

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 8 - CUSTOMER SERVICE

Friday 1 March 2024

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

BETTER REGULATION AND FAIR TRADING, INDUSTRY AND TRADE, INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, BUILDING, CORRECTIONS

CORRECTED

The Committee met at 9:15.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Emma Hurst (Chair)
Ms Abigail Boyd
The Hon. Mark Buttigieg
Ms Sue Higginson
The Hon. Aileen MacDonald
The Hon. Jacqui Munro
The Hon. Peter Primrose
The Hon. Emily Suvaal (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. Bronnie Taylor

PRESENT

The Hon. Anoulack Chanthivong, *Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, and Minister for Corrections*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

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

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

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Welcome to the second hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service for the additional inquiry into budget estimates 2023-2024. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today.

My name is Emma Hurst and I am Chair of the Committee. I welcome Minister Chanthivong and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Better Regulation and Fair Trading; Industry and Trade; Innovation, Science and Technology; Building; and Corrections. I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of those procedures. Welcome and thank you all for coming today to give evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn in, as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament.

CORRECTED

Mr GRAEME HEAD, Secretary, Department of Customer Service, affirmed and examined

Ms NATASHA MANN, Deputy Secretary Better Regulation Division, Commissioner for Fair Trading, Department of Customer Service, on former affirmation

Mr JOHN TANSEY, Executive Director Policy and Strategy, Department of Customer Service, on former affirmation

Mr DAVID CHANDLER, NSW Building Commissioner, Department of Customer Service, on former oath

Dr PETRINA CASEY, Acting Chief Executive, State Insurance Regulatory Authority, Department of Customer Service, affirmed and examined

Mr MICHAEL TIDBALL, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, on former oath

Mr LEON TAYLOR, Acting Commissioner, Corrective Services NSW, sworn and examined

Ms CLAIRE BEATTIE, Acting Deputy Secretary, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, Department of Communities and Justice, affirmed and examined

Dr ANNE-MARIE MARTIN, Deputy Commissioner, Security and Custody, Corrective Services NSW, on former oath

Ms ELIZABETH MILDWATER, Secretary, Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade, on former affirmation

Ms KATIE KNIGHT, CEO, Investment NSW, Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade, on former affirmation

Professor HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE, Chief Scientist and Engineer, Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade, on former affirmation

Ms TRINA JONES, Rental Commissioner, on former affirmation

Mr JOHN MINNS, Strata and Property Services Commissioner, on former affirmation

The CHAIR: Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. We are joined by the Minister for the morning session from 9.15 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 11.00 a.m. In the afternoon we will hear from departmental witnesses from 2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 3.30 p.m. During these sessions there will be questions from Opposition and crossbench members only and then 15 minutes allocated for Government questions at 10.45 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.15 p.m. We will begin with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, thanks so much for coming today.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: My pleasure.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: The Premier's memorandum on DLOs clearly states that DLOs must be politically neutral and impartial. Do you believe it's possible to be politically neutral and impartial if you're a member of a political party?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: All matters of DLO are a matter for the secretary. As I said last hearing, I did not ask or request for any DLOs to be appointed to my office.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have any DLOs who have worked in your office been a member of the Labor Party?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've never—all DLOs that were assigned to me by the secretary I have not asked or requested their political affiliation. It's none of my business.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Did you know their political affiliation without having to ask?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's none of my business. DLOs, as I said, are a matter for the secretary, who assigned them to my office. I did not ask or request for any individual to be allocated to my office.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have any DLOs in your office become policy advisers, subsequently?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are you interested in their political affiliations?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm interested in their talent, their work and their work ethic, and their dedication to public service.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Would you support an SO 52 to prove to the Parliament that no DLO in your office has done political work, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: SO 52s is a matter for the upper House, not a matter for me.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you wouldn't support—you wouldn't speak to your colleagues about an SO 52 that had to do with your office?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: An SO 52 is a matter for the upper House, not a matter for me. I don't have a vote in your SO 52s.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Could you please tell me the size of the New South Wales economy?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The New South Wales economy GDP I think is probably about \$840 billion I think.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's not quite the numbers we have from the half-yearly review—around \$770 billion. Could you please tell me what proportion of the GSP is created through exports?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Exports are an important part of the New South Wales economy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Just a very simple answer.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Are you finished or would you like me to answer?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I would like you to answer. I understand that trade is an important part of the economy. That's why I'm asking the question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct, so I'm glad you asked about trade, because trade is important for the New South Wales economy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What proportion of the GSP is created through exports?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: One in five jobs in New South Wales are supported by trade or export.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That wasn't my question, Minister.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Don't read your talking points. Answer the question.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: He can provide context.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think these are very specific numbers.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's what I'm asking.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course the Treasurer is in the next room, but certainly with trade—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you're the trade Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's right. In trade and export, we have a number of sectors, which are obviously important to the New South Wales economy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It sounds like you don't know, so I can tell you. It's around 15 per cent, Minister. Can you tell me how much it's worth? You have to be passed a note, as the trade Minister, to know how much trade exports are worth. How much is that worth in the economy?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The top five exports in New South Wales—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, the fact that you have to be passed notes—

