graduated on 2 April with 12; and squad 68 graduated on 5 March with nine. We have also recruited and currently employed 28 additional Aboriginal liaison officers in the last financial year.

Ms PURICK: On the police website it says auxiliary training is 17 to 13 weeks, but I have heard that some have been pushed out in four to six weeks. Can you confirm the minimum training for auxiliary is seven weeks?

Commissioner CHALKER: JESC, Joint Emergency Services Communication Centre, staff go through a seven-week program. Much of their training now is being done on the job, so they do their initial training for legislation call-taking practice and the like, then have a significant period of call-taking work undertaken in the JESC.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is it reasonable to conclude that the high police attrition rate in the Northern Territory could be at least in part attributed to the Constable Zachary Rolfe murder trial, which has been a blow to the whole community for many reasons and presumably a blow to the morale of the police?

Mrs MANISON: We have an upcoming court case and I will be very careful with the comments that I make.

Mrs LAMBLEY: As we all will.

Mrs MANISON: There is no doubt that this has been a very difficult time for many people across the Northern Territory Police Force and the people of Yuendumu. It is really important at this point not to go too far into it with a court trial coming up next month.

I have spent many times—as have the commissioner and his senior executive—going through police stations and talking directly to the troops about how they are going, especially close to that event. I went through the police station and had several conversations with members day about that. The greatest impact on attrition at the moment goes to the pull of family and the pull of interstate recruitment ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: How do you know that minister? How can you measure that? Or are you just making an assumption?

Mrs MANISON: No, because of the conversations I have. This is my experience from the conversations I have with officers. There is no doubt that the events in Yuendumu were tough for many members, as they were for the people of Yuendumu. We are commencing a trial and it is important we do not go into it too much, given this will be a matter before the courts.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How do you think this trial has impacted the morale of the police force in the Northern Territory? It is the elephant in the room, which we read about every day in the media. Territorians want to know how it is impacting the police service. We all know coppers in our neighbourhoods and communities and anecdotally we hear stories and whispers. It has had a profound impact and I would like to hear from the police executive and Police minister about that impact and how you are managing it.

Mrs MANISON: At the time, a huge amount of work was done with officers across the Northern Territory and there continues to be a range of conversations. Respecting that a trial about to commence, I do not think this is a timely conversation.

Please be assured that, as minister, every day I make as much effort as I can to get out to stations and talk to people face to face. Police officers are frank with me about their feelings and how life is going within the organisation. I keep in touch with the issues and work with the executive and they work closely with officers across the organisation. That is all I will say at this point.

Mrs LAMBLEY: If now is not the time—and I am not arguing with you—when will be the time? This is affecting everyone. We are reading about it in the paper, it has been broadly reported throughout the media and people are interested, particularly in my part of the world in Central Australia. We are getting nervous about the upcoming trial, which starts online 26 July and want to know what preparation is being made by the police force and government. It has the potential to be explosive; it has had a major impact on the police service. I would like to acknowledge that. The police officers who had the courage to talk to me at different opportunities expressed concern about the impact it has on them. This is budget estimates; it is your opportunity to speak to Territorians and not close down a conversation, which we are having in the media anyway.

Mrs MANISON: I appreciate you are trying to drill into this matter at estimates, but in respect of the court processes, I am not going into this any further at this point. Please understand that, as the minister, I am accountable every day and get questions from the media, in parliament and on the doors. As there is an impending court trial, this is not the time or place for these discussions.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I disagree. This is an opportunity to have a difficult conversation. We are here and have the security of parliamentary privilege.

Mrs MANISON: I do not abuse that privilege.

Mrs LAMBLEY: As I said, this has had a profound impact on each and every one of us for many reasons. It is an opportunity for you to explain how the potential reaction will be managed during the trial. I would like you to talk about the impact it has had on morale and police attrition rates. If we cannot talk about the policy and procedure of Northern Territory Police, during a major crisis like this. I question what we are here for.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I gave the reasons why I do not think I should be using parliamentary privilege now, with the timing of this trial.

Mrs LAMBLEY: If you are concerned about saying something you should not, I am not concerned about it.

Mrs MANISON: No, I respect justice, the court process and my responsibility as a minister.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The police attrition rate has nothing to do with the court case. I am asking how the attrition rate has impacted on police.

Mrs MANISON: Sorry.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You are just closing it down, minister. It is not good enough.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I have put a very reasonable case on the table. I respect the court process and I do not think it would be responsible for a minister to run commentary at this time.

Mr CHAIR: I also remind honourable members about the manner and form ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: You did not want to talk about crime; you do not want to talk about this.

Mrs MANISON: The Member for Araluen is abusing her position right now by trying to do this.

Mr CHAIR: Order!

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, I am attempting to have an open conversation.

Mrs MANISON: It is very irresponsible, Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It has a major impact on the whole of the Northern Territory and we cannot talk about it.

Mrs MANISON: You really have no respect for the court process at all.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do.

Mr CHAIR: Order!

Mrs LAMBLEY: There are always constraints.

Mr CHAIR: Order! I remind honourable members about Standing Order 109, which is about the questions and not to ask ministers for an expression of opinion, and also not to contain hypothetical matters. The Rolfe case occurs in late July and we do not know the outcome. I say that is hypothetical to talk about it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am not asking for any discussion about the outcome, just about the impact on the police force and plans that have been put in place to respond to situations that may arise. Reasonable questions—I accept your position. I do not know if Territorians will.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the recruits who graduated this financial year, how many were posted to Darwin and Palmerston?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand over to the commissioner to go through those details. As I have answered in parliament before—we have had this debate in the Chamber—it is really important that people across the Northern Territory get the police recruits and service that they deserve. We found in police that we have had several people who have never been outside Darwin. By making sure our recruits get out to the regions and outside Darwin, we have officers where they are needed, who will have a fantastic experience in their first few years on the job, learning from great experienced police officers in some wonderful parts of the Northern Territory and, most importantly, providing valuable service to the people who live in those communities.

We make sure that new recruits serve outside Darwin. This is a very important change that has been implemented to ensure that our recruits get great experience on the ground, but most importantly, the regions, towns and communities they serve get the service they truly deserve.

Commissioner CHALKER: The number who have graduated to Darwin or Palmerston, is zero. They have all been posted outside Darwin straight up. The reasoning behind that is that the model in place across the Northern Territory—and has been in place for quite a period of time—is a return of service provision for people who work in remote communities, as well as Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy where, once you complete two years tenure in those locations, you can seek a return of service to your locality of choice. It is probably not surprising to many that Darwin is the preferred station after that point in time.

Darwin always has quite a large number of what we call supernumerary positions where people have completed their return to service and come to Darwin. Our current modelling to approach this is to ensure that our major regional centres have sufficient resourcing. That will enable them to pick up continuing relief in their remote stations, where they have relief, whereas Darwin has continued to pick up remote station relief here, which has impacted on their business. I am trying to ensure that each area now has sufficient resources across their command portfolio to provide policing resources commensurate with the positions they have allocated and not to impact significantly on Darwin and Palmerston going forward.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many recruits have been posted to Casuarina or any the Darwin rural stations?

Commissioner CHALKER: None.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many have been posted to Katherine?

Commissioner CHALKER: I do not think I have that breakdown.

Mrs MANISON: We will need to take that question on notice. I assume what you would like is the year-to-date figure of where recruits have been posted. We know it is mostly Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine, but sometimes recruits go to other places.

Question on Notice No 5.5

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you please provide a breakdown of what station every graduating constable for the financial year was posted?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I accept the question.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When was the last time a graduating constable was posted to Darwin-Palmerston, Darwin-Rural or Casuarina?

Commissioner CHALKER: It was 2019.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are graduated constables—do you start to call them probationary constables? Just so I am using the right language. Do we then have a result of probationary constables being partnered with each other in the regions because the volume of probationary constables does not allow for them to partner with that mixed experience? On how many occasions is a probationary constable partnered with another probationary constable?

Commissioner CHALKER: That has been the case in the Northern Territory Police Force for decades.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You have to agree that with this change of policy since 2019, all recruits are heading outside the broader Darwin area. For example, when we asked in the last parliament, there were 88 graduates or PCs in Katherine alone. I do not know what the total number of police in Katherine are, but I would guess that is an enormous proportion.

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct. As I said, the situation is one that has been ongoing in the Northern Territory Police Force for decades. It is part of the issue as it relates to the return to service—so the predominant seniority of the police force tends to settle in Darwin or into the specialist areas such as crime, major crash or those types of roles.

What we rely upon is that the supervisor teams on the ground have a level of awareness and oversight. They try to make sure the probationers are working with people who have been on the ground a lot longer than them. They tend to work that mix through. Given the graduation squads and time in between them, some of them get a bit more exposure and experience to it from there. It is an ongoing issue that is not easily treatable and has not been able to be treated for the last couple of decades.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Does that not leave the police officers more vulnerable to police assaults, just because of the sheer levels of on-the-job experience?

Commissioner CHALKER: We do not have evidence that gives that indication. Arguably, our recruits are probably more recently trained in the latest—as it relates to our operational—safety and tactical training. We tend to find that training holds them in good stead.

Assaults against police is something that continues to concern us. Any assault on a police officer in the execution of their duty should be considered an abhorrent act and that is something we continue to do. We do not see that it is specifically linked to probationary constables as being high victims in that category.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There has been this big push—you have just outlined the numbers of recruits of all levels through the police college. There has been a huge recruitment drive of late with the NT Police. You have also talked a lot about the aggressive recruitment drive from interstate police. How is Territory Police attracting people to fill these squads? Is Police going back and proactively contacting people who have either left the police force or were not accepted by the police force in the past to enrol?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is something that we do. We also have our accelerated recruit program where we can bring experienced police back. Part of the limitation is under our *Police Administration Act* where those who have previously worked with us have gone to other agencies, particularly in law enforcement, and have obtained a higher rank. I am limited in being able to bring them back at that rank. That is something we can have a conversation with the NTPA, regarding whether it is still a contemporary piece of legislation to have within the PAA that would limit me bringing experienced NT police officers who have gone to other jurisdictions for a period of time—I cannot return them at the rank they may have attained down the track.

We maintain a level of contact with a number of our people as it relates to them being advised when we are doing accelerated recruit programs and the like. Our recruitment program appears to be working quite well. The number of people who are applying and the ones we select down to our program gives us strong encouragement that we will continue to be able to recruit as and when needed.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you proactively reaching out to people who did not pass their entry requirements in the past?

Commissioner CHALKER: There are some established standards, for example, where people may not be able to reapply for up to a 12-month period. We do not recall any if any of those have met that relevant standard. We hold that standard.

With our current active recruitment program, we are able to find and recruit people. In November 2019, when I returned, there was a squad that had commenced and I had to turn recruiting back on. We have managed to recruit what will be in excess of 220-odd constables plus auxiliaries and the like by October of this year. I am very comfortable with the fact that our recruitment program, with the conditions we offer people as an employer, is clearly seen for the value it is.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have any of the entry requirements or selection criteria changed in the last two years?

Commissioner CHALKER: They have not under my direction.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has any of the psychological testing changed?

Commissioner CHALKER: I have had a review of psychometric testing to understand the value of that but they continue to use psychometric testing to assist with the challenge panels, which is part of our interview process.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If someone completes the psychometric testing and was deemed unsuccessful, previously they were not allowed to reapply for 12 months. Is that right?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is my understanding.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has that changed?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, not to the best of my knowledge.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What happens if a new police constable does not satisfactorily complete their probation period?

Commissioner CHALKER: Their employment is terminated.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can that probation period be extended?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, it can.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On how many occasions has that happened?

Commissioner CHALKER: Very rarely.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could I get a number on that for the last financial year?

Commissioner CHALKER: We can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.6

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many constables have had their probationary period extended for this reporting period?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, there has been recent media and public criticism of accreditation and training at the police college, but the government has not cleared the air on this issue or explained what is or is not the case. It is really important that this issue is understood because the last thing Territorians need is to feel a lack of confidence in our constables being recruited and being pushed through the college system.

I believe you should go into the detail we need to know about whether or not the college is operating with the correct accreditations or not.

Mrs MANISON: I am delighted you have asked this question, because I want to put on record my complete support of the leadership team, the work at the police college and the amazing job they are doing with the hard work they put in, along with the police in police recruitment. Anybody who asserts that we are not recruiting quality people and do not have a high level of training and quality assurance at the police college is wrong. I again give my thanks to the staff at the police college for the amazing job they do every day. Our standards are very high in the Northern Territory Police Force and so they should be.

I will let the commissioner go into a few of those points. I am appalled by some of that commentary I have seen about the police college.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If you have been so appalled, why has the government not released what it says is the true record of the situation? There has been a void from government. There has been no information whatsoever. The fact that it has even come to estimates means that you let this languish in the community. Why have you not been quick to move in as Police minister to right the record?

Mrs MANISON: Because the record speaks for itself.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is not an acceptable answer. You have to meet things head-on with the information. Even in every question I have asked you, you have front-loaded it with great, wonderful thanks and praise for everybody. It is all very wonderful to be effusive, but you are just running down the clock. There are questions that just have a natural answer. The answer often is just sitting in the document in front of you or the commissioner, or any number of people sitting on this panel.

It is a very serious and important issue and government either has something to hide or it does not. If it does not, please tell us so that—even for just the morale of the police force and those constables. Imagine how they are feeling about this situation. It is incredibly important that the factual air is cleared by government on this certification issue.

Mrs MANISON: I will let the commissioner answer the question. I make no apologies for talking about how proud I am, as Police minister, to be the minister of this incredible organisation, because I get to see firsthand the amazing work these people do. Estimates is a chance for me to be able to talk about it.

Commissioner CHALKER: I understand the topic circled around the unlawful release of a police college executive committee meeting around 17 October 2019. This broadly relates to RTO status. It centred around, as I understand it at that period of time, an audit which is a standard practice they undertake at the college to understand their compliance with the RTO status. It is a standard practice of identifying some areas that needed some treatment applied to.

My understanding is that was a snapshot in time and post that audit, the college undertook a range of actions to address all of the areas identified. Quite clearly, the training standard I have had in place since returning as commissioner is a high one. My understanding is that all of the RTO progress and actions continue to be subject to internal governance committees and reported through the NT PFES training assessment advisory committee, which includes the Northern Territory Police Association as part of the committee membership.

The college will continue to undertake RTO audits to monitor compliance and improve performance. The most recent audit was conducted in March of this year. The college complied with the ASQA requirements in relation to notification to them with the compliance audit undertaken and provided the 2020–21 annual RTO declaration.

Those matters were historical but, from my advice, appear to have been treated.

Mr CHAIR: Honourable members, we will take a three-minute break.

The committee suspended.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like to talk in greater detail about police numbers. This is always something of interest. We asked global questions, in advance of estimates, and got some numbers but they do not seem to match.

On page 1 of the written questions, police give a figure of 1,612.89 ongoing full-time and the executive contract and ongoing part-time. In a different part of that answer, it breaks down ongoing full-time into various ranks and notes that there are 1,610—I appreciate it is similar to the 1,612.

As we have known for a long time, if you want to fudge the figures of police numbers you can. People want to know how many police are driving around in cars catching criminals. When push comes to shove, that is what it is all about. If something happens to me, my home or business and I ring 000, how many police are there at any one time able to respond to that issue? Can you give me a figure of how many sworn constables there are, which surely excludes auxiliaries? Talk us through what counts as a police officer in your statistics?

Mrs MANISON: I will pull out my brief.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On page 5 it says 1,667 frontline police, which is completely different.

Mrs MANISON: That is in the written questions that you have.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Which page? Page 5 says there are 1,667 police and page 1 says there are 1,612?

Mrs MANISON: I am looking at page 2 under 'ongoing full-time NT police'.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Say that again?

Mrs MANISON: You have a couple of different graphs. Page 2 is ongoing full-time police, page 3 is ongoing part-time and page 4 is executive contract.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You add the three together and they are the police numbers?

Mrs MANISON: The figure is 1,667.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If we add ongoing full-time, ongoing part-time and fixed term full-time, is that right?

Mrs MANISON: We responded to your written questions and the total is 1,667; the most police that we have had.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In that, you include part-time constables and above?

Mrs MANISON: We have some people, not a huge amount as you can see, within a very big organisation like police, where over 1,612 of them—we have 1,612 are all going full-time and we have 38.34 ongoing part-time and being there as part-time could be for a raft of reasons. I have met some people with return-to-work conditions and others with different reasons. That is the number and I am very pleased with that figure because it is a lot more than when I started—1,667.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are they what the government would call frontline police? Or is that number bigger because you include auxiliaries in that?

Mrs MANISON: They are police ...

Commissioner CHALKER: That is our total rank establishment, all police officers, and by definition all can be deployed for frontline if I so choose.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That 1,667 does not include auxiliaries?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, it includes auxiliaries.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: With ongoing full-time or with any of those three employment categories is not specific to constables or above? What could that include?

Commissioner CHALKER: As per page two of your written question, I will go through the rank classifications for you. Your ongoing fulltime is Aboriginal community police officer first class, Aboriginal community police officer, Aboriginal community police officer recruit, senior ACPO, the police auxiliary recruit, police auxiliary, police auxiliary first class, senior police auxiliary, a constable in training, a constable, a constable first class, senior constable, senior constable first class, examiner—those four examiner classifications are all part of

our forensics team. They are sworn officers, who will either be crime scene examiners, finger print examiners and the like. They are a speciality field of sworn. Also there is remote sergeant, sergeant, senior sergeant, superintendent and assistant commissioner. That is that category.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As far as government is concerned, you class all those categories as frontline policing?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many actual police drive around catching crims?

Commissioner CHALKER: At any given point in time that changes on a day-to-day basis because of allocation of resources as the relevant stations and their rostering teams set up their rosters—how many attend and whether people are on sick leave or have court commitments and the like, which have an impact. Each day there is a distinct difference in the number allocated but as we break down what is at Darwin police station, Casuarina, Alice Springs Police Station they all have relevant cohorts that provide what we call our general-duties response, as well as traffic response and other duties, which would pick up our alcohol policing interdiction, our community engagement teams and the like.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Why do police count recruits as frontline staff?

Commissioner CHALKER: We count all police officers as frontline staff because I have the ability to deploy them all, even recruits, if needed. As recently as the search that occurred only a couple of weeks ago, I had to seek to deploy our recruits because we could utilise them to assist with search on the ground, for example. They are readily deployable from the moment they are sworn in.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They could drop out; they could fail. A number of things could happen during their period of training. How can they be caught up in these highest-ever police numbers? For example, 104 constables are recruits—or just constable recruits—I suspect if you take that out of your 1,667 number, minister, that will leave it a lot less ...

Mrs MANISON: It looks a hell of a lot nicer than when you were last in government.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You can be a smartarse all you like, but the reality is that you are in the hot seat. I want to know, as do Territorians ...

Mr CHAIR: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mrs MANISON: I am just stating a fact.

Mr CHAIR: Order, Minister! Leader of the Opposition, please refrain from using that type of language.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We have the most police ever before under your watch and the highest crime ever before. That is very interesting. What is the rationale? How is it possible you can count recruits in those police numbers? I would suggest that undermines confidence in Territorians when we talk about police numbers. I do not think any average Territorian would expect you would count a recruit in your overall number—until of course the day they graduate. I accept that.

Commissioner CHALKER: The reporting has not changed since I have known of it. This is standard practice as it relates to the total FTE paid by police to derive the FTE figure. There is no distinction where we would separate recruits away from that. It is not anything that has been a common practice for at least the last decade to the best of my knowledge.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That may be the case and I do not know the answer to that, but ultimately ...

Mrs MANISON: It is the answer. Have a look in the annual reports.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Ultimately, you will not send recruit constables, for example, out to fill vacancies at Casuarina Police Station. In terms of usable force, what is the daily usable size of the force? For example, commissioner or deputy commissioners, I do not think on a daily, weekly, monthly or even yearly basis, you have to hop in a paddy wagon and do GDs work.