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: Witnesses are entitled to be treated with courtesy at all times under paragraph 19 of the procedural fairness resolution. That includes being able to answer a question that's been put without being spoken over the top of routinely.

The CHAIR: I will ask the Hon. Jacqui Munro—I think she is being respectful. However, if you want to redirect the Minister, I ask you to courteously redirect him.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I will redirect you, Minister, because I can read notes myself but I would have expected that you, as the trade minister for New South Wales, would have known these numbers. Do you know what the targeted dollar value of New South Wales exports is for 2024?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Exports make up 19 per cent of New South Wales GSP. More importantly, can I make this point—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Did you say 90 per cent?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The advice I've got is it's contributing 19 per cent to New South Wales.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Nineteen per cent, okay. What's the targeted dollar value of the New South Wales export economy this year?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I would say we should try to grow our exports as much as we can. I mean, exports is important for the New South Wales economy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have you read the NSW Trade Statement, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The trade economy is important for the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand. That's why I expect the trade Minister to know these numbers.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our trading partners are predominantly based in Asia—North Asia, South-East Asia and China. Trade and export is important.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's not my question. Minister, can I please redirect you? Have you read the NSW Trade Statement?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The trade statement is important.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But have you read it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I always get briefed by the department about trade opportunities.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is our State's Trade Statement.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I do want to—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is the answer yes or no?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I want to have a meaningful conversation. If you're going to continue to interrupt me, I'll let you finish.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Budget estimates is about ascertaining how the Ministers are performing—that's what this is about—and how they're leading their portfolios for our State.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: I don't think it's appropriate for a member of the Committee to be explaining the purpose of budget estimates to a Minister.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: He should know.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: My point of order is simply again in relation to a matter of courtesy. If a question is being asked, it's then not appropriate for a member to then seek to answer the question at the same time. It's up to the Minister to answer it as the Minister believes appropriate. The member can—whatever this term "redirect" means.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I think we've heard the point of order.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Seriously, let the Minister answer the question.

The CHAIR: I partially uphold the point of order. I think we do need to give the Minister a chance to answer the questions and give him a little bit more space. But I reiterate that you can redirect him, if the answer is going in the wrong direction.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Let me redirect you, Minister. Are you aware of the target for 2031 for New South Wales trade export values?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The trade statement that you refer to, Ms Munro, was a document done by your Government. I'm going to review our trade strategy to ensure we attach onto markets which have the greatest growth. Can I just say, the South-East Asian strategy, which is work done by Nicholas Moore, who is the Federal Government's trade envoy, has great repercussions for the New South Wales economy. We are talking a \$3 trillion economy—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can I please redirect you, Minister, because that wasn't my question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The question is about trade.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: The question was: What's our target for 2031? I can tell you that it's \$200 billion. That's a fairly significant growth that needs to be achieved. Do you think that we will reach either of those targets—the 2024 target, which is \$130 billion, or the 2031 target, which is \$200 billion?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's why we continue to find ways to support our export industry to engage with our trading partners to ensure we reach—I would say, my goal is to grow the export market as much as we can for our comparative industries, where we have a great advantage. I think you are missing the other point here, Ms Munro—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you agree with the trade statement recommendations, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The trade statement is a statement that was done by the former Government. This Government will make its own trade statement.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you are committing to your own trade statement, is that right?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, our—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you are going to make your own trade statement.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Don't put words into my mouth.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, I'm asking you.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You are putting words into my mouth and that's not fair.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You are not answering the question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The trade statement was your statement. I'm trying to revise our trade strategy in particular to actually connect with the fastest growing economic market in the world, which is the South-East Asian market. It is an economy to the size of \$3 trillion.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I will redirect you. You have talked about growing exports, and that's really fantastic to hear you talking about that. But where is the NSW Wine government MOU up to? If you are talking about growing exports, where is it up to?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have been contacted by the MOU with the Wine Industry Association. I'm also working with my colleagues in the department of agriculture and the Minister for Agriculture as well on that front.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Where is it up to, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will continue to have those conversations with the industry.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So you are having conversations?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Wine export is important. We understand it is part of the New South Wales economy.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I'll redirect you. You just said it's important and you just said you are having conversations. My question, I will repeat, Minister, is: Where is the MOU up to with Wine NSW?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will consider that as part of our deliberations with the industry.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So nowhere, basically. Have you discussed this with Minister Moriarty?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Chair, can I just reject—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'll redirect you. Have you discussed this with Minister Moriarty?

The CHAIR: The Minister can correct the record.

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Can I correct Mrs Taylor's comment and her conclusion, which is actually not accurate. I have corresponded with the Minister for Agriculture on this front.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, but there's no MOU and you have made no progress on that? You are having conversations.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will have these conversations.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Great. That's really helping the wine industry. How is the Government preparing for China to reopen? In the wine industry, what are you doing as Minister for Industry and Trade, besides having conversations?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Can I just say, I'd like to acknowledge firstly the work of the Commonwealth Government in re-establishing our trading partner with China.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I completely agree.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That's kind of helped a bit.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm asking you as the trade Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Resetting our relationship with our biggest trading partner through the Commonwealth has been a great positive step forward.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I agree. I'll give you full kudos there and to Federal Labor. But what are you doing?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: What we are doing through our international trade networks to ensure that we continue to—not only for wine but also for other products. You might be well aware, Mrs Taylor, but, if you are not, a great company based in New South Wales, Cochlear, has actually signed a significant agreement in southern China, in Guangzhou, to make sure we can access their markets in the health industry as well. It's important.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, if I could redirect you because you do like to talk about what everyone else is doing. Let's talk about what you're doing. If we look at South Australia, the Premier of South Australia is really on the front foot. He is going and leveraging things. Your Premier, Premier Minns, ruled out visiting China last year despite his counterparts in Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia visiting China. So the Premier's ruled that out, which is his prerogative, for his reasons. As Minister for Industry and Trade, have you also ruled out a visit to China?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will continue to connect with our overseas market. Can I also just say—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You don't have anything planned, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I am actually going to the ASEAN Summit as invited by the Federal Government for next week to advocate and advance New South Wales in what is the fastest growing economic bloc in the world over the next 20 years.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's great you are doing that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But I also say this—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I hope you have a really good time, but I'm actually asking you a specific question, Minister, and I have limited time. I am asking you what you are doing in terms of—we've got South Australia doing it, we've got Western Australia, we've got Victoria, who've actually put money against an MOU, and New South Wales hasn't. Are you planning to or are you not?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Certainly we will consider these connections with all our trading partners. We have an international trade network in our Asian markets. But I will also say that in terms of trade and connection—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I need to redirect you. You are not answering my questions. I acknowledged—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, I'll let you finish, Mrs Taylor.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You need to, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I am.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You need to respectfully listen to my question. That's the job I have today and your job is to answer those questions.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Respectfully.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You keep redirecting. I'm redirecting you on to China. Currently South Australia is leveraging their sister city relationship they have with Shandong province, a key Chinese wine region, and encouraging technical cooperation and other soft diplomacy avenues. I note one of Sydney's sister cities is Guangzhou, which is a Chinese key market—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: —key market for wine. Are you doing anything to strengthen this relationship—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The answer's yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: —besides having a conversation?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The answer is yes. Late last year we—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can you tell me?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, late last year we signed the JEM, which is a biennial agreement between the two States. The representatives for the Chinese delegation were here, for which I was present with the Governor, making sure at that announcement that I set an example of Cochlear, a great Australian company, based in New South Wales accessing that health market.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I know you know a bit about Cochlear, in particular.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I will redirect you, Minister. Do you think New South Wales is underprepared, because the 2022-2024 MOU previously included \$250,000 in annual funding for the wine export initiatives?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, as I said—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But you are doing nothing.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are doing lots of things. I reject that as well.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Have you put money towards that MOU, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Wine is one export market. There are others as well—that's correct.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's what I'm talking about at the moment. If I can redirect you again, Minister, have you or will you be putting any money towards the MOU with the wine industry?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are having those conversations. As I've said to you, we are having those conversations with my colleagues right now.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You are having the conversations but you are not doing it.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Trade involves not only connections with your overseas, but also working with—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Oh, Minister, please don't give me motherhood statements on trade. I'm done now. You are obviously not doing anything.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Given you are so interested in Asia and South-East Asia, I presume you met with Mike Newman, our senior trade commissioner for Japan and Korea?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You've met with him?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: He was here for a number of events recently.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But have you met with him—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: —to have a meeting about trade?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Not a meeting. I've met with him, because he was part of a number of events that we've had.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you haven't sat down to have a meeting about trade with him, over a desk?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've had a conversation with the former STIC on a number of occasions.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But when you say "a conversation", do you mean at a function?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Lots of conversations.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, at events we had a conversation, of course.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You are not talking about a meeting. You didn't seek out a meeting with him.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No. I said, we—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Why would you do that? You look indignant, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, no. Mr Newman is a public servant. Of course he provides advice to the Government. He has been here, back to Australia, a number of times and I have met him a number of times.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay, but you actually haven't sat down for a specific one-on-one meeting to discuss trade in that region, which you have already said is important.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have to say that trade with Japan, where the former STIC is actually located, is really important to us.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, I know, but you didn't meet with him.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We had the Governor of Tokyo here in Sydney.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand, but that's not my question, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have had a number of meetings. Not only with investors—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, could I please redirect you to the task at hand?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —with the AGVCC to make sure that we continue—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: The reality is that you're the trade Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Which senior trade and investment commissioners have you met with, have you sought meetings with? I'm not just talking about at a function.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've met with Mr Newman. For those who have been back in Australia, I have met with Mr Parker and I've spoken with Mr Newman. And, as I said, all a part of that network—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: When you say that, do you mean a meeting, like an over the table meeting, or do you mean like a cocktail function with canapés? Because that's what it sounds like.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: He likes those.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Surely the bigger picture here is to ensure we connect with our export markets.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: They are our tools to connect.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct. It's all part of the wider network.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you haven't sought a meeting with them.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: International trade is not a one-person show.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand that, Minister, but who leads—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's part of a whole network offshore—