Mrs MANISON: You would be surprised. I know Deputy Commissioner Murphy shops at Hibiscus and I have heard some great stories about the times he has had to assist.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I understand you could, but the reality is you do not, right? I am not trying to be tricky, just trying to understand what is our capable use of police officers. There are auxiliaries, who have performed PALI roles or auxiliaries in JESC. They are not out in cop cars chasing bad guys, either. Then there are all the examiners and forensics; they provide that important support. There are executive-level people who provide leadership but who are not out there on the ground. What is the number of police who provide our outward-facing daily on-the-ground capability?

Commissioner CHALKER: We run a rank structure that looks after the deployment of our resources. As it breaks down to how our divisions are at present, we have what we refer to as our general duties division. That would be Darwin, Casuarina, Palmerston, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy and the like. They all have predominantly uniformed officers that will provide response capability and capacity.

We then have our crime, forensics, and tactical response group portfolios. Our college command and recruitment teams have resources allocated. We move our resources seamlessly to focus on what we need to provide to meet demand as best as we possibly can.

Every one of our remote stations—54 of them and 13 still remain as temporary police stations 14 years on, from the intervention of 2007—require a policing service of some model. We have to make sure we can move resources around to ensure there is continuity of service wherever we can possibly achieve that. If remote service members need to go on sick or bereavement leave—which is not uncommon unfortunately—we have to move our resources around to facilitate people to be able to go and do all manner of things.

We make sure all of our frontline resources have as many adequate resourcing provisions as we can. Part of the reason we have had the focus on remote policing is to alleviate the pressure of our major centres, providing ongoing relief to the frequency of which they have been doing that.

At a number of stations, we have been able to secure a third house—an actual residence for a police officer and their family. We have built those stations to a capacity of three instead of two. This will give greater continuity on the ground and also alleviate the impact pressure that provides on the relief of other resources.

Across the board, the two deputies work quite frequently together on their available resources, which is that allocation of resources across the board under their two portfolios, to have as many forward-facing police officers as we possibly can.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What I am trying to get at, is there is still a situation where sometimes in Palmerston there is only one van on a shift, the same at Casuarina and rural area has no van or is sharing vans. It is very hard for people to stomach that when we have a government saying, 'We have recruited more police than ever before. We have the highest number of police,' yet the daily in-your-face capability of the police seems to be severely limited—perhaps worse than ever before.

Can I get a breakdown of what that staffing looks like in each of our stations? I understand that people take leave and all these different types of things, but at the end of the day if you are meant to have three vans on the road and you can only have one because you cannot find the staff or fill the overtime, that is a problem. You will not pull auxiliaries off PALIs to fill that or recruits out of the college. You will not send Deputy Commissioner Smalpage out to do it. It just does not work that way.

Why, when we have the biggest numbers of police than ever before, do we have—scarily—some of the smallest numbers of vans on the road?

Commissioner CHALKER: I do not accept that is the premise that is out there at the moment. Yes, there are times when reports that go out that there is a reduced capacity. Whenever that comes to our attention, we do a deep dive to understand why that is. Invariably, we find out that what is perpetuated to be the case is completely and utterly untrue.

We tend, on our deep dive, to find out if people have been booked off sick. Then a broader response occurs. In Darwin, the Territory duty superintendent will be critically aware that a van may be unavailable in a sector because of people booking off sick. They will then utilise the available other sectors—be it Darwin, Palmerston or even Humpty Doo—to provide further response to the broader greater Darwin area.

As it relates to the pressure point that comes from family and domestic violence, it is the case that our assaults have increased. We have been quite upfront about that. We know the causation of all of that. The truth of it is, that complaints of assault are a significant body of work that police need to undertake. When someone is

assaulted we have to undertake every endeavour to ensure that offender is placed before the court and faces the full sanction of the law.

They are timely investments, but they are worth the investment to ensure that an offender is taken off the road. We actively engage with the NTPA, which hears these stories from time to time. We continue to ask it to make contact with our relevant divisional superintendents straight up so they can find out exactly what the circumstance is and the truth behind the matter. We will continue to do so.

With the resourcing we have, predominantly our recruits will all be going into our frontline services. Every one of them, once they graduate, will be additional people available to go into vans. Their first couple of years is dedicated to frontline policing services. That is where our largest recruitment focus has been. Hence, the reason I say that our planned activities are always such that when the rosters are produced there is adequate resourcing across the board. We then have to respond adequately—and we do it very well—to provide sufficient resources forward facing continually across the board.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is undoubtedly a sensitive issue for the police executive and you, minister. I asked you in parliament on 6 May why there has been a directive to stop the use of bulk messaging. My understanding is that previously, if overtime needed to be filled, a message would go out to everyone saying, 'This is the spot. Does anyone want to do it?' Now that has been stopped, which means police are having to make very time-intensive phone calls ...

Commissioner CHALKER: I made that call. That followed many and frequent visits to a number of my major stations where I constantly received complaints from officers on the front line about the frequency of the text messages they were receiving and the impact on their amenity after hours. I withdrew that to ensure that all the divisional superintendents and their relevant senior sergeants and teams are working with their team to facilitate appropriate call-back opportunities within their agency that has a focus and lens on the amenity of officers when they are off duty.

At the end of the day, policing is 24/7, 365-day operation and we have people who book off sick. We need to recall resources. It is not the case that you can join the Northern Territory Police Force and think you will work a 40-hour week each and every week for a 20 or 30-year career. It is just not what our work involves and what the community expectation is because, as you have been saying, the community sense is that they want police officers out and about. We have every model in place.

I also have an obligation to my people for their health and wellbeing. The spasmodic approach of that system was going to all and sundry with no auditing as to who was available, who was on leave and who was not ready to go. I have asked them to tighten it up. That was the basis for that decision. It was not a decision made on any level of fragility. It was one that ensures appropriate management and supervision is in place to ensure that we have appropriate mechanisms to recall people in those times when people book off sick and we need additional resources.

Mrs MANISON: I had a further discussion with the commissioner and the NTPA about that. But given the response that the commissioner has delivered, and you can see the consideration he has given to the issue, I have no doubt that is the right operational call.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It highlights the large numbers of overtime hours required and the extra pressure that is putting on police because they are not having adequate levels of a break. I do not think it is necessarily regarding police underestimating their working week and what that might look like. Overtime payments go into the tens of millions of dollars. How much has been budgeted for overtime this financial year?

Mrs MANISON: It is important to recognise that it has been an extraordinary year. I started these estimates outputs talking about the fact that we have been dealing with the COVID-19 situation. That called heavily on police resources. Last year there were some great examples of police officers from across the organisation who were on the front line making sure that they were upholding community safety and being on border control checkpoints. There were large overtime pressures then.

The other issue was we had many police officers sacrifice leave. Many had to cancel their leave last year, even going into the start of this year. We thank them for all the time that they have put in. The nature of the job is very demanding, day-in and day-out. In this financial year, due to the COVID-19 response, we still had extra demands on overtime, for some of those reasons.

Commissioner CHALKER: As best as we plan to mitigate through effective, targeted rostering to treat our demand environment, this environment we operate in does not allow us to get that right 100% of the time.

As recently as the unfortunate fatal that occurred over the weekend and the incident at Finke on the preceding weekend—when those incidents occur, we provide a full model response to ensure that we get to the bottom of the causation of those incidents on behalf of family and the broad Northern Territory communities.

There is little doubt that COVID-19 had a significant impact on overtime. To our people's credit, our sick leave ratios stayed stable throughout that time. Our people committed to turning up and getting the job done, with the backdrop of significant overtime. The Northern Territory community should be deeply indebted to them for all the work that they did in that regard.

When you look across what occurred in the rest of the country, when police forces the size of New South Wales and Victorian required the addition of Australian Defence Force personnel to undertake their duties, it is a testament to the fact we were able to do it with the support of the AFP and the ADF as effectively as we did. COVID-19 impacted every jurisdiction significantly. The flow-on was for police to be there front and centre to guide their relevant jurisdictions through, as we continue to do.

Going forward, we are making sure that we do the best we possibly can. We have an electronic rostering system process under way that we hope to resolve by the end of this year. We believe that will provide us with a greater tool to forward plan and mitigate and control our overtime as best as we can. At the end of the day, I am trying to make sure that our people are not exposed to anywhere near as much overtime, predominantly on the basis of their health and wellbeing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do we have those overtime figures? I can take them on notice.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I am happy to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How much was spent online overtime last financial year, how much has been spent to date and how much is budgeted this year?

Question on Notice No 5.7

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How much was spent on overtime last financial year, how much has been spent on overtime year to date and how much is budgeted for overtime for this financial year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

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

Ms PURICK: Can you tell me the number of full-time police allocated to the Humpty Doo Police Station?

Mrs MANISON: The Humpty Doo Police Station is an important part of the police service, as is the fire station. I give you that assurance as a rural member. We have some great people working there. Their day-to-day business includes domestics, traffic and assaults. I will ask the commissioner to take the question and check how many staff are there.

Commissioner CHALKER: I believe it is eight, but I will confirm that shortly.

Mrs MANISON: It is a popular station to get posted to.

Ms PURICK: Of course, they have the wonderful local member who looks after them.

Mrs MANISON: They love working there.

Ms PURICK: Two local members! Could I also ask the number of vehicles, which are allocated to that station?

Question on Notice No 5.8

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

Ms PURICK: Could the minister provide the information on the number of vehicles which are allocated to the Humpty Doo Police Station?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Goyder has been allocated the number 5.8.

Ms PURICK: Can you tell me the exact hours of operation for the Humpty Doo Police Station, when the public can deal with a police office or auxiliary?

Mrs MANISON: The front counter would be different to the hours of operation of the station.

Ms PURICK: Both, the front counter versus hours.

Mrs MANISON: Usually the front counter is business hours; however, the station is still operational.

Commissioner CHALKER: During the COVID response, which is ongoing, I had to reduce the number of operating front counter hours. We made Palmerston the ongoing front counter for police response. I will double check whether Humpty Doo has reopened as an active front counter.

Ms PURICK: It has reopened.

Commissioner CHALKER: It will be Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 4.00 pm.

Ms PURICK: If there is a callout after 4.00 pm, is the response from police officers from Humpty Doo station, behind closed doors, or does it come from any station?

Commissioner CHALKER: Any call for response for Humpty Doo police officers, by its first notice, should go through the Joint Emergency Services Communication Centre and they would be deployed out of that area.

Ms PURICK: If the station was to go 24 hours, as for Palmerston or others, what would be the cost to extend the station's opening hours?

Commissioner CHALKER: From a demand environment, that would not be a justifiable move at this point in time. If you are referencing front counter hours, the attendance would be low. The transition to 24/7 response, in the event that there is no available Humpty Doo resources, Palmerston would be the next default to provide service category response. That could then extend to any other available resources across greater Darwin.

Ms PURICK: I understand with NT fire service, if Humpty Doo is closed and there is an issue in the rural area, the response might come from Palmerston or another station. Do you have the number of instances, for the last financial year of an incident in the rural area which required police attention, where the attendee officers have had to come from another station?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is not information I would have readily at hand. It would be a manual process for us to deep dive through our system to identify the relevant offices tasked to undertake that. Suffice to say, the imperative is ...

Ms PURICK: Firies can do it, though.

Commissioner CHALKER: They run a separate system to our programs within police. More to the point, the priority of our response is to ensure that if a category is following a priority one response, we will send any unit available. It may be the case that you have rostered Humpty Doo members on, but they may already

be attending another job and we may have to divert some other resources to Humpty Doo to provide further response. It starts crossing over with the legitimacy of the purpose of that.

Ms PURICK: They are related.

Are you able to provide—I will say the Litchfield Council because I do not want to go into the Daly River area. For the Litchfield Council boundaries in the rural area, can you provide the number of incidents that have required a PROMIS report for the last financial year, or from January?

Commissioner CHALKER: I met with the Litchfield Council only a couple of months ago and went through a number of the reports prior to that time. I can pull that information up and provide that you.

Mrs MANISON: We are more than happy to put that on notice if we can obtain that information.

Question on Notice No 5.9

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

Ms PURICK: Can you provide information on the number of PROMIS reports for the rural area for the last financial year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

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

Ms PURICK: The information is there about the number of reports, but can you give me information on PROMIS reports that have not been acted upon for lack of resources? Not all incidents are serious, but some may not be attended to. There were some PROMIS reports that were not actioned.

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to see what information we get. When you go to stations you meet triage teams as well. There are people who work throughout the day to make sure there is follow-up with members. For example, a car attending may not be required and there is no expectation that a van would turn up to attend to the job. However, there is still a level of follow-up and reporting that is required.

Palmerston and Casuarina have great teams to make sure there is continual follow-up when jobs are reported that require further police response.

Commissioner CHALKER: The minister is accurate in that description. It is not a case that we would never attend because of no resources available or follow-up. The case would not be closed off with that as a legitimate reason. The process is such that there would either be a referral to the admin of that station. If it was a case that through the prioritisation they determined that no response was required at that time, but a follow-up was required, that would be allocated to Humpty Doo, for example, for when they are next on shift to respond to the matter.

Having said that, if you have any information indicating that that is the advice any of your constituents have been receiving, I would appreciate hearing it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the total number of assaults on police for the financial to date?

Mrs MANISON: Year to date, that is 169.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is unbelievable. How many of those went on to lay charges?

Mrs MANISON: Year to date, 236 is the number I have been given for charges and multiple charges in some cases.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Did you say 236? How many do not proceed to a charge? Of the 169, how many proceeded to charge and how many did not?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, 217 of those proceeded to court.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Hang on, sorry. You said there were 160 assaults on police. Obviously, some of them will have multiple charges.

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Rather than breaking down the charges, can you tell me how many of the instances of the 169 assaults laid charges and how many did not?

Mrs MANISON: I do not think I have that data here, Leader of the Opposition. The data I have is that the number of charges that proceeded to court to date is 217.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, it is just that that information, in and of itself, does not tell us the story about ...

Mrs MANISON: It shows that there are more charges laid and appropriately so.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But it could be one assault with 15 charges and 20 assaults went uncharged. I want to know how many of the total assaults—I am happy to ask it on notice.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, you will have to take it on notice. I have data but I just do not have that.

Question on Notice No 5.10

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 169 assaults on police, how many of those assaults proceeded to charge or multiple charges and how many laid no charges at all?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the assaults on police that proceeded to have charges laid, how many resulted in successful prosecutions?

Mrs MANISON: The number of those charges that resulted in conviction was 64.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Out of the 236 charges, 64 charges were successfully prosecuted?

Mrs MANISON: That is the data I have.

Mr SMALPAGE: That may be accounted for by the fact that there are probably charges still before the court, having yet to be resolved. The figure of 64—that is only those which have been finalised. I have no doubt there are a number still awaiting trial or ongoing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of those 64 charges successfully prosecuted, how many instances of assault do they represent?

Mrs MANISON: We do not have that breakdown, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I ask that on notice?

Question on Notice No 5.11

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 64 successfully prosecuted charges, how many assaults on police does that represent?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.11.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the process for police to be supported if they have been assaulted?

Mrs MANISON: It is really important that we back our police. I stress that assaults on police are completely unacceptable. These are the people out there serving and protecting the community every day. It is a disgrace if people decided they will assault a police officer, because that is horrendous. These are the people to protect the community. I will hand over to the commissioner to talk about what support is put in place for the officers who are subjected to these horrendous assaults.

Commissioner CHALKER: At primacy is the criminal offence. The officers will provide advice that they wish to lay a charge and make a complaint of assault of police. That invariably occurs at point of arrest. At the point of arrest tends to be the highest point of where an assault is likely to occur on a police officer. The relevant supervisor will be made aware of that matter. They have an obligation to ensure that employee support services are provided to that individual, particularly if they have been spat on or exposed to blood and the like. There are some medical assessments that we oblige them to undertake for their health and wellbeing.

There is also a clear directive that the executive is to be made aware. We have an executive notification service so that we become aware which of our officers have been assaulted in the course of their duty and the relevant divisional superintendents and their teams ensure ongoing support for the officers involved.

It is still far too frequent. The spitting on police officers is one of the more abhorrent acts that can be undertaken in the course of one's duty. Unfortunately, we still see more physical assaults occurring on our police officers in the course of their duties.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have a series of questions that you might want to take on notice. I will read them and you can tell me, just in the interest of time.

Deputy Commissioner Smalpage, you mentioned that some would still be before the court, so I would like to know how many of the instances of assault are still before the court. Of the ones that have been concluded, how many resulted in a conviction, what the other results were, how many resulted in no conviction being recorded et cetera? If you have that data, I can ask them slowly. If you do not, I can do them as a question on notice.

Mrs MANISON: I can give you few bits of data and you tell me what works for you. The number of charges that proceeded to court is 217. The number of the charges that resulted in a conviction is 64—but taking on board what the deputy commissioner said about impeding court matters as well. The number of charges resulting in a finding of guilt is 76.

Commissioner CHALKER: Sorry, minister, for clarity on that. Not all people found guilty have a conviction recorded.

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, that is right. That is what I want to know.

Mrs MANISON: The number of convictions where an offender served prison time is 60—whatever other data you are after.

Question on Notice No 5.12

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 217 charges that were laid for assaults on police, how many assaults are still before the court? How many of the 64 that were successfully prosecuted resulted in no conviction being recorded, a conviction being recorded and what were the ranges of sentences imposed on those convictions?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I confirm that of the 169 assaults on police this financial year, you are saying that 60 have resulted in prison time?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, that is the advice I have. The number of those convictions where the offender served actual prison time.

Commissioner CHALKER: But it might not necessarily be linked to the assaults in this financial year. It could have been in the previous financial year. It just depends when the offender comes before the court.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could that also include actual prison time, for example sitting in the basement of the court waiting to come up—it is not necessarily a prison at a prison facility, it could be just until the rising of the court. Does it include that?

Commissioner CHALKER: It certainly can do, but as we understand it the current average is about 77.9 days of served time imprisonment.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I might just ask that on notice if you do not mind, minister.

Question on Notice No 5.13

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 60 assaults on police that have resulted in prison time for the offender, how many were to the rising of the court? How many were for time served on remand? And how many served time, not on remand, in either the Darwin Correctional Centre or the Alice Springs Correctional facility or the Tennant Creek work camp?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: I accept the question, Mr Chair.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many youths in the year to date have been arrested?

Mrs MANISON: Year to date is 420.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Does that represent 420 youths or 420 arrests?

Mrs MANISON: That is 420 arrests.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many youths is that?

Mrs MANISON: I am chasing down the number of youths. If you want to keep questioning and then we will see what we can bring?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I want to understand how many are being repeatedly arrested and how many youths for that period were bailed.

Mrs MANISON: It is 239.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That represented 239 youths?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Clearly, there is repeat offending there. For the repeat offenders, can you break down how many times they have been arrested in that period?

Mrs MANISON: We do not have each individual offender, but I am just trying get you a number of how many were repeat offenders. There are lots of different numbers with different meanings.

Sorry, Leader of the Opposition, can you ask the question again? Apologies for doing this. I am trying to make sure I get the right thing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You are looking at how many of them are repeat offenders?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I also wanted to know how many times each of those repeat offenders had been arrested for that period.

Mrs MANISON: We will have difficulty obtaining the individual numbers. I am trying to see the right number. For the reporting year we are talking about, the numbers I am looking at is 117 were arrested on the trail of 192 occasions for offences committed whilst on bail ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you want me to ask my other questions on notice?

Mrs MANISON: Keep going. We are endeavouring to get you the answers.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many repeat offenders is 117. Is that the answer to that question? How many offenders were arrested more than twice or three times? I can do that on notice.