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I've heard this one before.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —and onshore.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, can I please redirect you? I'm talking about the senior trade and investment commissioners, who lead the teams that exist around the world for our trade delegations. And you're telling me that you have not sought out specific sit-down meetings? I mean, have a Zoom. We're in the era of technology.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I said I've met with Mr Andrew Parker, our STIC in ASEAN, who is based in Singapore.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You're only interested in one area.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've had a number of conversations with the former STIC, in Mr Newman.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you didn't meet with him, actually. You saw him at a function.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've had a number of conversations with him. You don't have to have a formal meeting to actually trust in trade.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You're actually getting to a point where you're misleading the Committee. Can I ask you about the other—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But the point here is our trade network is not a one-person show. It's about connecting with—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, could I please redirect you? Have you met with Moin Anwar, our STIC for the Middle East?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: He's not a STIC, Ms Munro.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So what is he now? Have you met with him?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think he's a TIC. Is that right, Secretary?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: He's a TIC? Are you serious? Have you met with Mr Anwar?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm advised that Mr Anwar actually reports to our STIC in India.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So there's no specific Middle East STIC anymore? You've got an acting STIC—to call them this term—in India. Do you have plans to have that as a permanent position?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll consider our networks.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you know how big India's import market is? Do you know?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: India is a growing market for New South Wales.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's over a trillion dollars. That's an import market that we need a relationship with.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: India is a huge market for Australia. We have a number of—for example, we have a number of students from India who come to study.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But do you have someone there who will be a permanent senior trade and investment commissioner?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We have office staff in our Indian office, in our Indian networks.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Who is leading that operation?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think Malini Dutt is actually acting in the position.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand that. That's why I'm asking: Will you make that a permanent position? She is the person that you are supposed to be meeting with, as the trade Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll always continue to consider the appropriate allocation of resources to what are our important markets for trade in New South Wales.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you think India is an important market that deserves a dedicated senior trade and investment commissioner?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government has a policy regarding the STICs that, once the contract expires, we will not renew it. But what I would also say—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Who is going to lead our delegations in those countries? I'm glad to see you've got another note.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, trade networks and trade offices is not a one-person show.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But someone has to be the boss of an office.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Stop your talking points.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Who do you meet with?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: There's been a point of order.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I find some of the interjections quite derogatory. The Minister has a right to refer to notes. Since when has it been a national crime to refer to notes? Trying to make these cheap political points diminishes the Committee.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's not a cheap political point.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Chair, I ask you to call them to order.

The CHAIR: It is completely normal for a Minister to get notes. It is also completely normal for a Minister to refer to the other people that are here with him to provide that information for him. If we don't want to have continual points of order, I recommend that the Opposition be careful of their comments.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'll allow the Minister to read from his notes. Can you please tell me if you're going to have a dedicated point person, for want of a better term, in a market like India—in India?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are going through a review of the leadership team in all our locations. As you're well aware, we have a policy commitment for STICs. When their contracts expire, they will not be renewed. I'm in one sense glad you want to bring up the STICs. I'm focused on getting the right people in the right places to grow our market.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So were we. That's why we put these people in place.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's right. That's why you tried to appoint Mr Barilaro to New York.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Here we go.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: This is great. I'm focused on getting professionals who are experienced.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: If only you could be so focused on trade rather than thinking about former politicians in this place. Honestly—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, that's your record in international trade.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: —it's unbelievable.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our record is to ensure that we get qualified people, qualified leadership in those particular networks.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Could you please explain to me who you're going to have leading our delegation to Japan? Because we've just seen in Queensland that a full battery manufacturing supply chain facility is being set up. Did you speak to anybody in the Japanese delegation recently about that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In the Japanese delegation who came to Australia, we focused on the growing markets that are important to New South Wales in industry.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What action came out of that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are working hard to grow our export markets to Japan and also foreign investment as well.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So you just had canapés and a conversation.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'll just reject that.

The CHAIR: We are now moving to questions from the crossbench. I will go first. Minister, it won't surprise you that I'd like to talk about animals in rentals. Minister, I have had people regularly emailing my office, who are desperate in the market. They can't find rental housing with their animals. Many of these people are on the verge of experiencing houselessness within days or weeks. What is happening with the New South Wales Government's election commitment to allow animals in rentals?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Thank you very much, Chair. Renting is a significant policy issue, and it's a high priority for the New South Wales Government. As members and the public would be well aware, as housing affordability becomes more difficult, more people are renting and renting for longer. The Government does have a suite of policy reforms—obviously, some were passed last year, with the portable bond scheme and ending rent bidding. This year we hope to implement a broad package around a commitment to no-grounds evictions and, of course, pets in rentals as well. Chair, the policy proposal that we are trying to implement is going to be the most significant change in rental policy, I think, in decades. We are really changing the paradigm about how owners and renters interact in the property market. It's not an easy policy forum. I don't dispute that as well.

The CHAIR: I understand, Minister. Can I ask you when we can expect to see that legislation? At last estimates we heard early 2024 and certainly in the first quarter. Is that still the intention?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, the Government is considering its policy options at the moment, Chair. What I would say, in terms of the rental piece at the moment, you will see the fact that its complexity is actually, I suppose, reflected in the fact that there is no national uniform consistency across the country. Queensland and Tasmania have their own—

The CHAIR: Minister, I'm just trying to get an understanding of where we're up to on your time line for the legislation. I understand it's complex. Has it gone to Cabinet yet? Or has the part particularly about animals in rentals gone to Cabinet yet?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It will be part of the whole package that the Government and the Cabinet will consider. As I said, it's not an easy—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's a no.

The CHAIR: So it hasn't made it to Cabinet yet?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think matters for Cabinet are matters for Cabinet. I'm not going to disclose those issues in a public forum.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: She's not asking you to. She's just asking if it has gone.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But what I would say is that it is a priority for—

The CHAIR: Minister, will there be a draft circulated for consultation?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: When the Government makes that decision, or the Cabinet makes that decision, we will obviously release it at the appropriate time.