Mrs MANISON: On notice, thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

Question on Notice No 5.14

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 117 youths who were arrested on more than one occasion, how many were arrested twice? How many were arrested three times? How many were arrested four times? How many were arrested five times—six, seven, eight, nine, 10 times? How many were arrested more than 10 times?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.14.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, I am a bit confused by your information. Let me just step back. There were 420 arrests for the period. That was shared amongst 239 youths. Of those 239 youths, 117 were on bail at the time of their arrest. Not just for repeat offenders, but they were on bail at the time of their arrests.

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of them committed a serious breach of bail? What is your end date on the reporting period?

Mrs MANISON: IT is 31 March.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is not year to date?

Mrs MANISON: Sorry, 31 March is year to date for me in the briefs I have been provided today.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay, sorry. In my mind I was thinking it was this year. That is for that period 1 July to 31 March? Do you have any data on how the new youth justice stuff is working?

Mrs MANISON: (inaudible – microphone off).

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There were 117 arrested and all of them were on bail. How many of those youths arrested while on bail, went on to be bailed?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have that information to hand; I am happy to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.15

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 117 youths arrested whilst on online bail, how many were then bailed again?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. We may have to hand to another agency to obtain the information.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Were all the 117 youths arrested for new offending? We know that breach of bail condition has been removed as an offence, but in police media alerts, we are getting information about breaches of bail. How many of the youths have been arrested for breach of bail or new offending?

Mrs MANISON: I think you would just be asking questions about the reforms that we legislated.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you not talking about a period pre-reform?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, this is the period pre-reform but I have information about post-reform implementation.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, we will do both.

Question on Notice No 5.16

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 117 youths who are repeat offenders and were arrested, how many were arrested for breach of bail and how many were arrested for fresh offending?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I asked before, how many youths have been arrested for serious breach of bail, under the new legislation. Do you have that?

Mrs MANISON: Under new reporting? Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. What date was that gazetted?

Mrs MANISON: On 14 May.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will any data on the amendments be from 14 May?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To what day?

Mrs MANISON: The latest information I had was up to last week. What was the question again?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many youths have been arrested for serious breach of bail?

Mrs MANISON: For committing a prescribed offence—13; breaching curfew or an EM device—14; breaching EM curfew and committed a prescribed offence—17.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In all three categories—if you could go through in that order again—how many were bailed?

Mrs MANISON: I only have overall figures. Since 14 May, 10 youths charged with a prescribed offence were granted bail at their first court appearance.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What about for the breach of curfew EM and then EM prescribed offence? Or is it 10 for all three of those categories?

Mrs MANISON: I will put that on notice, Leader of the Opposition. Because I want to get the data right.

Question on Notice No 5.17

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Since 14 May, 13 youths were arrested for a prescribed offence, 14 for breaching curfew electronic monitoring and 17 for breaching electronic monitoring and committing a prescribed offence. Broken down into those three categories, how many were bailed by police and how many were court bailed?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

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

Mrs MANISON: Sorry for going backwards and forwards, Leader of the Opposition. We would rather get as much of this done as we can. Other information regarding one of the questions you asked is that 101 youths were arrested on a total of 154 occasions for offences committed whilst on bail, excluding arrests where breach of bail is the only offence.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you know which question on notice number that is?

Mr MONAGHAN: I do not think that it relates to a question on notice.

Mr CHAIR: Okay.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you say that again?

Mrs MANISON: For Hansard, 101 youths were arrested on a total of 154 occasions for offences committed whilst on bail, excluding arrests where breach of bail is the only offence.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is this in relation to the ...

Mrs MANISON: That is of the 117.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 117 youths who were arrested while on bail, 101 were arrested 154 times, Therefore, if I minus 154 from 192, I should get the number of youths who were not arrested because it was breach of bail—192 minus 117 equals youths arrested for breach of bail.

Commissioner CHALKER: The 192 includes breach of bail as an arrest. The 154 is where it excludes breach of bail as the only offence.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, so 192 minus 154.

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes. Just to be clear, it is where breach of bail was the only offence.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Was I waiting for an answer? No, I took the last question on notice regarding the new reform. Since the reform has been in place, how many youths have been subject to curfew or electronic monitoring, or both?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have that data here but I can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.18

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Since 14 May, how many youths on bail have been subject to a curfew, electronic monitoring or both?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.18.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Since 14 May, how many youths have been arrested for breaching their bail by breaching their curfew or electronic monitoring?

Mrs MANISON: I went to breaching curfew or electronic monitoring—14 youths on 19 occasions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Were they for serious breaches of bail?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have asked about how many have been arrested—no, we are on the new bit ...

Mrs MANISON: That was breaching curfew or EM device.

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

Mrs MANISON: These are the numbers I have:

- serious breach of bail, committing a prescribed offence—13 youths on 17 occasions
- breaching curfew or EM device—14 youths on 19 occasions
- breaching EM curfew and committing a prescribed offence—17 youths on 27 occasions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For those youth offenders arrested for a serious breach of bail, how many were found not to be a serious breach of bail because they were trivial, technical or exceptional circumstances?

Mrs MANISON: The advice I have had is that it is twice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Twice out of how many—out of the 13, 14 and 17?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of the youths who were engaged in a serious breach of bail were subsequently bailed?

Mrs MANISON: I will have to get that information for you.

Question on Notice No 5.19

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of the youths who were engaged in a serious breach of bail were subsequently granted bail?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.19.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For this financial year, how many youths have been arrested for new offending while on bail?

Mrs MANISON: We will take that on notice with the other questions.

Question on Notice No 5.20

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For this financial year, how many youths have been arrested for new offending while on bail?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, and for consistency, it will be until 31 March 2021 which is the year to date.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.20.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the youths being dealt with under the new provisions of the act, how many have served actual prison time?

Mrs MANISON: I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.21

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the youths who have been dealt with, since 14 May, under the new bail and other provisions, how many have served actual gaol time, that for this purpose excludes periods of remand or the rising of the court.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, with the understanding it is likely I will have to get most of it from another agency.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.21.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have police been given directions when dealing the youths to proceed to the less serious charge?

Mrs MANISON: The commissioner is shaking his head, absolutely no.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For example, if there was assault with intent to steal, which has a 14-year maximum, if there was aggravated robbery, would that be downgraded to assault with intent to steal?

Mrs MANISON: I would say that police would be doing their job professionally and ensuring that the appropriate charge is laid.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many people have been arrested under the government's ringleader legislation?

Mrs MANISON: I will put that on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you not know that? Your much-heralded reform that was to keep us all safe?

Mrs MANISON: It is another tool in the tool box. There is a big, broad legislative reform program.

Question on Notice No 5.22

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many people have been arrested under the government's new ringleader legislation since 23 March this year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.22.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of those arrested, how many were youths, how many were adults and how many went on to serve gaol time?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, please put it on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.23

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the number of people arrested under the government's new ringleader legislation, how many were youths, how many were adults and how many serve actual gaol time?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.23.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.8

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I have some answers to questions taken on notice that I can put on the record now, or would you like to do it another time?

Mr CHAIR: Can you please clarify the number of the question, minister?

Mrs MANISON: It is 5.8: How many police work at the Humpty Doo Police Station, what are the opening hours, how many vehicles are allocated? The answer is there are 16 frontline staff across five patrol groups with one crew per shift; one sergeant; 14 constables and ACPOs; one auxiliary; and the front counter is Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 4.00 pm. The station runs on a 24/7 basis. There are three vehicles with this station.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In the answers to written questions on page 17 it talks about the victim of crime survey, and it says that in August 2020 greater Darwin road safety and support command sought to establish a victims of crime survey to allow the community to provide feedback to police about reporting crime. The answer goes on to say that the survey was hosted on the agency website as a standard form; however, additional reporting functionality needed to be built to provide meaningful analytics of the data. Upgrades to the website reporting capability incurred at a cost of \$1,500. What was the result of that survey?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to speak a bit more about the work we do with victims of crime. I have to stress that it is really important that victims come first and we hear their voice when they have been a victim of crime. That is why, police as an organisation has been working to make sure that we capture more of that information about the service delivery to the victims of crime and how they are going. We deliver the services that people in the community need. That is very important. That is why we have gone to the extra effort when it comes to working with victims of crime.

Commissioner CHALKER: That was a DIP survey we undertook to try to account for some of the rumour and innuendo that was being attributed to my police officers, with people suggesting that they were trying to defer victims of crime from making complaints and the like. I wanted to go straight to the horse's mouth from victims with a random sampling to make sure we were getting a true assessment of what the victim experience was in being engaged with our police officers.

Satisfyingly for me at least, the report did not support the rumours and innuendo—which probably will not come as any great surprise to you—that relate to the Police, Fire and Emergency Services. We tend to be able to rip up just about every one of them. That was the case on this occasion. Our focus was about making sure that victims do not feel there are any blockages from us and that they are feeling completely and utterly supported by every police officer employee they are engaged with in our agency and that their experience is as good as we can possibly make it, given they have been through an experience that has touched them for all the wrong reasons.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is this not a publicly published survey?

Commissioner CHALKER: Not to the best of my knowledge.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is this survey different to some of the surveys that Neighbourhood Watch does on an annual basis?

Commissioner CHALKER: I am just double-checking. This is the August 2020 Victim of Crime survey, not the Neighbourhood Watch one.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are these done every year?

Commissioner CHALKER: I do not believe so, but I am happy to be corrected on that.

Mr MURPHY: No. It is just an initiative taken by the command. It is for the duty superintendents and senior sergeants to connect with community complainants about their call-taker experience; how the police engage with them on-site; the victim engagement and what that looked like; and how we can improve our service and get feedback from the people involved in the process to streamline our joint emergency communication services and police response. That has morphed into a technology solution now, but it is for internal consumption only.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: With Victims of Crime, you hear from time to time that it has run out of money. Did Victims of Crime run out of money last financial year? What is the budget this year?

Mrs MANISON: It is not one of ours. That is not in our ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: AGD?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, that would be one for Minister Uibo, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is fine. How many arrests did Strike Force Viper make?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Police to go through the statistical data, I take my hat off to Strike Force Viper. It has had an instant impact on the ground in Alice Springs. It is well-resourced and doing an incredible job. It would be fair to say that we have listened directly to feedback from Strike Force Viper and Strike Force

Trident, with some of the reforms we recently legislated, to understand ways in which we can target repeat offenders. They have been doing a terrific job on the ground in Alice Springs, getting some very good results. I always get very positive feedback from business groups in the community about the work they are doing.

Commissioner CHALKER: Between 13 October 2020—when it was established and now—Strike Force Viper had 234 arrests, 200 summonses, 54 youth diversions, 31 warrants and 29 youth breach of bail offences. They have been doing a significant amount of work. Notably, out of all of their apprehensions, 64% were youths and 36% were adults and 67% of the offending was property crime related.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many people arrested by Viper were repeat offenders?

Commissioner CHALKER: In respect of recidivist youths, the number of youth apprehensions on one occasion was 38; for two apprehensions it was 10; for three apprehensions it was 33; for four apprehensions it was four; and for five or more apprehensions it was 13.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Did you say there were 38 youths apprehended?

Commissioner CHALKER: Once.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There were 38 youths apprehended once, two youths apprehended 10 times ...

Commissioner CHALKER: No, sorry. Ten youths apprehended twice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry, I am reading my notes wrong. There were 33 youths apprehended three times, four youth apprehended four times and 13 five or more times.

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What about for adults?

Commissioner CHALKER: We broke down the adult numbers, but not to recidivism. We will have to take that on notice, if you want.

Question on Notice No 5.24

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I please have a breakdown, as has just been provided, of youth repeat offenders and adult repeated offenders? That is, how many were arrested once, how many more than twice, how many more than three times, how many more than four times, and how many five times or more?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.24.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Last year, I believe, you were able to give a figure of the percentage of repeat offenders arrested by Strike Force Viper; I think it was 75% or something horrific like that. Do you have an update on that percentage?

Commissioner CHALKER: No.

Mrs MANISON: We have given you the raw data, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You will get me the raw data.

Mrs MANISON: You just heard it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, we did not get the adult stuff. The figure from last time was not youth-specific. If I recall correctly, it was global.

Commissioner CHALKER: What we know of the 548 apprehensions they were involved in, 352 of those were youths, so that accounted for 64% of the offenders they came into contact with.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the youths arrested by Viper, how many were on bail at the time of their arrest?

Commissioner CHALKER: Individually I cannot break that down for you; I will have to take it on notice. I can say that 29 youths were arrested for breach of bail.

Question on Notice No 5.25

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the youths arrested by Strike Force Viper, how many were on bail at the time of their arrest?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.25.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of those youths went on to be bailed again?

Mrs MANISON: (inaudible – microphone off) that data there.

Commissioner CHALKER: I will be able to provide any relevant to police bail; however, court-issued bail would be a separate matter.

Question on Notice No 5.26

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the number of youths arrested by Strike Force Viper who were on bail at the time of their arrest, how many went on to be police bailed?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.26.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In relation to Trident—perhaps we should have merged those questions. Can you provide the same levels of data for Trident?

Mrs MANISON: We are happy to. Do you want to talk it through now?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If you have it, yes.

Mrs MANISON: It was great work by Trident for another year, operating out of Casuarina. They are the ones you do not see too much unless you watch Territory Cops. You see them doing plenty of work on that show. They do a terrific job across the Northern Territory.

Strike Force Trident apprehended 613 persons between 1 July 2020 and 31 March 2021. That includes 256 arrests; 164 summonses; 156 youth diversions; 37 warrants; and 1,200 charges laid. Of the 613 apprehensions, 62% were youths, 38% adults and 77% were property crime related.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 62% of youth—did you break down—sorry, it was 156 youth—that was just youth diversion.

Mrs MANISON: I can give you more data about the youths. Of the apprehensions by type for youth there were 119 arrests; 98 summons; 156 youth diversions; 5 warrants; and 3 youth breach of bail. Apprehensions by type for adults: 137 arrests; 66 summons; and 32 warrants.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 119 arrests of youths, how many were on bail at the time of their arrest and how many went on to be bailed again?

Mrs MANISON: We will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.27

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 119 arrests of youths by Strike Force Trident, how many were on bail at the time of their arrest and how many went on to be police bailed?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.27.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I want to ask about internal discipline investigations. How many internal disciplinary investigations have been initiated?

Mrs MANISON: It is very important that we deal with complaints about police professionally. This organisation strives to do that. The addition of body-worn cameras has been helpful over recent years. When our hard-working police are out in the field—when people are able to refer to some of that body-worn camera—it gives greater protection to police who are out there doing the right thing. It also assists with investigations.

I want to be on the front foot with this one. I am keen to land at a point with the Northern Territory Police Association and Police because reform of police discipline has been a topic of conversation for some time. I recently met with the President of the NTPA, Mr Paul McCue, where we had further discussions about it. I want to see what we are going to reform to be landed on by August. Then you would have to go through the process of drafting legislation and whatnot. I have now been informed in my last meeting with the NTPA that it is probably a bit ambitious at this point to get to August, but nonetheless I will strive to get there. Ultimately, I need to be able to get that work out of the parties involved; it is complex and we are working towards it.

Commissioner CHALKER: Just to set some context, we obviously have our complaints against police investigations which are carried out on behalf of the office of the Ombudsman. There are three formal categories of complaints, with category 1 being alleged serious misconduct or maladministration; category 2 is minor misconduct not suitable for resolution process nor sufficiently serious to be subject to a category 1 classification; and the complaint resolution process, which is commonly referred to as a CRP, which are minor matters dealt with through a conciliation process.

In the reporting period 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, there were 389 initial complaints. They are broken down into five were preliminary complaints: four were allocated as category 1; 66 were category 2; 118 were CRPs; 138 were declined; and 58 were categorised as 'info only'.

In respect of the matters and the work undertaken, the outcomes of category 1 and 2 complaints included one action under Part 4 of the *Police Administration Act*, which was a formal caution in writing; eight were 'no action required'; and there were 11 'remedial advice', which is administrative. That was the context of the actions taken under that.

The complaint resolution process had 'action reasonable finding' was one; 'apology by the NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services was three'; 'complainant satisfied' was six; 'no action required' was 82; 'remedial advice for the CRP' was 14; and 'remedial advice administrative' was 37.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of these across all those categories are generated from within police and how many come from external complaints, either through the Ombudsman or the front desk or whatever?

Commissioner CHALKER: In total 133 of the referrals were internal.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry did you have that global figure again?

Commissioner CHALKER: As in the total number? All up was 389 with 133 being internal referrals.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is it the case that a police officer cannot transition to another jurisdiction's police force if they have a pending disciplinary matter on foot?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is probably an accepted convention for other jurisdictions as it relates to their relevant referee inquiry and pathway to ascertain taking on the employment of a serving police officer; however, that tends to be further examined as to the status and categorisation for them to make a formal assessment. I would not say it is an immediate blocker. Exchanges occur between the relevant police forces to understand the status of those, because whilst you may be caught up in a complaint against police as a police officer, you may have had little to no involvement in that actual matter. You may have just been a party to the police officers who were at a scene or event. As with all of these matters, there is no presumption until such time as the matter has been resolved and thoroughly investigated.

Mr GUYULA: This may not relate directly to Output 1.1, but it is about community safety. What extra resources have been provided for processing interstate arrivals at Gove Airport and what check points are in place on our roads to protect remote communities from interstate travellers arriving by road. I am aware that anyone driving into the NT on the Stuart Highway can turn off into remote communities, such as driving down the Central Arnhem Highway. There are lots of tourists in the region. Are there check points to ensure travellers have not recently arrived from interstate hotspot areas?

Mrs MANISON: It is an important question and goes to the heart of a lot of the work that has been done in the last 12 months to keep everyone safe from COVID-19. There was a strong focus on Nhulunbuy and the region as we were concerned about the safety of people in remote communities if COVID-19 was to get in. It was also important that we kept the mine and services operating, so there were strict plans and protocols. It was in Nhulunbuy where we had one of our first attempted breaches, which the police tracked down swiftly and the people were removed from the community. As the Territory Controller, I am sure the commissioner is best placed to answer some of the work he has been driving to keep people safe out there.

Commissioner CHALKER: I can confirm that we have continually risk-assessed all the travel that has come in through the Northern Territory. Our process is that when a person is either in a declared hotspot, under the Chief Health Officer direction, they must quarantine if they continue into the Northern Territory. Currently, I have police officers at the border on the highway to Queensland, they are based outside Camooweal. This is because of the outbreak in New South Wales and the proximity of New South Wales to the Northern Territory, as well as the fact they had a couple travel into Queensland in recent weeks. Not having any other border protections between us and those jurisdictions, I reinstated that border checkpoint.

South Australia has been maintaining border engagement. At all our borders through our primary entry points, we have automatic number plate recognition and signage, which makes everyone aware that if you are going to arrive my road, you must complete an arrival form. We have been undertaking audits and checks on people by the ANPR to ensure they have been providing reports and ensuring compliance has increased.

Relating to Nhulunbuy airport and the responsibility for the arrival processing, we provide support to health in the event that they cannot get adequate resourcing to facilitate the arrival. We monitor actively, through the emergency operation centre, the departure point of any flights coming into Nhulunbuy. If any come from hotspots, before departure, all travellers are made aware that if they arrive in the Northern Territory they will be subject to the 14 days of quarantine at their cost and be transported from Nhulunbuy to Darwin.

We maintain an active focus on all flights that depart across the country arriving into the Northern Territory. Similarly, we do that for places like Yulara, where a significant number of flights come in. A lot of active work occurs. Groote Eylandt is another location where there are a large number of flights; we are actively engaged with the monitoring of those to ensure the ongoing protection of the Northern Territory.

Mr GUYULA: In the lead-up to the 2020 election, a meeting of businesses in Nhulunbuy were told by the Labor candidate that the government had committed to providing CCTV for Nhulunbuy town. Could you advise when this will happen?

Ms MANISON: We are committed to delivering CCTV. We have done some early assessments to look at the IT infrastructure required and how it needs to be implemented. We have not finalised the time line of the rollout, but it will happen during this term of government. We have a very ambitious CCTV program, including upgrades and maintenance of the existing structures.

Yes, we will deliver CCTV to Nhulunbuy, but we are finalising the rollout of when that will happen.

Mr GUYULA: Please advise what support is available for police officers who serve in remote communities to access local language education and cultural awareness training?

Ms MANISON: That is an important question because we strive to ensure that officers serving in remote communities understand culture on country and what is happening. That is why we are getting more Aboriginal liaison officers into the police force—it is a wonderful addition—and stronger numbers with our Aboriginal community police officers. They do a magnificent job serving in the Northern Territory Police Force.

Commissioner CHALKER: I established the community resilience and engagement command, which looks after our Aboriginal liaison officers. Their role is primarily to start developing cultural protocols for how police in remote communities engage with the remote communities and, more to the point, how a remote community will meet and receive a new police officer into their community as well as the cultural awareness and training we can provide together while that police officer and their family are in the community.

Many of us who have lived and worked remote before know that we tend to be adopted by the community when we are there for a good period of time. We want to make that model one that occurs up front and establishes the appropriate pathways so that all our police officers have a greater understanding of culture and law specific to the community they are choosing to serve.

That work has already been undertaken. We are already actively involved in a number of cultural awareness programs, depending on the locality. I am continuing to drive and focus on that. As opposed to a broader awareness of Aboriginal culture in a college environment, I would much prefer all of my police officers to be exposed to culture, law and understanding in a relevant community.

Mr MONAGHAN: I am assuming that is part of your remote policing strategy. Are there other important aspects to that remote policing strategy that you think are critical for rolling-out a successful police force in remote locations?

Commissioner CHALKER: Absolutely. The whole premise of it is ensuring our people have a greater pathway of being able to understand and hear from community. For me that is the critical importance of the Aboriginal liaison officer program. They act as a bridge between our people and the community. By having a greater awareness and level of understanding we have already seen some encouraging results as it relates to reporting and the things that are of concern to community. By building that and seeing local people from a local community wearing our brand, who are associated with and employed by us, gives a greater pathway of being able to make is far more accessible.

We ultimately want that to be able to provide a number of people who, for example, will be prepared to nominate as NTS volunteers to work in the third units to ultimately become our future Aboriginal liaison officers—our future Aboriginal community police officers, hopefully in the constable ranks. We already have some early success with that.

There is no greater story than being able to get an Aboriginal person, born and bred in one of our more remote communities being able to establish a long-standing career with our agency and being a permanent employee out there, trying to create that pathway fathers to follow.

It is a multifaceted approach to how we do things. We are very keen to make sure that communities have greater access to us and a greater ability to be heard. We do not view ourselves as being there purely from an enforcement perspective. We believe we are there as a key part of ensuring that the amenity of those communities improve. We know the community wants to go on that path with us.

Mr GUYULA: Minister, please advise what ongoing support is available for police officers working in cross-cultural situations, especially for those who live in remote communities. You probably have touched on this, but just for the record.

Mrs MANISON: It is really important to ensure that when an officer goes to serve in a remote community, we want them to become a part of that community and region and to understand culture, work with the elders, understand about ceremony and ensure that they are operating well within the community and building strong relationships. We also want them to be there for some time. We do not want to have the fly-in, fly-out police model there. There has been a great deal of effort in the last few years to make sure we get people to put their hand up to go out for a few years to build strong relationships with communities.

The Aboriginal liaison officers are helping, as has the work the commissioner referred to as well. There is a lot more work happening in this space because it is really important work.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The *NT Independent* has been blacklisted by the Gunner government. Is it true that you, commissioner, have launched an investigation into who within the police service is leaking or providing information to the *NT Independent*? If so, could you provide some details?

Mrs MANISON: I will say at the outset, police operate and look at a raft of any investigations on any given day. Generally, police do not talk about all the investigations they do on any given day, either.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is about transparency and openness, though, is it not—media, public interest, code of conduct as members of parliament, not restraining, restricting or impeding the liberty and freedom of the press? It is a fair question.

Commissioner CHALKER: If a criminal offence is occurring then I believe it is appropriate that we undertake an investigation. The unlawful release of information—that is, information that is not lawful to release—is a criminal offence. If that presents then we will undertake an investigation in that regard, as we do with a range of things. I am quite confident that if the *NT Independent* has no criminality to be concerned about, then it should not be an issue that should cause them any concern.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It raises an interesting question for the Chief Minister, who is instructing government not to provide information to a media outlet and now someone will, potentially, face some sort of repercussion for providing information to a media outlet. It is nothing to do with you, police commissioner, but it poses a fascinating turn of events.

Mrs MANISON: I do not know how this is relevant right now, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 1.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – GENERAL POLICING, CRIME DETECTION,
INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION
Output 1.2 – Response Services**

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, General Policing, Crime Detection, Investigation and Prosecution, Output 1.2, Response Services.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any questions regarding Output 2.1?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the current cost of the Nightcliff police station? Has that budget completely blown out from estimates that it would be \$10.3m?

Mrs MANISON: The Nightcliff police station will be a magnificent piece of infrastructure. The management of the infrastructure side of that goes through DIPL. It is part of a broader project though, with the housing component and the social housing as well. I will see if we have the information of where it is at.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, it is now 1 pm. Honourable members, we will break for lunch and pick this up at 1.30 pm.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back. We are at Output 2.1 and we were talking about the cost of the Nightcliff police station.

Mrs MANISON: Before we go to that, I have an answer to a question on notice.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.7

Mrs MANISON: The question was ‘how much has been spent on overtime last financial year—2019–20. The numbers are \$14.7m. From July 2020 to 31 March 2021, it is \$14.3m. For this financial year it is \$10.7m.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.4

Mrs MANISON: In relation to the 49 separations from police, constables and above, we have seven constables, 11 constables first class, 20 senior constables, three senior constables first class, two remote sergeants, three sergeants and three senior sergeants.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A former police officer was recently prosecuted for, among other things, stealing a police firearm and ammunition. The individual had a police-issued Glock in their bedroom drawer for close to three years. We understand an audit was conducted as a result of this in April and there were two Glock pistols that had not been located. Have the two missing Glocks been accounted for?

Commissioner CHALKER: My understanding is that those two firearms still have not been located. There has been a body of work to ascertain whether they have been destroyed as part of our normal practice of those types of weapons and where they may become beyond use in the field. That work is continuing as it relates to the audit we have undertaken in that regard. We are also reviewing how we allocate our Glock firearms, in particular. The current practice is that they all go to an individual police officer and we are now reviewing whether that is contemporary with where things should be or whether we need to implement some further rigour around the management and oversight of those particular personally issued firearms.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Two firearms remain unaccounted for. Are there other types of firearms that are unaccounted for?

Commissioner CHALKER: Not that I am advised.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could these two Glocks be in the community?

Commissioner CHALKER: My understanding is that there is a very low likelihood of that being a possibility.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When did these weapons go missing?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is part of the work that is continuing to be undertaken to ascertain when its last record was and where they were. It is a link as to whether they were issued from the armoury or returned to the armoury and then ultimately destroyed within the armoury. We are trying to ascertain that. Hence the reason we have an absence of documentation, which is not acceptable to our standards and what we are trying to address as a result of the audit.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I imagine that is a very serious issue not to even be able to track whether or not they have been destroyed.

Commissioner CHALKER: It is one of a number I have walked back into but we are doing our best to re-address them.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When do you expect that investigation to have a result to know where these weapons went or are?

Commissioner CHALKER: We have to be open to the real possibility that we may not be able to account for them at all, depending on if they have been destroyed. There is no clear record that is the case. Or the worst-case scenario is that they have gone into the public domain. We have to work through that practice. As a result of work we have undertaken, we are now reviewing what our position is going forward and whether personal issue of the Glock firearm to individual police officers is the preferred methodology, policy and procedure.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Judge Fong Lim handed down a decision in relation to invalidity of speeding fines due to speed camera devices not meeting the statutory requirements. How many fines were issued by the incorrectly calibrated devices?

Mrs MANISON: I have answered this question a few times in parliament. It also goes across to the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice.

Commissioner CHALKER: The problem that arose with respect to the issuing of those fines was that there was an obligation to comply with the manufacturer's guidelines as they related to the specific distance to test the devices. Unfortunately, when the Palmerston Police Station was designed and that particular area of measurement was placed, it was not in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines. Noting that those who have gone before me likely acted with the best intent, for whatever reason, that technicality was not addressed.

For the period of time that was in place, we estimated there were approximately 20,000-odd fines issued and out of those, just under 12,000 have already been paid. There is no ability for us to recall those. By paying that fine, people acknowledge that they have committed a regulatory offence. There is no review pathway available for that. There are approximately 8,300 fines that remain outstanding and we are taking steps to have those that have been issued recalled so that people who are subject to those fines, do not pay them.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What total dollar figure are the 8,300 outstanding fines?

Commissioner CHALKER: I could not tell you. It would be dependent on the relevance category of the fines, the classification of the offending and the fine attributed to that relevant speed.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I take that on notice?

Commissioner CHALKER: Sure.

Question on Notice No 5.28

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 8,300 outstanding speed camera fines where the police are seeking to withdraw the fine, what total dollar figure do those 8,300 fines amount to?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.28.

Commissioner CHALKER: I also add that as a result of the finding of the court, we have taken steps to ensure the distance is in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines and that all our test going forward are valid.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That will represent a significant loss of revenue to Police. What is the government requiring from you with that shortfall? You have to find that shortfall from within or are you ...

Mrs MANISON: It does not go to Police.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It goes into general revenue?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr SLOAN: Has any action been taken against the manufacturer?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, there was no fault of the manufacturer. Unfortunately, it was a technical design that when our people took the steps to try to ensure there was an appropriate measurement that they could utilise to test the devices, they did not get right down to the nth degree of the specific measurements that were listed in the guidelines from the manufacturer.

Whilst they were able to assure the devices were accurate to the specific metreage and distance they were recording, because of the legislation—the gazettal notice—it did not accord to the specific measurement. I cannot recall the specifics offhand. For example, instead of it being, say, 50 metres, it was—sorry, 24.7 metres. For whatever reason they chose that, and I suggest it was on the basis on imperial—with the manufacturer being an overseas-based entity as opposed to metric.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many reports of sexual assault or acts of indecency have been received for the year to date?

Commissioner CHALKER: For the 12 months ending 31 March 2021, sexual assaults and related offences—476.

Mrs MANISON: That was an increase for the same period from the year before, from 427 to 476. That is an increase of 49.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of those involved victims under the age of 16?

Commissioner CHALKER: I will have to take that question on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I also wanted to ask how many under the age of 10, so should I ask that as one question?

Question on Notice No 5.29

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Out of the 476 reports of sexual assault or acts of indecency, how many of those involved victims under the age of 16 and how many involved victims under the age of 10?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.29.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of the 476 reports have resulted in a charge or charges being laid?

Commissioner CHALKER: We will need to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.30

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many of the 476 reports have resulted in a charge or charges being laid?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 5.30.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The provision of police documents to members of the public for inquiries, investigations and court cases has been reported widely in the media of late—I will not refer to the Rolfe court case. I just want some information on what policy is followed. Is there a policy in place for how this happens? How is it decided what information is redacted from these reports? In government we see reports that are heavily redacted, sometimes because it is commercial-in-confidence; often it is political, self-serving and quite subjective. How does Police make these decisions about what people get when they ask for these sorts of reports and information?

Mrs MANISON: It is a pretty broad question. People can ask for all types of information from the police force, and we have different legislation that applies to different information. You need to be a bit more specific about what you are referring to. I know you are trying not to ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am curious as to why the reports that were asked for by the Rolfe solicitors were so heavily redacted. Who made that decision? How was that decision made? Cutting to the chase, that is what I am curious about.

Mrs MANISON: The advice I have is that it is a court decision. I am very reluctant to speak about the upcoming court case.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It was a court decision, not in the first place, to redact.

Mrs MANISON: The advice I have been given is that it is a court decision. Again, I am very cautious about where we go in the estimates committee, given that we have a court case coming up.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Okay. You may not want to answer this, but the documents that were presided over by Justice Mildren recently, were not initially made available to the defendant. I am just wondering who decides that. Who decides what reports go to who in this type of internal investigation or matters of police officers before the court? Is there a process or protocol? You do not have to be specific. People want to know.

Ms MANISON: Police have different protocols and processes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Tell me what they are.

Ms MANISON: They also need to take legal advice. It just depends on the nature of the information. Police try to be as transparent as possible and assist with information. Clearly they have different reporting obligations as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: And what are they?

Ms MANISON: I think I have gone to this. It depends on what type of information and again, in this space ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: What are the options? What are you talking about?

Ms MANISON: It would help if you gave me a more specific question about the information you are after.

Mrs LAMBLEY: If a police officer finds themselves before the court charged with something—I am not talking specifically about Zachary Rolfe—and requires information from the police, how is that obtained? Who decides and how is it processed? People want to know; it has been in the media. It is of great interest.

Commissioner CHALKER: As you would be critically aware, the court process tends to have a defence for charges proffered on behalf of the Crown. That is the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions who, particularly in a hearing-related matter and one that proceeds to the Supreme Court, will allocate a relevant prosecutor who provides the court case on behalf of the Crown.

The crossover you are referring to is that police also act on behalf of the Coroner in any inquest and undertakes investigations on behalf of the Coroner. All of those decisions are based on the determination and decision of the DPP, as it relates to any criminal prosecution that goes before a court. That is the general convention. Various defences are then above to issue subpoenas for further information that they believe may or may not be held and that is represented by legal teams to determine, within the relevant information act and other defences it relates to legal privilege and the like, as to what goes forward.

I can assure you that all those practices have been adhered to in all matters I am aware of.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Ultimately it all goes through you as the Police Commissioner?

Commissioner CHALKER: No. I will receive a subpoena, being the Commissioner and CEO of the agency. But I have no further involvement in what is released from there. That is all a matter for the legal teams to undertake.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Decisions to redact or censor documents provided—who makes those?

Commissioner CHALKER: Again, that is made on the basis of the legal team's assessment of the information being requested and what is provided. I have no oversight of it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The legal team for the police service is internal, is that correct?

Commissioner CHALKER: Certainly, from our legal police representations—I would imagine that from the prosecutorial point of view and engagement with the Coroner where a coronial maybe in play.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many remote police stations are understaffed?

Ms MANISON: Having services out to remote communities is incredibly important. An important discussion for estimates is the upcoming end date of the NTRAI agreement with the federal government and some of the funding that has come in post the intervention for remote policing. We are still pursuing the federal government for an answer on whether or not any of that funding will continue. It provides police numbers and an important commitment to community safety in the bush and our remote communities.

Regarding getting police officers out to remote communities, I am glad to report that there have been improvements in recent years because of the work undertaken by the commissioner and the executive in getting people to the bush stations as well as the move toward three-person stations.

Commissioner CHALKER: I am not aware that any of our remote stations are currently understaffed.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What is your definition of staffed? Do you have a particular complement that you assign to each police station?

Commissioner CHALKER: By gazetted strength they will all have a relevant number, but as it relates to a two-person station if there is one that is a vacancy there will tend to be a relief person there. We have a policy that in remotes nobody works alone. The one-officer policy is such that they must work together. From an allocation of our resources every commander and assistant commissioner who has frontline resources responsibility for those remote stations knows that they are not to be understaffed. The advice I have is that none of our stations are currently understaffed.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Every station in the Northern Territory is fully staffed at the moment.

Commissioner CHALKER: Remote stations.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Remote stations.

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct. That is my understanding.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Okay, that is great news. Thank you.

Mr SLOAN: Following on from the Member for Araluen's questioning, Timber Creek currently has two officers and should be going to three, is that correct? What is the process to get the third officer? I know housing is an issue, but what does police do to make that happen?

Commissioner CHALKER: A direction that I have issued is if we can secure a third housing, I would much rather have a third officer based in that community. That provides is an in-built relief for that station, which then has a greater ability for those officers to get exposed to professional development to be able to undertake their affairs out of isolated localities and to also be able to take their rec leave and long-service leave as the case may be.

We see a constant draw on major centre resources by moving the resource out to the remote communities. We believe that we will see a reduction on that demand and ensure a greater consistency as well as ensuring that our remote police get at least one night every three weeks of respite. We know the workload that they are under so we believe it is a far better model. Our only restriction on that at the moment in certain communities is the unavailability of appropriate housing for a police officer.

Mr SLOAN: Whose responsibility is it to find the housing?

Commissioner CHALKER: We undertake that and we work with Territory Families and Urban Housing to try to ascertain relevant available GH housing or to ultimately enter into headleases for any private properties that may be available that meet the standard.

Mr SLOAN: With Timber Creek, in particular, is there a time frame when we can expect a third officer?

Commissioner CHALKER: We are working quite firmly on this. Timber Creek is a very good locality. We have no issue attracting people and have people lined up to go there with the current incumbents to move on shortly. As soon as we can secure the housing that is the intent; it is the message that all the commanders and divisional superintendents have been told, who have responsibility for our remote divisions.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Who redacts freedom of information requests?

Commissioner CHALKER: We have a specific team that looks after FOI requests and they go through that process.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Do they have criteria?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, they adhere to the *Information Act*, and the IPPs.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The IPPs, what does that mean?

Commissioner CHALKER: Information privacy principles.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are they quite senior people?

Commissioner CHALKER: They are certainly long-term public sector employees that, I would contend, are specialists in their field.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Information is power, is it not? If information is being redacted, we need to be confident that people are making those decisions very carefully. Obviously you have confidence in them, but I am wondering if you cast your eyes over the final result or the final decisions of redacting of FOI information requests?

Mrs MANISON: It is important to note what the commissioner said earlier, which is that they act to legislation and what they have to work towards.

Commissioner CHALKER: No, I do not cast my eye over the results of every FOI request. We get many FOI requests per annum, and that extends also to body-worn footage and the like. It is an area of exponential growth, not just for our law enforcement agency but across the board.

No, it is not an official process that the Commissioner of Police would review every single FOI request. However, having said that there are ample opportunities for people if they believe that any of my public sector employees have acted outside the interpretation, they have a legal ability to have that reviewed. There is absolutely nothing before me that tells me my people have done anything but ensure that whatever information they can provide they do provide.

Mrs LAMBLEY: When people are not given what they want through an FOI application they are commonly appealed. Who makes that decision about the appeal—the same people that originally do the work?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, my understanding is that becomes an independent review, but I am happy to seek clarity on that. I have received no correspondence from the Information commissioner, for example, that has given any indication that the NTPFES has been nothing but compliant on FOI responses.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am not saying that. People will appeal those decisions because they do not necessarily get what they want through their FOI application. When they are appealed, they do not go back to the unit within the police that processed the original FOI application. Is that correct?

Commissioner CHALKER: My understanding is they can ultimately go back through the Information commissioner to seek that appeal. I am more than happy to take anything on that you have evidence of, but there is no evidence before that gives an indication...

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is a process question. When they appealed, they do not come back to the police?

Commissioner CHALKER: They ultimately go to the Information commissioner if there are any reviews. I again highlight that I have had no communication from the Information commissioner that has given me any indication that our current process is flawed, nor are we releasing in accordance with the legislation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am not talking about your process being flawed. I am wondering what happens next. Someone appeals your decision, rightly or wrongly, it goes to the Information Commissioner. Is that what you are saying?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr COSTA: An example regarding Tiwi Islands where there is a shortage of accommodation, but we want more police officers. Could you explain what happened on Tiwi; especially at Pirlangimpi and how we are working at Milikapiti?

Commissioner CHALKER: We were able to secure additional housing in Milikapiti, which has been in the pipeline for a long period of time. We have a facility there, but unfortunately we had no ability to house police officers on a permanent basis. We managed to reach terms there.