The CHAIR: You have advised that New South Wales will have its own unique model for animals in rentals, rather than replicating the approach used in Victoria. Can you explain precisely how this new model will work and how it will differ from Victoria, particularly in regard to animals in rentals?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We understand for those who are pet lovers, of course, having a pet in your rental property is important. The Government is considering that package of pets, but also as part of other packages as well, Chair.

The CHAIR: I'm just wondering what the key features of the legislation are, how it will work.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are considering all those aspects at the moment. Of course, we will want to take some learnings from our colleagues in Victoria, but we also want to make sure that it actually works for the New South Wales market and, fundamentally—

The CHAIR: But I'm just trying to understand, Minister, what the actual aspects will be.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's something that the Government is considering on that. I'm reluctant to release the discussions—

The CHAIR: So we're not at a point yet where we've got how it will run?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We've got some, but the Government is actually considering that at the moment. I'm not going to—

The CHAIR: One of the most important aspects is where the legislation will put the onus, whether it will be that the tenant has to apply to the tribunal or whether the landlord needs to apply to the tribunal. Are you able to tell us, at this point, which way the current model that you're considering will go?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is considering its model around pets. Of course, it's also complementary to the no-grounds and other aspects as well. I know it's important to you, and I know it's important for the rental market, but I am reluctant to, obviously, disclose the Government's—

The CHAIR: So the Government hasn't decided at this point?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is considering a range of issues around both pets, no-grounds and other aspects of the rental—I think, in all fairness to me, I'm not going to be disclosing Cabinet discussions in a public forum.

The CHAIR: In regard to the no-fault evictions, this was something that the Government had guaranteed that they would get rid of. Is the Government still sticking to that agreement to get rid of the no-fault evictions?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is committed to no-grounds evictions reform, Chair. It's an important part of our rental reform agenda. Given the tightness of the rental supply market, we want to make sure we can do what we can, as supply comes on to the market, to make the tenancy and the certainty around rental much better. As I said before, whether it's no-grounds—the complexity around no-grounds—the fact is that there is no uniform consistency. Tasmania and Queensland have one model, Victoria has their own model, South Australia and the ACT have their own model, and WA and the NT have one model. The lack of uniformity and consistency just goes to show how complex this is.

The CHAIR: Is the New South Wales Government looking to adopt one of those models that is currently in place? I understand it's still being considered.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I would say, Chair, I am reluctant, as a legislator, as the Minister, to just simply adopt another State's reform agenda and to implement it into the New South Wales market. I think we need to be mindful that the New South Wales market is very different, I think, to South Australia or Tasmania.

The CHAIR: So in the same way that we are going to have quite a unique animals in rentals policy, the no-grounds evictions will again be unique to New South Wales and not similar to any of the other models?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are considering a range of models that best work for the New South Wales market. I am philosophically and fundamentally reluctant to pick up another jurisdiction's and just plant it in New South Wales, because we have to take into account the nuances of the market here in New South Wales. So it is better, I think, to find a package that works best for New South Wales. I'm really reluctant to rush something in and then table it only for an agitation for change to happen straightaway.

The CHAIR: Minister, you elected to do your own consultation on animals in rentals following the consultation that was just recently done by the Coalition Government. Their consultation showed that the majority of people in New South Wales wanted to adopt the Victorian model. I am wondering what the outcome of the Labor Government's consultation was and whether or not you'll be making those results public?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We actually have made them public after our extensive consultation last year with the work of the Rental Commissioner. Certainly, the results—if I can take a bit of time—show that 92 per cent of renters strongly supported the change. Some owners—72 per cent to 76 per cent of owners—don't support some of the measures. So there is, as I said, a gulf between tenants and, of course, property owners. We're just trying to find a package that is able to get broad acceptance about what model would work for New South Wales.

The CHAIR: Are we going to see this reform before the end of the year?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's the Government's intention.

The CHAIR: In regard to the no-grounds evictions, there have obviously been some rumours that there are concerns around New South Wales going a bit soft on those. Can you confirm that those rumours are not true?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is committed to no-grounds evictions reform. As I said, it is a complex area of reform, given that it's a significant paradigm shift as to how owners and tenants interact in the rental market. In all fairness, if this was easy, the former Government would've done it already. We are committed to it, we are going to do it, but we're also going to take our time to make sure that we deliver a

CORRECTED

package that actually has broad acceptance and—I suppose, in one sense—has certainty and longevity and that it's not agitated for change as soon as we table it.