We secured a third residence in Pirlangimpi. We had some issues with a couple of the residences, linked to mould, and we had to do a lot of work to get the residences back to an acceptable standard. Pleasingly, those two localities have now have the ability to have permanent police ongoing in those communities.

We are also seeking to increase Wurrumiyanga because of the activity that is going on in Tiwi and the proximity to Darwin. All in all the community, from what we are hearing, are comfortable with our decisions and direction.

Output 2.2 – Investigations

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.2, Investigations. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

Output 2.3 – Services to the Judicial Process

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.3, Judicial Process. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 2.3 and Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – ROAD SAFETY SERVICES

Output 3.1 – Road Safety Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 3.0, Road Safety Services, Output 3.1, Road Safety Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 3.1 and Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – FIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

Output 4.1 – Fire Prevention and Response Management

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 4.0, Fire Prevention and Response Management, Output 4.1, Fire Prevention and Response Management. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 4.1 and Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – EMERGENCY SERVICES

Output 5.1 – Emergency Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 5.0, Emergency Services, Output 5.1, Emergency Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 5.1 and Output Group 5.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES

Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 6.0, Corporate and Shared Services, Output 6.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like to take the opportunity to place on the record my thanks to everyone for your time today. There are a lot of outputs that we do not have time to get through today, but I can assure the fires, and everyone who missed out, that we will have plenty of written questions for them to work through.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Thank you very much.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 6.1.

Output 6.2 – Shared Services Received

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move on to Output 6.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 6.2 and Output Group 6.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

That concludes consideration of output groups relating to NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister, commissioner and deputy commissioners for your attendance and assistance today.

The committee will now move on to questions on outputs relating to the minister's portfolios of Agribusiness and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry and Northern Australia and Trade.

Mrs MANISON: I put on the record my thanks to everybody who helped prepare for estimates today from the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services and for the work they do across the Northern Territory. They are a magnificent bunch of people and we should all be very grateful for everything they give Territorians every day.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. From my count, commissioner, there were 186 questions for your group today. Thank you for your help, attendance and information.

We will take a three-or-so minute break to allow for a changeover. I ask that we do this reasonably quickly as we have just had a change previously. We will come back shortly.

The committee suspended.

**MINING AND INDUSTRY
NORTHERN AUSTRALIA AND TRADE
DEFENCE INDUSTRIES
AGRIBUSINESS AND AQUACULTURE
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND TRADE

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back, everyone. We will be going to Agriculture and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry Northern Australia and Trade.

Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and make an opening statement regarding your portfolios of Agriculture and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry and Northern Australia and Trade.

Mrs MANISON: The Northern Territory is a place rich in culture, resources and opportunity. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today as the minister for jobs, jobs and more jobs and to talk about the great things happening in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade to create jobs for Territorians, more

opportunities for local business to grow our existing world-class industries and to create new industry and diversify our economy.

Why are we doing this? Because it creates jobs and is great for Territorians, including those living in remote and regional areas. I have large and diverse portfolios before the Estimates Committee today and in opening I touch on some of the work that is happening in mining and industry. I look forward to also being asked about my other wonderful portfolios in the output groups.

The mining industry is the Northern Territory's largest industry and the single-largest generator of export revenue for the Territory, worth \$4.4bn annually and employing almost 5,000 Territorians. It creates jobs, helps build our regions, grow wealth for Territorians and contributes to improving essential infrastructure like roads, schools and hospitals.

The good news is that there is room for the Territory's mining sector to substantially grow and diversify over the coming decade. That is why in April I announced record funding for more mineral exploration to drive more mining development and create more jobs across the Territory. We will increase the annual funding for the Resourcing the Territory initiative from \$6.5m to \$9.5m from 1 July 2022 with the funding to be ongoing. This announcement delivers confidence and certainty to the mining industry as exploration will be crucial in unlocking new major projects.

We are working hard to ensure that the Territory is an attractive place to invest, provide certainty for industry and bring on the development of new mines. There are currently 20 mining projects working towards a final investment decision in the Territory with a combined value of \$6.2bn and the potential to create 5,700 construction jobs and 3,400 jobs ongoing. Many of these projects represent the opportunity for the Territory to become a major supplier of commodities needed for the future high-technology and low-emissions industries such as lithium, rare earths, vanadium and copper.

Just last week I announced Vista Gold had been given the green light to recommence mining at the Mt Todd Mine with 450 jobs in construction and 350 in operations. This is the fifth significant mine approval in the last 18 months. In 2020 Core Lithium was granted mining approval to develop its proposed open cut lithium mine on the Cox Peninsula potentially creating 200 direct, full-time jobs.

In 2020 Nathan River Resources was granted further approval to develop the Nathan River project in the Roper Gulf region creating up to 250 full-time positions across mining, haulage, marine and support functions. In November, McArthur River Mine's Overburden Management Project was approved enabling continuation of mining activities and ongoing employment of 1,000 employees and contractors.

In December KGL Resources Jervois Base Metal Project in Central Australia was given the green light potentially creating up to 360 construction jobs and 300 jobs during production.

These approvals are really positive and exciting for the Territory. There is so much more to be excited about. The Arafura Resources Nolans rare earth project is one of the Territory's mining major projects in the pipeline. The project has the potential to create around 620 construction jobs and 280 jobs during production. Just recently Arafura received support from Export Finance Australia for a loan of up to \$200m on a 15-year term and Arafura announced that it engaged Macquarie Capital (Australia) to help raise funds for the project. Just last week, Arafura received support from the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility for a loan up to \$100m. These are significant milestones for Arafura and this is positive and exciting news for Central Australia and the Territory.

Also exciting for the Territory and Central Australia is Newmont's Tanami expansion 2 project. Newmont Tanami is the fourth-largest gold mine in Australia, producing around 500 million ounces of gold annually, supporting over 1,000 direct and indirect jobs and contributing \$174m into the Territory economy. The Tanami expansion 2 project includes the construction of a \$1bn shaft and head frame at the underground mine creating another 350 jobs at peak construction developing underground operations to a depth of 2,140 metres increasing annual gold production by up to 200,000 ounces a year for the first five years and extending the time and life of the mine beyond 2040.

The opportunity for the Territory does not stop there. We have very exciting gas prospects, onshore and offshore. I have just come back from APPEA in Perth and everybody is talking about the Territory. The Beetaloo Sub-basin is estimated to have more than 500 trillion cubic feet of gas in place in the Velkerri B shale alone.

Onshore activity is ramping up this year, particularly in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. Considering the impacts of COVID-19, it is really exciting to see all of these works happening. There is also exciting activity happening with Central Petroleum—and who could forget the wonderful announcement earlier this year by Santos of securing the Barossa project? Five billion dollars will be spent on that and it will be fantastic for Darwin LNG and the gas industry here. Again, this will be great for jobs.

I look forward to taking the committee's questions and introduce the team from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade accompanying me today. I have several people here because it is important when you have such broad, diverse portfolio responsibilities you also have the experts around the table.

Last year I was asked some very detailed questions by my shadow ministers. It was terrific to see the depth of interest they had in all the great things happening in the Territory. I have here:

- Mr Shaun Drabsch, Chief Executive, Department of Industry Tourism and Trade
- Ms Joanna Frankenfeld, Chief Financial Officer
- Ms Anne Tan, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Luke Bowen, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Armando Padovan, Senior Executive Director, Mines
- Mr Ian Scrimgeour, Senior Executive Director, NT Geological Survey
- Mr James Pratt, Senior Executive Director, Energy Development
- Mr Phil Hausler, Senior Executive Director, Agriculture
- Mr Ian Curnow, Executive Director, Fisheries
- Ms Lorraine Corowa, Senior Executive Director, Biosecurity and Animal Welfare.

I look forward to your questions.

Mr SLOAN: I thank Shaun Drabsch and his team at the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade for all the work they have done this year. How many ministers do you currently report to in relation to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade?

Mrs MANISON: It is not really an opening statement question, but we will go for it—by all means, let us talk about it. Yes, four.

Mr SLOAN: In the last estimates hearings we discussed the restructure of the department and the current chart shows you now have three deputy CEOs for tourism, agriculture and mining; two general managers for policy and workforce; an executive director for finance all reporting to Mr Drabsch as the CEO. Can you outline how each of these areas receives the attention they deserve in such a massive department?

Mrs MANISON: Before I hand over to Mr Drabsch I will talk about the restructure. It is a good question. We had a chat last year about the development of the Industry department and—this was the exact point you brought up—making sure that each industry and area gets the attention it needs and deserves.

I was really passionate about merging these industry functions together because they do work together well. This is a very cohesive fit. It is good to have all these major industry groups sitting together in the one agency and getting on with the job of supporting industry out there in the Northern Territory.

As a minister, it has felt seamless so far. It has been very good. We have meaty and important portfolios within this agency, with the structure Mr Drabsch has put in place. We have some highly experienced public servants who have great industry knowledge, understanding and depth. This is particularly with the deputy chief executive structure that has been put in place and the senior management underneath that. The model has worked fantastically. It is a good structure for the agency and we are getting the outputs out of the agency that the Territory needs and wants.

Mr DRABSCH: Member for Daly, I appreciate your interest in the activities of the department and thank you for your kind words at the beginning.

It is important to recognise that this idea of integrating industry functions across the government into one agency came out of the Langoulant report a couple of years ago. There are clear reasons for that, which were based on the commonalities of issues and activities that occur across various industry sectors. There are specialist areas, such as agriculture and biosecurity, but in terms of industry development, there are common themes and common processes at play, as well as strategies. There are learnings that can be drawn from one sector and applied across the other.

From my perspective, working as the chief executive, I have five direct reports plus the executive director governance and finance, who supports me in a corporate services function together with Joanne in the chief financial officer role. Those five direct reports cover the five core divisions of the department: tourism; agriculture; mining and energy; strategy: and policy function, because we have responsibility for regulatory reform, economic analysis, market engagement and international engagement; and the business and workforce function, which is business enterprise development, workforce planning and training.

Each of those division heads has core responsibility for delivering against the objectives of government in those areas. We meet regularly, every Monday morning as a discrete group, to talk about the current issues, strategies, things we need to consider going forward in the week and months ahead, as well as what has happened in the past. Our board of management meets on a monthly basis as well.

Similarly, we also meet as an executive management group monthly, which is all my executive directors—ECO2 and above. It is a broad range of responsibilities, I acknowledge that. With the capability that I have as part of my team, at the deputy CEO and general manager level, and with the executive director and other executive levels, we have strong capability and knowledge of the industry, and a clear commitment and common purpose to deliver on the government's agenda of a \$40bn economy by 2030.

Mr SLOAN: I am curious, with the amalgamation of your department to include Defence, is that consolidated under agriculture, fisheries and Defence. What was the thinking behind that? It does not seem to fit in with agriculture and fisheries.

Mr DRABSCH: The Defence responsibilities are being split into two. The Chief Minister looks after strategic Defence issues and we look after Defence industry development issues. One of Minister Manison's titles is Minister for Defence Industries. There is a tourism function and a mining and energy function, and the agriculture and fisheries area has added to it a broader industry development function for things like Defence industries and manufacturing, which will emerge over time.

Luke Bowen, deputy CEO of that area, has extensive experience, formerly running NATO with the Defence advisory committee and the operations of Defence NT. It was a natural fit to set it under that division.

Mr SLOAN: How many FTEs are dedicated to the Defence part of the department?

Mr BOWEN: There are eight full-time equivalents in the unit at the moment. Just to build on the previous discussion, the alignment between Defence and biosecurity is becoming much stronger. We have a significant set of challenges in biosecurity defence. We are seeing much greater alignment between Defence thinking and biosecurity thinking nationally, which is an interesting alignment and we see it as very important.

Mr SLOAN: The Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade is perhaps the most essential to the future economic growth of the Territory. The TERC final report reiterated this point, saying we need to drive the shift to an investor-centric approach. What specifically have you done to drive this cultural change in your department?

Mrs MANISON: Having these investor functions all together in industry development functions. It was about making sure we were more agile and that we were working together when it came to industry development.

We have a great blueprint through the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission of what can be achieved across the entire Northern Territory Government to get to that \$40bn economy as quickly as possible. Clearly, this agency has been tasked with many of the report recommendations. We have been working through them.

I am really pleased with how the agency is going with the reforms and changes. It has been industry-focused on not just supporting the existing industry but the development opportunities for new industry. I keep talking

about diversification. It is so important that we diversify the Territory economy. I loved talking about mining and how much it brings into the Northern Territory in the opening statement, but there have to be more big industries than mining alone. We have to make sure we are not reliant on just a very few industries. That is exactly the work that this department is doing on industry development, growth and diversification of the Territory economy.

Mr SLOAN: Recently the Major Projects investment commissioners were appointed to report and make recommendations to the Chief Minister. Of the 12 projects currently on the Major Projects list, nine are directly related to your department. What authority does the Major Projects commissioner and/or the investment commissioner have to request information to set their lines and direct the efforts of your department in order to facilitate this decision-making?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, you are right, a lot of these major projects are mines. I argue there is a lot in the gas space as well. Clearly, we make sure when working with mining companies we give them first-class service and work with them efficiently as possible, because we want to see these project succeed because they are so important to the Territory's future.

Mr DRABSCH: The roles of the infrastructure commissioner, the investment commissioner and the Major Projects commissioner are central coordination roles. They have an authority and an opportunity to ask us for any information they choose to acquire. We happily provide it.

There was a point on the earlier comments that while we exist as an industry department, these functions of the investment and Major Projects commissioners, in particular, used to sit within the old DTBI agency. The teams are people who we have worked with closely over the years, so there are good, effective working relationships. We do not operate discretely as a department in ignorance or isolation from the activities of the Major Projects commissioner. They rely heavily for information and advice on subject matter of expertise.

Sea Farms is another example of the major project which sits under that. We work collaboratively. I attended a briefing with the investment commissioner for Japanese businesses based in Australia in Sydney early the previous month. We work closely hand-in-hand because the roles and functions are closely aligned and integrated.

Essentially, our job is to develop the policy, strategy, regulation and the products that the investment and Major Projects commissioners can pursue and bring to completion. They will coordinate with us. Their role is a coordination role. They will be engaging with us as well as environment, infrastructure and other agencies as relevant. We take a coordinated and one-NTG approach to that task.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You talked about fracking in the Beetaloo Basin, minister. Why has the time frame for the Strategic Regional Environmental Baseline Assessment, commonly referred to as the SREBA, process being cut by three-to-five years to 18 months. This is a part of your commitment to the regulatory framework for fracking in the Northern Territory ...

Mrs MANISON: There are no cuts.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can you explain that?

Ms MANISON: There are no cuts. I do not know where you got that information from. We are trending towards the time lines that we expected to get this important baseline done. We take the Pepper inquiry very seriously. We are honouring our commitments to that inquiry because we want to give people assurances that the development of onshore gas in the Beetaloo Basin will be done with world-class regulation to address any environmental issues and concerns so that we have a sustainable industry that can do great things for the Northern Territory.

Mrs LAMBLEY: For my information, minister, the SREBA will be completed over a period of 18 months only, because it will be completed in December 2022. Are you saying that is not the case?

Ms MANISON: I am saying that there have been no cuts—as you were alluding to.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I just remind the minister and the executives that page 451 of the fracking inquiry final report said that SREBAs will be conducted in stages over a period of three to five years.

Mr DRABSCH: The Pepper inquiry report was tabled in 2018. He talked about a three-to-five-year time frame for the implementation of the SREBA.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The SREBA framework was written in 2019.

Mr DRABSCH: Right. It was always envisaged that it would take three to five years. The SREBA work got well and truly under way in 2019 and baseline assessments have been collected. A variety of elements of that program have been advanced. I am a member of the HFI steering committee, which monitors the implementation of that program. The target of completing the SREBA work by the end of 2022 has been the common position for some time. We are on track to achieve that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: But not within the three-to-five-year period that is specified in the SREBA framework?

Mr DRABSCH: It is up from 2018/19. It is within a three-to-five-year period if it is finished by the end of 2022.

Mrs LAMBLEY: If it is, it is only just. When did you start work on the baseline assessments?

Mr DRABSCH: In 2019.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Which month? It really comes down to whether it is three years or not?

Ms MANISON: Yes. I have to stress that no corners are being cut here. This is a rigorous process. We are getting the important baseline data. As a minister who wants to go out there to develop the gas industry, create more jobs and business opportunities and make sure we have stronger regional economies, it is important to get it right and on our commitments through the HFI. That is exactly what we are doing and it is what we are doing with the SREBAs.

Mrs LAMBLEY: With all due respect minister, you and your government went into the 2016 election promising no fracking for the Northern Territory. You have done a complete backflip and now we have a government that talks about jobs, jobs, jobs and never talks about their previous commitment to not fracking in the Northern Territory. People do not believe you, minister. That is the problem.

Ms MANISON: Mr Chair! I would like to correct the record after that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have not finished speaking, minister.

Mr CHAIR: Honourable members, order! One moment, please.

Ms MANISON: It is absolutely true, minister, and you know it. Territorians do not trust you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Rubbish. I look forward to correcting it; people will see that you are talking rubbish again.

Mrs LAMBLEY: These questions do not actually come from me, minister ...

Mr CHAIR: Order! Member for Araluen, I have now called it five times ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: They are from constituents—people who are experts in this area.

Ms MANISON: You have been around, and in this parliament, long enough to know what was and was not committed to. We know what you are alluding to. I am looking forward to correcting you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: My next question, minister—can I ask the next question?

Mr CHAIR: No-one can ask any further questions until we have order.

Ms MANISON: She seems to be moving on very quickly, because she does not want me to correct her.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You can spin it how you like, minister.

Mr CHAIR: No-one can ask any further questions until we have order.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You backflipped.

Ms MANISON: You are talking rubbish and you know it.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, I consider your conduct to be disorderly and warn you that if you persist I will order you to withdraw from the hearings under paragraph 13 of the ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: People do not believe you; that is all there is to it. Anti-fracking to fracking—jobs, jobs, jobs and more fracking. It is very disingenuous.

Ms MANISON: I would love to correct the Member for Araluen so that people can see on the public record ...

Mr CHAIR: Minister! Member for Araluen!

Ms MANISON: ... that she talks rubbish.

Mr CHAIR: I have not finished, minister and Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Well, correct me!

Ms MANISON: I am about to.

Mr CHAIR: Honourable members. Please conduct ourselves in the manner set out in Estimates Committee, which is a question and answer. Questions are not to be debated. There is no inference or imputations; do not ask for an expression of opinion—especially a legal opinion.

Member for Araluen, you are on an official warning.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What about the minister? The minister was butting in, cutting me off and not letting me ask my question. Put me on a warning. Fair enough.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, you are on a warning. I called order five times. I called your name five times. You persisted with speaking.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do not think you are being fair.

Mr CHAIR: You persist in speaking over the Chair.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many questions have I asked during this whole day? I ask a few questions and I am shut down and put on a warning. The government-controlled PAC, Estimates Committee ...

Mr CHAIR: You continue to talk about the Chair being a government-held position, which is in the standing orders. It is meant to be a government-held position.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Only because the government decided it was. I will just shut up.

Mr CHAIR: Even if the Deputy Chair position was an opposition person, then they would have to sit in the Chair. It would be a somewhat difficult position to hold while you are trying to examine the minister and their staff. You can continue down this line. You are on a warning. Like I said last week, if I have to call order three times, surely we are out of order. It is estimates. We have Standing Order: 109.

Mrs LAMBLEY: As long as it is working for you guys, that is all that counts.

Mr CHAIR: Let us proceed in a civil, orderly manner if we can. Member for Araluen, would you like to put your question succinctly so the minister can then answer?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Could you clarify whether the SREBA process will be fully paid for upfront by the gas industry and if the Northern Territory Government is planning to pay for some or all of the SREBA costs up front and then it be reimbursed by gas companies later? What is the arrangement you have made?

Mrs MANISON: I will answer that question. Mr Chair, I would like to take the opportunity to correct the record with regard to some of the things the Member for Araluen said whilst we got into a bit of ...

Mr CHAIR: Disorderly conduct.

Mrs MANISON: ...disorderly conduct.

Mrs LAMBLEY: But I was the only one censured and told to behave. Not you, minister. You were perfect.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, I did tell the minister to behave. You probably did not hear it like you did not hear me call order. I asked both of you to stop so we could have some order. I should not even be talking at estimates so I will not. Minister, you have the call.

Mrs MANISON: Going back to 2016, because the Member for Araluen has said some things here on the record which are completely not the case. Our commitment was to have a moratorium so we could have a fully scientific inquiry into the issue of onshore gas development and fracking. That is exactly what we did. We had the Pepper inquiry. It was a very extensive body of work. It had some very well-regarded scientists, who did extensive consultation from the top to the bottom of the Northern Territory to people out in very regional areas to thoroughly investigate the issue.

After taking on board their report and recommendations, including doing work such as a SREBA, that was when we determined that the moratorium could be raised and we could proceed forward with the development of the onshore gas industry based on applying the inquiry recommendations. That is why you are asking the questions today. They are good questions about the SREBA. We will be honouring our commitments on the SREBA. With regard to the work on cost recovery, I will get Mr Drabsch to speak.

Mr DRABSCH: The principle of full-cost recovery was one of the recommendations of the Pepper inquiry report and the government committed to that recommendation and is in the process of implementing it. Precisely how that is implemented, whether it is an upfront mechanism that is a matter for Treasury. The principle of full-cost recovery has not been resolved from at any point in time.

Mrs MANISON: There will be a cost-recovery mechanism from industry.

Mrs LAMBLEY: But the precise nature of that cost recovery is not known by your team?

Mrs MANISON: That is what we are working through. Which is why we said that production does not start until we work through all the recommendations. That is exactly what we have been in the process of doing over the last few years and we are continuing to do so.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Will those contract details be publicly available, in terms of how the money will be reimbursed? This sort of information really matters to a lot of Territorians who do not agree with hydraulic and horizontal fracturing. It is important that people know exactly what is going on. They feel like they are left in the dark, to some extent.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, in all fairness, our gas expert who is driving some of these things, thought we would be getting to further down the list. If you have a lot more questions, can you tell me so that I can get that public servant out?

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, I am happy to leave it there. I have another question. I did not hear the answer to the question of whether the nature of this arrangement will be made public, as to the reimbursement of the costs.

Mrs MANISON: I need to get that detail. We will get that and get back to you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Okay. I have a general question from the opening statement. How many mines under the Gunner government have moved into the production phase over the last five years?

Mrs MANISON: Nathan River is up and running. There is the ability for MRM to continue to grow and expand. There has been some very good work. We are waiting for a final investment decision on a few more mines. We are looking forward to them get up and running because that means jobs. We are making sure that we are getting through the approvals in all the areas that we can contribute to. We are doing it in a responsible way because we need to make sure that environmental standards are kept and that we have full confidence in the operations of the mines. There have been some stories of success and I am looking forward to a lot more coming into the future.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Minister, do you want to put that on notice? How many new mines under the Gunner government have moved into the production phase? Or are there none?

Mrs MANISON: Can I suggest we go into detail regarding that in Output 8, if you like?

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is just a number. You do not know the number?

Mrs MANISON: No, I will get the number for you. I have just named two that have been able to get up and running. I need to get you more information to just the ones prior to me becoming minister.

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, the TERC final report pointed out something that we have been hearing for years, which is that the Territory needs to increase competitiveness in aspects of the mining industry. What is the department doing to achieve this and make the Territory more competitive?

Mrs MANISON: It is a great question. We are doing a lot more work when it comes to assuring that it is a more competitive investment environment. An example is the Cattlemen's and the work that we did on land clearing where it is non-irrigated. Being able to slash waiting times there from six months to six weeks is a small example of some of the work that we have been doing.

We are in the process now of establishing a minerals task force. We will have some of the leaders in Australia in mining working with us when it comes to looking at how we can make this investment environment better. How can we make sure that we are highly competitive? You would know that my ambition is to be regarded as up there with a great mining state like Western Australia.

We have some really positive areas of mining in the Territory. We have worked to reduce times when it comes to assessments of our mines and mine management plans to have clearer exploration processes and so forth. For me, it is getting those projects to final investment and over the line. There is more work we are doing. This department has been crucial in the implementation of the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report and the work we are implementing.

Mr EDGINGTON: You just mentioned the minerals task force. What is the budget allocation to establish that?

Mrs MANISON: It is \$250,000.

Mr EDGINGTON: This year the Territory dropped a full six positions in the Fraser Institute Survey of Mining Companies. For investment attractiveness we are now ranked 19 and for policy perception we are now ranked 36, yet the TERC said that within two years the Territory should lift its ranking to within the top 10 mining jurisdictions. How do you intend to achieve this?

Mrs MANISON: That is a good question. What I will say about the Fraser Institute first and foremost is that when you look at the results right across Australia generally the big miners, our friends in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland all dropped in rankings, about the same position as well. It was not unique to the Northern Territory. The big players also dropped down the list in that time.

What I was pleased about is that when it comes to access to geoscience and information, we are leading Australia and we are one of the most competitive places globally. That is getting eyes on the Territory and is why we have increased the Resourcing the Territory initiative from \$6.5m to \$9.5m per year to ensure that the companies looking to invest have access to world-class, geoscience and information to help get them interested in the Northern Territory.

The Fraser Institute's survey talked about seven to 10 businesses in the Territory. It gets 276 responses from 77 jurisdictions; less than 10 of those responses are received from the Territory—somewhere between five and nine. With regard to the competitiveness, we are establishing the minerals task force and finalising the people on it because I want to make sure we have the very best to get this government what we want to achieve, which is more mines, jobs and businesses and that we are seen as a world-class destination for investment with some very good streamlined processes that are efficient to help give companies certainty.

We are also doing a lot of work—it is not my space to talk about. The Environment minister was talking about important environmental reform processes last week. This is about making sure we can uphold important environment values and preservation of the environment to meet high standards and that the system is more efficient and more streamlined than what it currently is, which is why we are going through the reform process.

Mr EDGINGTON: But clearly the TERC is concerned with the Territory's slide backwards behind jurisdictions like Botswana and Chile. Are you concerned about that?

Mrs MANISON: I can see the work we are doing to improve our standing. In the time I have been a member of parliament I have seen rankings go up and down and all over the place in the Fraser Institute. What has consistently moved this year is the big power mining states in Australia have all dropped.

Mr EDGINGTON: What role will the minerals task force have in increasing our rankings in the Fraser Institute?

Mrs MANISON: Giving government advice on how we are one of the most competitive and attractive places for mining and investment.

Mr EDGINGTON: What will this minerals task force consist of? How will it be staffed and who will be on this task force?

Mrs MANISON: It will be supported through the agency, but I am not ready to release names, but please be assured I am going through a process at the moment and I am seeking to get the very best people that will achieve what we want it to do, which is to make the Territory a more attractive place for mining investment.

Mr EDGINGTON: You said \$250,000, is that the establishment cost? Would that be the cost of running the minerals task force per annum or will that be an establishment cost?

Mrs MANISON: That is the operational cost; we have put \$250,000 towards it. It is important to recognise we have a team full of brilliant public servants in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade and also in the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, who will ultimately work in this space also.

Mr EDGINGTON: Where will the Major Projects and investment commissioners sit in regards to the task force? Will they part of the task force or will they be advisers to the task force?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Drabsch will be there working on the task force, but we will be working with the investment commissioners and making sure that what we think is going to make the Territory more attractive when it comes to mining investment.

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

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure obtained in the Appropriation Bill 2021–22 as they relate to the portfolios of Agribusiness and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry and Northern Australia and Trade. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

That concludes questions on agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES **Output 7.1 – Agriculture**

Mr CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output Group 7.0, Agriculture and Fisheries, Output 7.1, Agriculture. Are there any questions?

Mr SLOAN: I want to talk about mangoes, if we can?

Mrs MANISON: I would love to talk about mangoes.

Mr SLOAN: I knew you would. What preparation is being done in relation to this year's upcoming mango season, in relation to staff?

Mrs MANISON: Member for Daly, you understand this issue very well, as somebody who represents a lot of mango growers. One of the pressing issues is the upcoming mango season and making sure we have the workers we require to get mangoes off the trees and to market.

We have been working with NT Farmers and mango growers on how we will get that workforce in. We are looking to our seasonal workforces from overseas and an appropriate place where we will be able to quarantine them. There are discussions afoot with NT Farmers, members of industry and the federal government about where we have people quarantining to get that workforce in and do our best to get the numbers we need. Getting seasonal workers is critically important to making sure our growers get the maximum return out of this season.

Mr SLOAN: Yes, it will be a tough season. It already is tough for tourism and hospitality and it will be hard for fruit pickers. Have you any idea of how many workers you will need to manage this harvest?

Mrs MANISON: Industry wants 750.

Mr SLOAN: Is that all—750?

Mrs MANISON: That is what they want, from the Pacific labour scheme.

Mr SLOAN: Is the department looking at Blaydin Point as a possible solution for some of the quarantine?

Mrs MANISON: It is not at the top of the list with regard to the security and medical requirements. When you have Defence, which provides all of those things—security, their own medical workforce—it becomes a more affordable option for them. We are looking at some other alternatives.

Mr SLOAN: Does Defence do its own medical at Blaydin Point? Is there any capability to share the load?

Mrs MANISON: We are making a range of representations to the federal government.

Mr SLOAN: Where are these 750 workers coming from?

Mrs MANISON: A nation that would be deemed approved by the Chief Health Officer. We have representatives who work with the team, the emergency operations centre and the Chief Health Officer. We will want workers come in from countries where we have assurances—you will never be 100% sure in a COVID world—that the risk can be well-managed regarding COVID.

Last year we sourced workers from Vanuatu, which is still doing very well with COVID-19. Traditionally, we have some farmers with relationship with Timor-Leste as well, but unfortunately, they have had some issues. Some other Pacific islands have also been dealing with some pretty big blows when it comes to COVID.

We are doing a lot of work right now to try to get some security and something locked in—when I say security, I mean get workers locked in and a place to quarantine—for industry. That way, we can start booking flights and getting people over for the start of the season. We know that towards August we need to get some first batches of workers. They will gradually move throughout the Territory and throughout the picking season. Mr Bowen, did you have anything to add?

Mr BOWEN: No, other than to reinforce the critical nature and pick up on your point.

Mr SLOAN: August is when it starts and they will need to quarantine for two weeks. That ball needs to be rolling now.

Mrs MANISON: It is rolling and I am doing what I can. Since I took over the portfolio in September, this has been an issue where I have spent a lot of time talking about seasonal workers. Getting workers in is critically important to industry. We have already seen the issues the melon farmers had to deal with, many around your electorate, when they could not get the workers in from Timor-Leste. We are working to secure workers—with certainty for industry—and where they will quarantine for them to start booking those planes.

Mr SLOAN: You said that 750 workers. How many can be managed within the on-farm quarantine and how many would have to go into a different facility?

Mrs MANISON: It depends on the agreement and the approval the CHO has given to a specific farm on their on-farm quarantine arrangements. To be clear, some requirements mean you need to be near hospitals and access testing. They are some things the CHO takes into consideration in working towards this.

Mr SLOAN: How many farms, at the moment, have been approved for on-farm quarantine?

Mrs MANISON: One.

Mr SLOAN: Are there plans for more to come online in the next four weeks?

Mrs MANISON: It is industry-driven. So far, we have had one that has expressed wanting to do that. Other farms are working through with NT Farmers about finding a bulk place of quarantine for the workers, as opposed to the on-farm option. That has been the overwhelming preference of industry here.

Mr SLOAN: You mentioned Vanuatu. How many workers ended up coming in last year?

Mrs MANISON: We had two plane loads, each load 162 and 161. We were the first in the nation to do it.

Mr SLOAN: One hundred and sixty-two, but we need 750, are they all coming from Vanuatu this year? Is there someone liaising with other countries to get these staff?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Mr Bowen to go into the processes of how NT Farmers work.

Mr BOWEN: They work through the federal department. DESE approves immigration and worker visas. It has to activate the process to allow us, once the CHO has given approval for the recruitment to take place ...

Mr SLOAN: From the federal level?

Mr BOWEN: Yes.

Mr SLOAN: At the end of the wash-up last year, what was the estimated loss to the mango industry from the lack of staff?

Mrs MANISON: One issue with the mango industry last year, because it had been so dry for the second year, was that some areas did not have the usual yield. Other farmers reported that they were okay, they had the usual crop and got most of the product to market. That was a saving grace. In some instances there was not as much fruit on the tree as in other seasons. However, this year we have finally had some decent rain. I am no mango expert—although, I have been taught a bit more about them—but over the next month or so, it will be dependent on how cold it is, in terms how the fruit goes.

Another issue the year before was that high winds damaged a lot of the flowers, which meant there was less fruit. All reports show they are expecting a bumper season this year. To put an exact figure on what was lost last year is very difficult to do.

Mr SLOAN: The pickers from Vanuatu last year were on a visa. Are they for 12 months or six months?

Mr BOWEN: It generally covers the season as I understand. Then they start again.

Mr SLOAN: Do you try to get the same people back the following year?

Mr BOWEN: A lot of the farmers have relationships with Pacific workers who come back on an annual basis, which is an ideal situation because often they can be trained, acclimatised, suitable and understand how the system works.

Mr SLOAN: In a recent written question to you, question 128, I asked you how many fruit pickers were employed through the Territory jobs hub in the 2020 season. You replied saying, 'This level of granularity is not available'. When I asked if it met expectations you said 'yes.' I do not understand how on one hand ...

Mrs MANISON: Was that the question about the melon farmers?

Mr SLOAN: Yes.

Mr BOWEN: Some figures that have come to hand today. There are currently 80 workers in the field, of which 34 have done their five weeks. This is for the melon harvest. The estimated demand was around 200 for the melon season. It is almost getting towards half of the anticipated requirement. The reality is that some of the producers have been moving staff from interstate operations, which might have filled some of the void.

Mrs MANISON: Going back to when the issue popped up with the melon farmers, they were expecting people from Timor-Leste. It was when they started having COVID outbreaks, so it was not possible to bring those workers over. We embarked on trying something different to try to encourage people to come over and pick melons to help them get 200 workers.

Clearly, we have not hit the 200 but with 80 we have had a crack and tried to assist. That has made a difference in getting extra workers out there in a very difficult year, with a hell of a lot of curveballs thrown in. Every jurisdiction is facing these challenges with worker shortages.

Last week I was at the agricultural ministers meeting and it would be fair to say that the biggest issue on people's minds is workforce-related. We have now seen some subsequent announcements by the federal government around ag visas and we are still trying to dig into the detail of what exactly that means and how

it can benefit the Territory. If we can get benefits through to our farmers—brilliant. That is what we want to see. We have very strong local advocates for the ag visa, as you would know, from representatives of Tou's Mangoes in particular, which are absolute champions of the industry, and Leo Skliros.

We are trying to see how that could assist industry. At the moment, with the melons, it was a first. We have had a go to support industry. We almost got halfway there. If there are other incentives that we need to put in place to make a difference to support mangoes we will look at them as well.

Mr SLOAN: With 750 staff and one farm approved for quarantine, so in advance of those people coming into Australia, they will have to go to Howard Springs or where?

Mrs MANISON: We are trying to finalise where that facility will be. We are in discussions with the federal government and are working through it. I am unfortunately not in a position to give an answer at estimates at this point. As soon as I can we will be out there talking about it. We are trying to work through this at present and I am trying to get the best outcome we need for the farmers to get the workers they need.

Mr SLOAN: Moving onto cotton; I am very excited about cotton. What is the department doing to assist the cotton gin down in Katherine?

Mrs MANISON: It is a very exciting development of NorCott and the work it is doing. I went to your delightful electorate last week and to Tipperary Station. It was amazing and fantastic to see the work they are doing with cotton with no irrigation. It was magnificent—it was there being harvested. We also went to the Douglas Daly Research Farm which is managed by the department. There we saw the cotton trials that are taking place.

It is important we promote the modern cotton industry in the Territory, because there is no shortage of critics. They are working from the view of cotton over 20 years ago regarding pesticides and water use. That it is not the modern cotton product we have today.

Mr SLOAN: That is a follow on to my next question. The biggest criticism I have of the cotton industry is that it has done a pretty poor job of marketing to the general public. What is the government doing to help dispel those myths?

Mrs MANISON: For me, it is putting myself out on social media videos and talking about it; going out and seeing it; and promoting the modern cotton industry. I have also had discussions with local cotton growers, the national organisations and NT Farmers about their role in helping dispel some of the myths and misperceptions about modern cotton and what the industry can offer the Northern Territory.

The gin presents a very exciting opportunity to the Connolly family and the people working with that business. We have some good major projects people in government working with them to help navigate government and give them timely service to get this cotton gin off the ground. It presents an amazing opportunity for diversification and to support industry and new jobs.

Mr Bowen, is there anything you would like to add?

Mr BOWEN: It is a good question and a priority for us. It is not just cotton, but also a range of other broadacre crops that form part of a rotation—there is a lot of work on alternative crops that form part of the rotation. These will be very good for the region and diversification across agriculture on pastoral and Aboriginal land, as well as some of the freehold land in your region.

To answer the question in relation to promotion and the communication of the benefits of modern cotton: there has been quite a bit of work done through field days. Cotton Australia has spent a lot of time well engaged with environmental groups and various stakeholder groups who have concerns. It is legitimate for people to be concerned because of the perceptions about cotton, probably from former times.

There is no doubt that modern cotton has much lower inputs in terms of chemicals and water. We are effectively growing—there are 3,000 hectares of cotton in this year, most of which has been harvested by now. Only 500 hectares of that involved any sort of top-up finishing irrigation. It is mostly all dry land.

Mrs MANISON: To that point, a water licence is a water licence. As long as people work within their water allocation—which is scientifically distributed—the crop of their choice is not the issue, it is about making sure they do not go outside their water allocation.

Mr SLOAN: Has there been any economic modelling done to project how much cotton we could produce over the forward estimates?

Mr BOWEN: I could not put a specific number on it. The economic analysis shows we can make a good margin out of cotton. Even moving it to the eastern states to be processed, based on current commodity prices, there is still a margin in it. The outlook is very good and the quality of the cotton produced in the Northern Territory is shown to be very good in terms of fibre strength and character.

There is a margin there and producers are seeing an opportunity—which is the best indicator. Where producers are willing to invest—and significant investment, too, in the processing facility, which is private investment. That is good reinforcement that the economics exists as well as the general rotation—probably a one-in-four rotation with a range of other broadacre crops which complement each other.

Mr DRABSCH: The government, through the Local Jobs Fund, supported a feasibility study on the cotton industry jointly with NT Farmers Association, which found the potential development of the cotton industry in the Territory, with up to four cotton gins, could yield annual production of \$200m a year within the next 10 years.

Mr SLOAN: Do you know how many bales per hectare they are getting?

Mr BOWEN: On the dry land they are looking at about four bales to the hectare. They probably expect yields a bit higher than that on irrigation. Import is up to nine or 10 bales per hectare. They were getting about four in this current dry land.

Mrs MANISON: The stories I heard the other day, which you would have heard as well, were that they had seen an improvement over the last two years, the more they are working with it. That was positive.

Mr SLOAN: In regard to wild dogs, I have spoken to some pastoralists on my journeys—they are becoming an increasing problem. Is the government still responsible for issuing permits for the 1080 chemical?