The CHAIR: As you mentioned, there was a tranche of reform already put through. Will all of the next changes be put through at once or are you expecting that there will be more than one piece of legislation?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No. Our intention is to have a broad package that covers the different aspects of our rental reform agenda: no-grounds, pets and other aspects that we've identified as part of the consultation process.

The CHAIR: So they'll come in at different times of the year?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, they'll come as one package.

The CHAIR: Come as one package?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's our intention, that's correct.

The CHAIR: At the beginning of these questions I said that we're getting a lot of calls about people who are about to experience houselessness because they're not able to obtain rental properties with their animals. We know from our pound inquiry that pounds are overflowing. People aren't wanting to give up their animals. What is your advice to those people while we're waiting for these reforms to come through?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I would say that we understand the tightness of the rental market, Chair. The lack of supply has been building up for a number of years. We've obviously inherited a significant challenge. Supply is central to the rental market, and also those with pets. But, at the same time, at the moment what we're trying—

The CHAIR: I'm just wondering what your advice would be to them. What do they do at this point while they're waiting for the reforms?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course, if there is any advice that Fair Trading can provide to that, then they are welcome to contact Fair Trading.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Good morning, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Good morning, Ms Higginson.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I know the Astill report has been provided to the Government. Can you provide any indication of the time? I think everybody appreciates it's a very long, detailed and comprehensive report, full of complex issues. What's your current timing, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Firstly, I want to thank the commissioner, the Hon. Peter McClellan, an eminent jurist, who has done this inquiry. As you would all be aware, when I first heard about the issues at Dillwynia, I quickly instituted the inquiry.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sorry, Minister—I have such limited time. I know there will be opportunities for you to talk about that. For the State, what's your current timing, do you think?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The report was handed to the Government yesterday. It is an 804-page report. The Government will, as a respect to the victims and to all those who have been affected—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Timing, Minister—weeks, months, years, days, hours?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It will be very imminent, probably within the week.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Within the week.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Thereabouts, yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, have you read the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures manual? We call it the COPP.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The operations of the—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, the policies and procedures that relate to corrections systems in New South Wales.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: All operational matters are obviously delegated to Corrective Services.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's right, but have you read that? Have you looked at that?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The actual COPP manual itself?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, I haven't.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware of the last time it might have been updated?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm happy to that on notice or ask the acting commissioner to answer that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Would you be currently aware if I said—perhaps you wouldn't—that there are a number of breaches of the COPP that are, by routine, taking place and that there are breaches within the system?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I would say, Ms Higginson, where there are breaches within the workplace, my expectation is for the department to address those appropriately.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Section 8.3 of that—and I don't expect you to know that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's a very specific one.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Section 8.3 states that all inmates have ready access to computers for education and legal purposes. According to inmates, this is not the case. In fact, they are denied access a lot of the time. Have you got any idea how many computers are currently in the Bathurst jail?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Not specifically at Bathurst jail but I do know that we provide communications tools, particularly iPads, for our inmates, obviously in a very controlled environment.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm talking more specifically for education purposes.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We run an extensive education program in Corrective Services. Ms Higginson, it's actually a key part of what Corrective Services does to rehabilitate our inmates. It's in our education program and of course it's a way for contact. I'm advised that there are probably 11,325 tablets that are available as of early this year.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware that there are currently inmates who were enrolled and had access to open university courses and then had to cancel those courses because they couldn't access them? Is that something that would concern you, Minister, if you were aware of that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Rehabilitation and reintegration into our community is an important aspect of Corrective Services.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And education is fundamental to that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's all part of it. Can I just say that the work of Corrections in this space is important and we do take it seriously. I'm advised that last year we did about 212,000 hours of training and about 500-odd inmates actually completed courses. In my most recent visit to Goulburn, I saw this on the ground, where inmates were actually working onsite on projects and constructions at our facilities. I think this is a demonstration that inmates who want to change their lives will be provided those opportunities.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, you're well aware that the cost of calls for inmates is very expensive. In June you removed the affordable phone call option for inmates, increasing the cost of a 10-minute call tenfold to \$2.59. Why was that decision made?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think there are a couple of aspects to the phone call thing, Ms Higginson. First of all, the initial setup around the third-party services is one that we actually changed. I'm not sure if you're aware of that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, I am.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The third-party thing is something that has significant security risks for those outside, and obviously inside as well, because once an inmate uses third-party services, we are unable to determine the next-steps destination of that phone number. It could be to a victim; it could be to elements within society that's not—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think inmates should be able to access free phone calls? If your issue is genuine security concerns, then why is cost an issue at the moment? Why have they become more expensive? At the moment inmates are expected to pay something like 10 per cent to 15 per cent of their income to make a phone call.