Mrs MANISON: I will have over to Mr Bowen, but that is a conversation we have had ongoing with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, because it is an issue that can create a fair bit of grief for them. With the baiting of dogs and so forth, there is a process and a bit of science.

Mr BOWEN: It is a very good question. Having been on the other side of the fence, so to speak, in industry I know the devastating impacts economically and physically of wild dogs. The Territory is a bit unique insofar the wild dogs; there are also dingoes that exist in the population, which are currently protected wildlife.

To control wild dogs, you also need a permit from Parks and Wildlife in case you accidentally kill a native animal. The other complicating factor is that we have veterinary chemicals and poisons—there is legislation which governs that, which this department is responsible for. Under the Health department there are also regulations around it. We have the authority to issue the permits for the use of the chemical, which is a 1080 chemical that can be used in an injectable form into fresh meat or alternatively prepared baits. The landholders also need approval have a permit in case they inadvertently kill wildlife.

There are a number of different steps along the way. The engagement with industry has been very important. A wild dog advisory committee has just been established, which has representatives from industry, government and Parks and Wildlife. Part of what that reference group is there to do is establish the protocols in relation to baiting rates and the rest of it. The committee has just been stood up. An incredibly important part of operations for the livestock sector is controlling predators.

Mrs MANISON: It is an ongoing discussion which came up at one of my first NTCA meetings, which is why we have the advisory group working with them to look at the issue.

Mr SLOAN: Do you have the number of how many permits were issued in 2020–21 versus 2019–20?

Mr BOWEN: We would have to take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 5.31

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

Mr SLOAN: How many permits for the chemical 1080 were issued in financial year 2020–21 versus financial year 2019–20?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Daly has been allocated the number 5.31.

Mr SLOAN: Do you have any estimate on the cost to the pastoral industry from these wild dogs?

Mr BOWEN: The permit is issued for five years, just for the record. There has been an attempt at doing some modelling. It has been estimated in the order of—the figure is hard to get because it generally affects young cattle, or calves. A figure I saw was in the order of up to \$20m as the estimated cost. It is very hard to determine.

Mr SLOAN: Has the issue been getting worse over the last few years?

Mr BOWEN: I could not answer that question; I am not entirely sure. It depends on the region and the area as to what the prevalence is.

Ms MANISON: It would be fair to say—they are raising it as a contemporary issue, so clearly it is ongoing and of concern. We need to work more closely with them to look at ways we can deal with these dogs.

Mr SLOAN: Last year, expressions of interest were sought for Keep Plains, Wildman and Larrimah. Is that process of submissions closed now?

Ms MANISON: Submissions are closed. They are being dealt with by the Northern Territory Land Corporation, which sits with Minister Lawler, but as the minister for Agribusiness I have great interests in their success and how they are progressing. My understanding is that NT Land Corporation is anticipating making announcements about those soon.

These land releases provide really exciting opportunities for more business, cattle and crops in remote parts of the Territory. The Keep River is exciting, particularly with Project Sea Dragon happening just north of that. It is a very exciting and dynamic region at the moment with the opportunities it presents.

I am delighted with Mr John Coleman and the work NT Land Corporation has done. It is about opening up more land for development and more diversification and investment in the Territory. We are expecting an answer on that soon. It will not be to announce the end stages, because they are significant parcels of land. I understand they will still have to work through more processes. However, they will have narrowed down some of the expressions of interest.

Mr SLOAN: Going back to cattle, in the past it has been the government's goal to have a Territory herd of three million by 2030. Is that still achievable?

Ms MANISON: I just came out of a really interesting meeting with Pak Gulfan Afero the other day and Ms Linda Reeves from the Australia Indonesian Business Council. We were talking about cattle and the importance of our relationship with our dear friends in Indonesia and our strong trade ties, particularly with our world-class live cattle export industry. We must always work to protect and keep this great industry going. It is so important.

What was very clear—and our aspirations to have more head of cattle across the Northern Territory—is that we have had a couple of rough years when it comes to whether and drought. We spoke about that last year at estimates. The biggest concern and hottest topic that pastoralists had been talking to me at that time was the drought. That put pressure on the number of cattle. We are seeing high prices for cattle and that comes down to a supply issue.

There is a lot of effort in restocking and pastoralists having to make the decisions to focus on restocking and growing their cattle versus—'I can get more revenue into my business right now and sell'.

Without a doubt, the industry has had a couple of rough years. That has presented some challenges. Thankfully, we had rain all around the place. Going into the Cattlemen's conference it was beautiful to see

emerald green everywhere in Central Australia. It is beautiful to see desert country when it is like that. The feedback I still get from Barkly pastoralists is that it has been patchy there.

Mr BOWEN: That is a very good question. I think that the focus on increasing the herd is achievable—moving up towards three million head. Industry set that target. As the minister to clearly outlined, the reality is that we had a couple of bad years in 2019 and 2020. Record numbers of cattle have left the Territory. It has been over 15 years since we saw the numbers that left the Barkly and Victoria River district throughout 2019 and 2020, with 2019 being the biggest year. More than 600 head of cattle left, which would not normally leave the Territory. Most of those would be females and would normally be breeding.

It has contributed to the national level. Our national herd has gone from over 30 million down to about 24 million. The impact of that has been that we are seeing record high prices and people are having to restock with rain over quite a bit of the country but still large parts of Queensland and the Barkly did not have the season they would have liked.

We are seeing demand for restocking very strong. There is a lot of competition from processors and live export which has meant the price has gone to quite high levels, which is making it difficult for exporters into the export market as well as not much of a margin in the supply chain into Indonesia and Vietnam, for example, which is putting a lot of pressure on. The Indonesians are finding it difficult to source cattle at the right price and it is difficult for their processors and feed lotters to make a reasonable quid in the supply chain.

Is it achievable to reach three million? Yes, we believe it is. That is part of a lot of the focus for our research, development and extension programs, which is improving the productivity of the herd and increasing the efficiency of the herd as far as reproductive rates. There are a number of projects focusing on supplementation, nutrition, genomics or genetic improvement and also sustainable rangeland management. We have some of the best rangeland scientists who work here and are developing systems for sustainable rangeland utilisation in Central Australia as well as other parts of the Territory. It is achievable and needs to be complemented by infrastructure development and innovation around ...

Mr SLOAN: Do you share that information about fertility and reproductive rates with farmers?

Mr BOWEN: It is done through a range of ways. We are fortunate in the Territory that we are part of a national program where—our producers pay a levy every time they sell an animal of \$5 a head. The majority of that goes to research, development and marketing and a number of areas around animal health and traceability.

A significant amount of the money that is generated through levies goes into the national levy system through Meat and Livestock Australia particularly and is then matched dollar for dollar by the Australian Government. It then comes back into the Territory and is prioritised by producers throughout our regional groups, which are ministerially appointed and located in Alice Springs, Barkly region, Katherine and a new group being stood up in the Top End. They prioritise the research they want done into the industry and that drives where that federal money comes back into the system.

There is about 75% of the money in our current research programs. About \$6m worth of programs currently on the books are industry-generated, industry paid for effectively. Those have a range of different extension and adoption programs that go with them, including demonstration sites and field days. In the last week there was a two-day workshop in Darwin about meat profit, which is one of those workshops that gives the producers the ability to manage their business more efficiently in marketing, finance and economics. A range of those sort of products are extended to the industry in order to help lift that productivity efficiency.

Mrs MANISON: I have been adamant with the agency that when it comes to our efforts in research and what we do to support industry, it must be driven by industry and its needs. An area where I have not had complaints, I have had a lot of compliments, has been from the pastoralists and the cattle industry about the research work done in this agency with pastoralists to make sure they are tackling the issues important to industry and they get the most reward and value from. They do it very well.

Mr MONAGHAN: The target being three million, what are we at the moment?

Mr BOWEN: It is probably just under two million. It has been up to 2.4 or 2.5 million. We think it has probably just slipped below two million.

Mr SLOAN: On page 100 of Budget Paper No 3, there has been a reduction of \$609,000 from research and services contracts. Can you explain what that is? It is in the footnote down the bottom, number four.

Mr DRABSCH: The answer is in relation to a number of programs coming to an end, such as the citrus canker funding program ...

Mr SLOAN: Would that not be in page 99 under the \$1.25m? Will you take that on notice?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. We are happy to take that on notice and get the information for you.

Mr DRABSCH: We are happy to do that, but to confirm that there were a number of programs and contracts which ceased. There can be variations from year to year depending on the nature of the programs.

Mr BOWEN: There were a few programs and the budget reflects that. The Commonwealth on-farm emergency water scheme has come to an end, so that ...

Mr SLOAN: That has its own line, though, has it not? On page 99—On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme?

Mr BOWEN: Yes, it does, down \$1.2m.

Mrs MANISON: I will put this on notice and endeavour to get you an answer by the end of estimates today.

Question on Notice No 5.32

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

Mr SLOAN: On page 100, Budget Paper No 3, there has been a reduction of \$609,000 from Research and Services Contracts. Can you explain what these contracts entailed?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I do, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Daly has been allocated the number 5.32.

Mr SLOAN: On page 99, General skills migration visas processing fee, increased from \$300,000 to \$450,000 this year. Can you ...

Mrs MANISON: That one is not in my line of reporting. Migration NT you are saying? That would be minister Kirby.

Mr SLOAN: Would that be processing fees for those international seasonal workers?

Mr DRABSCH: No, it is more to do with skilled migration program.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, for the members of the opposition and the committee members, because we have very diverse portfolios here and, as I said, diverse public servants with the expertise, if they could let us know when we get to the other issues, if they are to be asking question. That way, I can get the appropriate public servants in the room. For example, I have different public servants for Fisheries, biosecurity and Animal Welfare.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.1.

Output 7.2 – Fisheries

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 7.2, Fisheries. Are there any questions?

Mr COSTA: I was on the Tiwi Islands about three weeks ago and met with the Tiwi Land Council. A question was asked in regard to the current fishery set-up with the Tiwi Land Council and traditional owners. Some of the delegates on the committee wanted to know whether there is a review process that is meant to take place. I think it was a 20-year lease or deal, but there was a review process after five or seven years. They

just wanted some clarity and some of them were not happy with the boundaries of the zones where they were closed off. I wonder if I could get some information on that.

Mrs MANISON: Member for Arafura, in this instance, could I take that on notice and get the advice, and try to get back to you by 4.30 today? And if not, I will put it on notice and get a response back to you.

Mr COSTA: Thank you.

Mr CHAIR: Honourable members, we will take a short break.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions on 7.2? That concludes consideration of Output 7.2.

Output 7.3 – Biosecurity and Animal Welfare

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output 7.3, Biosecurity and Animal Welfare. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 7.3 and Output Group 7.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – MINING AND ENERGY

Output 8.1 – Agriculture

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 8.0, Mining and Energy, Output Group 8.1, Resource Industry Development Services. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, what is the current time that it takes for a proponent to obtain an exploration licence, measured from the time of application to the time of granting that licence?

Mrs MANISON: There are a few different elements I will touch on regarding exploration licences in mining. The first is that we have undergone significant work over the last few years to streamline our processes. We have been able to work to reduce those times with industry.

Also when it comes to the Northern Territory Government's side of it, in terms of our assessment processes, they are very good. However, where things get a bit more complex in the Northern Territory is where you are working to get licence approvals with traditional owners and land councils. I have to stress that it is very important that Aboriginal people have a say on what happens on their country when it comes to development. There is no doubt that there are some processes where the timelines take a bit longer.

I was heartened to see the work done by having Mr Wyatt at Barunga the other week to discuss the work and reforms to the Aboriginal Benefits Account and streamlining the approvals processes. I have not seen the details of what exactly that means as yet, in terms of how that will drive more streamlined approvals processes but it is good to see them at the forefront of those conversations.

When it comes to approvals times and assessments, at our end, we have done significant work making it as streamlines as possible and as fast as possible. However, some of the areas that can create longer times for exploration permits is the work on country with traditional owners to get that sign-off. Is there anything further Mr Padovan would like to add to my answer?

Mr PADOVAN: There are two components to exploration licences. The first is getting the licence through the *Mineral Titles Act*. On Aboriginal land, that can take between three and five years because there are negotiations which need to take place. On Native Title land, the exploration licences can take from eight to nine months. The department's process is approximately three months. The balance of that time is legislated time frames regarding notification.

Once an operator or a proponent has their exploration licence, before they can get on site and do exploration work, they need to engage with the *Mining Management Act*, submit their mining management plan. That describes the work that they wish to do on that site. We have done a lot of work over the last three to four years streamlining mining management plans. We started that journey at the end of 2017. We issued the

revamped mining management plan for exploration in early 2019 and we have gone through another round with industry. We took on board its feedback on how we can make the process even simpler.

Up until 1 June this year, the median time to assess and approve an exploration mine management plan from application to grant of authorisation is 25 days.

Mrs MANISON: It is fair to say we have control of the Northern Territory Government processes. We streamlined them and tried to make them as efficient as possible. This is a very live conversation and the federal government has bought into it with regard to the announcements about the Aboriginal Benefits Account and the reform processes working with the land councils. Without a doubt, the minerals task force that we are establishing will also be part of the conversation.

I cannot express enough that it is really important that Aboriginal people are part of the economic journey, that they determine the work that happens on their country and on their land. We have seen great success for a very long time in the history of the Northern Territory, for example Groote Eylandt and Nhulunbuy—some of the amazing projects. There is a lot to be excited about in the future.

Mr EDGINGTON: I want to go back to the Territory's Local Jobs Fund—I think it was announced last month that NAIF would co-invest \$120m with the Territory government to 'on lend' to local proponents. Who will have primary responsibility for administering the fund, and what will the application process be for interested proponents?

Mrs MANISON: It is a question for the Chief Minister, because that is his portfolio. However, where we feel that projects from our portfolios can benefit, we encourage them strongly to work with the Local Jobs Fund.

Mr DRABSCH: The Local Jobs Fund used to be under the DTBI portfolio prior to the election, so I have some familiarity with it. There is established criteria for applications under the local jobs fund, which is used for assessment of potential applications and as an investment advisory committee, which is consulted as part of the deliberations advice that is prepared for Cabinet in considering any applications, which are ultimately approved by that Cabinet.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, the question was also asked on Tuesday last week and the Chief Minister answered it. If you are looking for further clarification then it would be in *Hansard*. It was late in the day.

Mr EDGINGTON: How is the minerals industry development strategy progress? What key initiatives are planned this year, and what budget allocation is there for these programs and initiatives?

Mrs MANISON: My focus right now is working through the task force that we will establish. There is a huge amount of work to develop our resources across the Territory. One of the key announcements we have made has been increasing the exploration work by making sure we have a broader scope for how people can access Resourcing the Territory. But it is also about increasing the budget. That is from the start of the process; the very important early exploration work to get people interested to firm up what resources are there and get projects moving forward.

My focus is firmly heading on the minerals task force for investment attractiveness, making sure we have the right regulatory regimes in place. We are going through the very important work on environmental reform to give industry certainty, because industry has said loud and clear that it would like this process to be well and truly under way—they have been some of the focuses. Ms Tan or Mr Padovan, do you want to comment further on the strategies for minerals development?

Mrs TAN: The mineral industry development strategy is being considered in the context, as the minister has indicated. In the context of the findings that might come out of the mineral development task force we believe that will be a necessary piece of work captured within the mineral industry development strategy. We are also very conscious that the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission has made some recommendations for the resource space and we need to make sure those recommendations are captured within the strategy.

At the last estimates there was mention of the strategy being in development. That is still in train because that was superseded by the TERC recommendations, in particular the recommendations about the mineral development task force. We are seeking to capture all of those. The question that is front of mind, and is a matter for the minister and Shaun to make a call on, is how the mineral industry development strategy dovetails with the work of the mineral development task force, which we are expecting will take probably 12 months to complete.

Mr EDGINGTON: How does all that fit in with the Resourcing the Territory initiative and how is that progressing?

Mrs MANISON: The Resourcing the Territory initiative is very exciting. I will get Mr Scrimgeour to come up to talk about it. This really is his area of expertise and we saw you there at the AGES conference.

Mr EDGINGTON: It was good to be there.

Mrs MANISON: It was a good conference. There was a lot of excitement. I have not met a more excitable, optimistic bunch of people than geologists. At AGES there was a whole room full of them and it was fantastic.

Mr EDGINGTON: I understood everything they said.

Mrs MANISON: If you go back to the Fraser Institute, we are absolutely top of the list of the nation and ranked very highly globally. Mr Scrimgeour, I will get you to talk about the work on the Resourcing the Territory initiative, why it is important for the development of mining, the case that was put forward for increasing it from \$6.5m to \$9.5m a year and the broadened the scope for what it can be used for to get more mines.

Mr SCRIMGEOUR: We are very excited with how that has been progressing. Obviously, we do not have time to go into all the details of what we have been doing, but a few highlights that will have pleased you in the Barkly region is the work in collaboration with Geoscience Australia to open up the Barkly Tableland region to the east of Tennant Creek.

About 100 new exploration licences have been taken out by at least a dozen or so companies, including major companies like BHP coming into the area as well as Teck and Newcrest and a number of enthusiastic junior companies. As part of the initiative we will be further upgrading the geophysical data over the Barkly region in the coming few months to keep that momentum going of interest in the Barkly.

Across the Territory we have been working on programs to increase that quality of geoscience data to attract new explorers. The work in the Barkly has shown that to be pretty effective. Across the Territory we have been working in places like the Tanami to upgrade the geophysical data in the Tanami and recently worked with CSIRO to produce a new interpretation to attract investors more into that area.

We have also been capturing all of the data from past exploration to make that all digitally available to industry as an initial dataset they can use when they are trying to select areas for exploration. I am pleased to say that we have just completed that over the Barkly and Gulf regions and will now be extending that across the Territory under the new funding.

We also have a grants program called the Geophysics and Drilling Collaborations program that is currently being funded at up to \$1m per year, but will be significantly increased under the expanded Resourcing the Territory initiative. This provides co-funding of up to \$100,000 for selected projects and \$125,000 for diamond drilling projects for industry exploration projects across the Territory.

In the past, that has been to attract people and share risk with companies looking to explore minerals in greenfields areas where people have not looked before. After the recommendations of the TERC, we will be expanding that program, and we have in this current upcoming year, to include companies that are looking to target near mine deposits to expand resources and extend mine life or bring projects into development. That will be a much bigger program in future years and we have expanded it in this current year to be approximately \$1.7m in grants. We can give brownfields grants as well as giving it to companies that are exploring in greenfields areas.

We have seen a lot of interest and excitement from these programs. The Member for Barkly was at AGES and hopefully saw the vibe in the room. We are very keen to keep working to expand the exploration sector.

Last week we were in Perth and consulted with a lot of companies about what they would like to see in Resourcing the Territory going forward. We have a lot of excited companies, particularly based in Western Australia, which are looking to move into the Territory. It is quite an exciting program.

Mr EDGINGTON: We just spoke about exploration licences and the time taken to work through them. What work is the government doing with traditional owners and land councils to encourage the grant of mutually beneficial exploration licences on Aboriginal land?

Ms MANISON: One area we have worked really closely with land councils over this term of government is economic development. I thank the land councils for their ongoing leadership. We have some amazing leaders across the Northern Territory doing very important work. We are continuing that conversation.

That was really well reflected when we look at the membership of the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission and Team Territory. We had the land councils and some very important Indigenous Territorians as part of that work in recognition that so much of the Territory is Aboriginal land, has native title and it is important that Aboriginal people are driving economic development forward.

The ABA changes announced last week go to the heart of that important reform work. As we know, for the royalties collected in the Northern Territory, the federal government put money into the Aboriginal Benefits Account to match that for the benefit of traditional owners, economic development and opportunities for traditional owners. We are trying to work through what the reform changes announced by Minister Wyatt will mean and how it may mean more streamlined approvals processes for working with land councils and Aboriginal people. It is a very important area of reform to ensure we have more investment certainty.

Aboriginal people must benefit from the economic development that takes place on their country. It will be better for everybody in the Northern Territory when we have better services, housing, infrastructure and quality of life for our Territorians living in remote areas.

Me EDGINGTON: The Member for Araluen asked this earlier on but I am not sure if you have the answer yet. How many mines have moved from exploration to a production stage?

Ms MANISON: We were speaking about several mines that have been approved. Nathan River is now up and running, which is important. We have signed off an important approval plan for McArthur River Mine—some of the complexities and issues in dealing with the management of that site.

I am delighted about the significant progress with mine management plan approvals of several projects. I was thrilled to sign off on the Jervois copper project, which will be fantastic. Jervois is close to a final investment decision, has done good diligent work with its approvals processes and is good to go.

I am very keen to see Core Lithium getting off the ground. That is progressing and getting closer.

There was the great announcement by Arafura Resources, which secured NAIF funding and other funding commitments from the federal government, which is very important going forward. We are eagerly awaiting its mine management plan so we can go through that, but we are expecting a very high-quality plan.

To approve the Mount Todd gold mine—last week I made that announcement. It is fantastic news for the Northern Territory and is about getting it closer to a final investment decision. These have included some diligent, good work—environmental assessments completed and mining management plans completed. It is good to have them there.

Mrs LAMBLEY: My question was about new mines that have gone into productive phase of the last five years. So far you have only said Nathan River, is that correct? Just one?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. But mines do not happen overnight. There has been a lot of work in the development of these mines. TNG's mining management and environmental plans have been assessed. A huge amount of work has been happening and there is a lot to be excited about with the mines that have gotten to the point where they have full approvals; they just need finance and off they go.

Mr PADOVAN: We have many projects at different stages of development. Nathan River is the only new one to commence in the last five years. We have the Core Lithium grants project and the Jervois project. Those are new mines awaiting finance so they can commence.

We had Vista last week. That is a recommencing mine, which has been inactive for quite a while, but it is a significant mine. The McArthur River mine's Overburden Management Project—whilst that is not a new mine, the work that has gone into the OMP is significant. Effectively, the mine has had EIS halfway through its life.

We are awaiting the MMP for Arafura, which will see a proposed manganese mine north of Groote Eylandt in the pipeline. We also have some smaller operations, which are in care and maintenance that are looking to recommence mining. One of those is Linecrest, the Frances Creek iron ore mine, which is in care and maintenance and is reprocessing existing stockpiles, so it is not mining, per se. They are keen to use this as

a steppingstone toward recommencement of mining, which is going back into the pits and redeveloping them. They are looking at exporting their first load very shortly.

Mrs MANISON: The other project I want to touch on is the Tanami expansion. This is not an insignificant project; this is huge. We are talking about over \$1bn going into that mine with a new workers' village, new shaft and exploring other parts of the Tanami. That is a massive investment and great confidence in that mine going forward, expanding it out beyond 2040—over \$1bn in investment going to Newmont Tanami. There is incredible investment happening in the Northern Territory right now.

Mr EDGINGTON: Getting back to the MMPs, what is the average time for a mining management plan and the categories of exploration, extractive and mining operation plans? What is the average time for approval?

Mrs MANISON: We spoke earlier about the work we have been doing is an agency to cut those times where we can have more efficient processes. A whole lot of work commenced prior to me becoming minister, which is now being finalised with the extractives industry. They went through how to streamline the mining management plans and the approvals process to make it as efficient as possible. That work has happened and we have had some very good outcomes when it comes to streamlining those processes.

Regarding the mine management plans, Armando will talk about some of these examples where we have made approvals on a case-by-case basis. We do not want unnecessary paperwork coming in. We want the information to make a sound and clear assessment going to the management of that mine. We do not want reams of paper for the sake of it, we want an efficient process and that is what we have been working on with these companies.

There had already been significant work with a few mines. We spoke about this last year at estimates. A significant body of work has been done on streamlining mine management plan processes and working with the operators up front for them to be clear on their requirements. We are making sure that time is not wasted and we are getting what we need to make those assessments; but still doing it with rigour. We have made the process more efficient and we have cut down times. Last year, I had some examples of the comparison of paperwork of what we had actually cut. I will hand to Mr Padovan to go into that in further detail.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you minister, but I am after the average times.

Mr PADOVAN: The time taken to assess an MMP depends on a range of factors, which includes the complexity and magnitude of the project, resourcing and timeframes in terms of getting responses from operators. We looked at the statistics for the current financial year to 1 June 2021. The average across all mine management plans, which are exploration, extractive and operational, is 40 days.

For exploration mine management plans, our average is 35 days—that is end-to-end, from application to when the authorisation is issued. For extractive mine management plans, it is 46 days and for operational MMPs or mining MMPs it is 45 days. Our KPI is to have 85% of applications determined within 90 days and at the moment we are tracking at 87% of MMPs. Some MMPs are relatively small and simple, others are quite complicated.

We have done a lot of work on reviewing the exploration MMPs in March. We finished reviewing the MMPs for the extractive industry, which is a different operation to exploration, which was done with industry involvement—the Extractive Industries Association. We were pleased to have that released in March. Our goal is to have the templates for mine MMPs reviewed by the end of this calendar year, by applying the lessons we have learned from reviewing the exploration and extractive MMPs.

A good example of some of the work we have been doing with mines, is the Rio Tinto Alcan Gove MMP, which is publicly available on our webpage. It was a significant body of work between us and Rio Tinto. Their whole MMP for the next 12 years will take them from mining, to remediation and closure—it is about 250 pages. It was a challenging and collegiate body of work.

The MMP is about the operator giving us the information we need to understand what they are going to do and the environmental risks and how they propose to manage those risks. We can audit against it when we go on site, to determine compliance.

Mr EDGINGTON: Regarding environmental risks, what support is being provided to TNG? We recently saw the media attention on the requirement to provide more detail on the EIS. What support and coordination is available to high level to proponents that find themselves in this situation? Minister, as part of this project,

you recently described this as good for the Territory. What sort of support is being provided to TNG at the moment?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, it is deemed a major project, so they have the support of the Major Projects team.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 8.1.

Output 8.2 – Mines Services

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output 8.2, Mines Services. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the appropriation this year for legacy mines and how does this compare to the actual spend for last year?

Mrs MANISON: Member for Barkly, it is a very important question. For those mines, before we have better regulation and environmental protections in place—like we have today—some legacies have been left, unfortunately. We are working to remediate some sites. For example, in your neck of the woods, making sure we have safe sites and the legacy infrastructure is not dangerous to people in the public.

I will hand over to Ms Tan to speak about the work that happens with the legacy fund and the remediation. It is very carefully planned to make sure we get the best value for the Territory out of the work. In my perfect world, I would like to see it happened more quickly, but it is something I talk to the agency about. If we do not get the planning right we will not get the best value for the dollar to do some important remediation work.

Ms TAN: In relation to legacy mines, your question was how much are we spending this financial year? At this stage, contracts to the value of \$670,000 have been awarded. This is in the context of what we consider to be the potential outstanding liability in relation to legacy mines, which is significant. The balance of the mine remediation fund at 31 March stood at about \$50m. There is a plan being worked on to consider how expenditure from the mine remediation fund can be expended. We will do that in collaboration with industry. We recognise that it is a critical issue for the government. It is being expedited at this point.

Mrs MANISON: The fund is growing, but it is important that we get the planning work done correctly to get the best value for the Territory when it comes to remediating mines and the issues we have. You will see more money out the door in the future because a lot of the planning work has been done. We are expecting to see the growth of that work coming out.

Mr DRABSCH: I will quickly add to that. Another important expenditure in that area over the coming financial year will be on the Rum Jungle project, which is remediation work for the old uranium mine near Batchelor. That will be funded by the Commonwealth. There has been a substantial announcement in the federal budget on that project over the coming years, and there will be quite a comprehensive program of remediation undertaken, with precise details of the expenditure on an annual basis. That is still being worked through.

Mr SLOAN: Will they be upgrading any of the roads around Rum Jungle, do you know?

Mrs MANISON: I am expecting so. From what we understand from the federal government—and going back to last estimates, I had received confirmation from the minister at that time that they were looking to do further work. They will have a significant program over the next decade. They are working on further details. I cannot put a price on that, but my understanding is it will be significant and mean significant investment into the area. It will be very good for local jobs. It is important to recognise that this is a federal government legacy from a federal government time. It is positive to see investment being put in for important remediation work.

Mr EDGINGTON: You say that there is \$50m in the fund. Is there a plan moving forward? You talk about Rum Jungle; how much money will be committed to its rehabilitation? What is the plan moving forward?

Mrs MANISON: Not from the Northern Territory fund. That is a federal government legacy, so federal money will go into that.

Mr EDGINGTON: From my calculation that is over \$49m. What is the plan to use that?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Ms Tan to speak about that more. We have several staff members working through the plans, priorities and where that money goes to get the best value for the Territory.

Ms TAN: The team is working on a remediation plan for the Redbank mine site, which is south-east of Borroloola. Extensive planning work is necessary before work on the ground commences. The work in train is a mine waste characterisation assessment. We are also working on a conceptual hydrogeological modelling.

All of that will ultimately lead to and result in a plan for how the Redbank mine site can be remediated. It is a large legacy mine site and there is parallel work in train on smaller mine safety works, looking at how the activity on smaller mines, not as large as Redbank, can be addressed. Ultimately, the plan is to see whether there is an opportunity to use the planning already going into Redbank to inform a framework that can be applied across legacy mines more broadly. We recognise each legacy mine site has different characteristics and will require a different set of assessments to be undertaken.

At this point, the team is working on the development of a legacy mines strategic work program, which will be considered in the context of industry. We are very keen for industry input. That work program should set the course over the short to medium term on the remediation of legacy mine sites and legacy artefacts.

Mr EDGINGTON: How long has this legacy mine fund been around for?

Mrs MANISON: A while.

Mr EDGINGTON: It sounds to me there is just no plan to use that money. There is lots of talk ...

Mrs MANISON: There is.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is there a plan to rehabilitate Redbank?

Mrs MANISON: I have been the minister since September. I assure you the department is very clear that I want to see money getting out the door.

I spoke about my lack of patience at the start of answering this section of the questions, so I have to pull myself up sometimes. By recognising that if we do not get the planning work done properly up front, we are just wasting money. That is why, whenever I go in to the department—I have seen the people who do this planning and legacy mine work. It is quite a process to make sure we get the preparation work right. Ultimately, we are trying to get the best value for the dollar for Territorians.

I like seeing money get out the door because it will fix some of the legacy issues—and I love seeing people get jobs. It is good for businesses in remote areas in particular; you know how I feel about that.

The department is very understanding of my feelings about this. I ask questions, but a minister must also know that if we do not get the planning right, you will probably be in my ear for another reason—this time about why we are not spending money wisely. I get that, because these legacies have been around for a while. This fund has built up to the point where we can do some serious work. To be frank, \$50m in the scheme of some of this remediation work is not much. Which is why we have to make sure we get the best value for money.

Mr PADOVAN: Redbank is a priority. It has its own reputation which we want to deal with. To reinforce what the minister says, people think you just get a front-end loader and backfill the pit. It is never that simple. You might be transferring a problem on the surface to an even worse problem below ground, which is not what we want to do. It is critical that we do all of the preliminary studies and come up with an appropriate remediation design that is developed in consultation with traditional owners. At the end of the day, it is their land and they have a say in that.

We can use Rum Jungle as an example and to be clear, none of the mining remediation fund money goes into Rum Jungle. That is a totally federally funded process. The design work for Rum Jungle costs in the order of \$30m. In the case of Redbank, we have awarded around \$1m. Next year we are looking at \$1.2m but once we have that plan, which we expect to have in the next 18 months to two years because there is a lot of technical and specialist input required, we expect that job to cost in the tens of millions of dollars. It is all in the preparation at the moment.

The other thing we are doing around your area, Member for Barkly, is the small mine safety program. We have a project under way to upscale how we deliver that. At the moment it is being done on a site-by-site basis in relatively small packages of work. We want to trial in the Tennant Creek more of a regional approach and make greater use of consultants who can be out there and we can really leverage what we have. The

plan is to adopt that approach to other legacy areas around the Territory. There are some around Pine Creek, Adelaide River and Alice Springs. That is when we will really see money from the fund being spent.

Mr EDGINGTON: It is good to see there is some planning underway for Redbank.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 8.2.

Output 8.3 – Energy Development

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consideration of Output 8.3, Energy development.

Mrs MANISON: I can give an answer to a question by the Member for Arafura. The department has met with the executive of the Tiwi Land Council and advises that results of the recreational fishing survey should be available in July. That will allow the final element to then be discussed with council. All other NTG obligations under the Blue Mud Bay agreement with the Tiwi Land Council have been met, such as legislating the fishing exclusion zone on the north of the islands amending the *Fisheries Act* to allow for enforcement powers for marine rangers and ongoing training and support programs and to amend fisheries regulations to enhance the Aboriginal coastal licence.

The department is currently preparing a written response to the Tiwi Council on these elements.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the time line for the SREBA?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand over to Mr Pratt to speak to that question. Contrary to some of the assertions by the Member for Araluen, we are on track and we are meeting our public commitments.

Mr PRATT: The time line for the completion of the SREBA is the end of 2022. The Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security is the agency charged with implementing the majority of the recommendations relating to the SREBA. There has been some tremendous momentum in completing that activity. Work started in late 2018-early/2019 through the Commonwealth Government's GBA program, which is the Geological and Bioregional Assessment Program. That commenced with some water studies and has developed onto terrestrial ecosystem studies, aquatic ecosystem studies, environmental health, greenhouse gas and social, economic and cultural studies.

The departments of the Chief Minister and Environment, Parks and Water Security are leading majority of the Territory-based components of that. Most of the Dry Season work will commence very shortly for this season's activities—they are multi-seasons with our Wet and Dry—and the compilation of that report will be at the end of 2022, when government will be in a situation to consider production approvals, as per the Pepper inquiry recommendation.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many petroleum exploration permits have been issued as of today? How many are pending?

Mr PRATT: Off the top of my head, I think there are 46 granted exploration permits in the Northern Territory. There are approximately 135 exploration permit applications, which is the stage of activity prior to being granted a permit. There are two areas out for expressions of interest through a petroleum acreage release activity that the minister launched last week at APPEA. That activity is in the southern Georgina Basin and there are some highly prospective areas.

Following the expressions of interest and public submissions process, those areas can be awarded exploration permit applications subject to the minister's consideration of the scientific and community feedback.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the current average amount of time to grant a petroleum exploration permit?

Mr PRATT: There is no set statutory time frame for it. I think I received this question late last year in the throes of estimates being completed. From the process of the minister releasing areas for interest through to the awarding of an exploration permit, it can range from two to three years. That time period, which I will run through shortly, is largely determined through adhering to the *Native Title Act* through processes such as the right to negotiate process, which can take 18 months to two years.

In essence, the release of land for expressions of interest is currently open for five months in the southern Georgina Basin. Once those submissions close, the minister has a month to review them and determine

which areas are suitable land release and which areas may not be. That is then put out on publication for one month. It is also a concurrent process of notifying the land councils under section 29 of the *Native Title Act*, which as a notification process; that is a four-month period.

The minister then considers the information received from the public and puts it out for objections of the areas she may release. Again, there is a statutory time frame of one month for objections to be received. The right to negotiate process commences with native title owners. That can last for up to 24 months and is subject to land councils and native title owners meeting and discussing in due course.

The minister then has the opportunity to consider all that information, conduct appropriate persons tests under section 15A of the *Petroleum Act* and potentially determine to award a permit. That is it in a very quick nutshell, but it can take between two and three years.

Mr EDGINGTON: The independent Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing was handed down on 27 March 2018. Fifty-five of the 135 recommendations are still outstanding. What work is being done to respond to these remaining 55 recommendations?

Mrs MANISON: There is a huge amount of work; there has been since the inquiry was handed down and the recommendations were very carefully considered by the government. I think it was an outstanding piece of work that deeply consulted with Territorians and genuinely gave people a say across the Northern Territory, as well as digging quite deeply into the latest scientific research. It looked at some of the social elements— not just looking purely at science, but social sciences as well.

Mrs MANISON: The delivery of the recommendations as a whole is being overseen by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, but clearly this department has a large role to play, as too does DEPWS. We have quarterly updates that go to Cabinet. We keep a very close eye on this. It is also very broadly publicly reported on too. There is a huge amount of information about the inquiry, the recommendations and how we are progressing that is publicly available.

Mr DRABSCH: It is important to recognise that the implementation of the recommendations is happening in a series of phases. The 55 you referred to were part of what was considered phase two of the three phases. That was, essentially, putting in place the regulations which allow the approval of exploration activity and exploration management plans. That is why you have exploration drilling happening on the ground in the Beetaloo and McArthur basins now, because those recommendations have been put into place.

We are working actively on some of the other recommendations, which are the responsibility of our department, over the course of this year. I will let James talk to the detail of that.

Mr PRATT: Our agency has approximately 12 or 13 legislative reform recommendations still remaining. Some of that includes financial assurance frameworks, implementation of technical approvals and looking at seismic guidelines for hydraulic fracturing operations. We are also looking at understanding increasing penalties and offences to be in line with world's best practice, according to the inquiry's recommendations. We are also looking at, prior to the grant of further production approvals, enacting a broader range of powers to sanction and include, but not limited to, remediation and rehabilitation orders, revocations, suspension or variation orders and enforceable undertakings.

Strengthening the regulatory system that we have has come a long way since the handing down of the Pepper inquiry. There will be further amendments to the *Petroleum Act*, which should be in parliament later this year for passing early next year. That will complete a series of recommendations. Other activities also include the full cost recovery model that was referred earlier in today's hearings. That is a matter being led by the Department of Treasury and Finance, which will be releasing a public paper later this year for feedback on that as well.

Mr EDGINGTON: Given the department is working on those final 55 recommendations, what is the budget allocation for the department to pursue those?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have the exact budget allocation, but it is fair to say that we put in significant additional resources across government to do the work in a timely manner and to uphold the standard.

Mr EDGINGTON: Do you want to take that on notice, minister?

Mrs MANISON: I would be more than happy to take it on notice, Member for Barkly. Just wait, Mr Drabsch had something to add.

Mr DRABSCH: It is core business of this branch and division of the department. In an explicit budget allocation, there might not be a particular line item. It is the budget for the branch as a whole and the work of the members of the branch is predominantly dedicated to the implementation of that. Do you want to add to that, James?

Mr PRATT: I can give you a budget breakdown. In 2020–21 the budget for the energy development group was \$7.3m. That included regulation of the industry, as well as hydraulic fracturing inquiry recommendation implementation.

Answer to Question on Notice No 5.31

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I have an answer to a question on notice about old dog permits, 5.31. The number of wild dog 1080 permits issued in this financial year is 64 five-year permits. These are renewal permits. In 2015–16, five years ago, a total of 82 five-year permits were issued.

Mr CHAIR: As it is quickly approaching 4.30 pm, that concludes consideration of the outputs relating to Agribusiness and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry, Northern Australia and Trade. On behalf of the committee, I thank Minister Manison for your attendance, Mr Drabsch and all his officers for appearing today—and everyone else who is not in the room and has not been here today. I know there has been a power of work done.

I also thank Mr Keith and his staff who continue to keep the show on the road.

Ms MANISON: I thank the amazing staff of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade for their very hard work. They are really passionate about the economic development of the Northern Territory and do a fabulous job. Thank you for your ongoing hard work and all the preparation for the estimates process. They are a great bunch of people.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes today's hearings. Hearings will recommence tomorrow, Tuesday, at 8.30 am when we will have questions of the Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing.

The committee concluded.