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We provide communication and connection for inmates with their family and friends. It's an important part of what we do. That's why we provide tablets to our inmates and that's why we do provide phone call access. But also it has to be done in a controlled environment, given the nature of the Corrective Services system.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think inmates should have access to free phone calls, Minister? Telstra provides free phone calls all over the place. Do you think that you should be providing free phone calls to inmates if they can be provided securely?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: There's been no recent increase in the call charges, Ms Higginson. There are many ways, I suppose, for inmates to communicate with their friends and their family.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you ever spoken to one inmate that says, "Yes, Minister, I've got great access to communications and phone calls"?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In my visits to a number of our facilities—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Because it's not happening.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, in a number of my visits to the facilities I have spoken to a number of them and I understand that connections with the outside world is—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you think they should just have free phone call access, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We provide a range of communication tools to our inmates to ensure—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you accept the evidence that communications with loved ones is one of the most important parts of someone's rehabilitation and their recovery, when they're absolutely deprived of their liberty entirely?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Connection, of course, is part of how we do our reintegration and rehabilitation. Of course I think that connection to families is part of what Corrective Services actually does. In terms of the technical operations—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, should I just take it as you don't think inmates should have access to free phone calls?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think inmates have access to phone calls—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To free phone calls?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —and to communication tablets.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Free phone calls?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They have access to a number of communication tools.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No, I'm just talking about phone calls, remember?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They have phone calls, yes.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The way you just pick up the phone and you make a call to someone you love—your daughter, your son, your brother, your mother. You just make a phone call.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In New South Wales our cost for phone calls for inmates is actually one of the lowest in the country, and there are other ways to—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you accept that it's literally 10 per cent to 15 per cent for a 10-minute phone call of somebody's access to money when they're in a prison?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think the Corrective Services facilities are a unique environment, Ms Higginson. We do provide—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, would you commit to—yourself, in earnest—looking at this issue and really making a determination on whether inmates could have access to free phone calls? Could you do an economic analysis? Could you do a look at it? Would you just commit to it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think, Ms Higginson, my thoughts are that, whether it's phone calls or education, it's part of the broader program as to how we try to rehabilitate and reintegrate inmates.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, phone calls and education are two very, very separate things. Communicating to people you love when you are at the most broken part of entire existence and being educated are two very important things, but they're fundamentally different things. I'm just talking about free phone calls for prison access.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We would always consider to make sure that the rehabilitation program continues to deliver.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In terms of labour, are you aware of how the labour system works within the prison system? As it currently stands, my analysis of it is there is no way to describe it other than it is incredibly exploitative. Inmates are engaging in work and they are doing so on long and regular hours and they receive little to no money to do so. The evidence is that one of the most consistent issues of violence and crime is poverty. It's fighting about access to things that people can pay for within the prison and it's because prisoners are working and they receive no money. Does that concern you?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our rehabilitation and training program, Ms Higginson, I think is an excellent way for us to—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What about just much how labour is being exploited within the prison system?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But it's also, I think, about them getting the skills that's required as they actually reintegrate into—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: There's been no increase with prison wages in 10 years.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think we'll continue to—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Will you have a look at it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, we'll always look at ways to improve our Corrective Services system.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Going back to the Opposition now.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I want to talk about lithium batteries, because there's been great concern about recent fires and things that have happened. Just quickly, could you tell me where the national process is up to to harmonise lithium battery safety regulation?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, thank you very much, Mrs Taylor. Of course, any government is always committed to safety of all products. I am advised that NSW Fair Trading has been engaged with the ACCC, which actually—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Have you, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We've actually done this as part of the conversation with the building Ministers' council. At the moment, the report that was handed down by the ACCC in October last year has made a number of recommendations to improve the regulations. Of course we support—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: If I may redirect you, I'm aware of all of that, Minister. My questions are specifically again directed to you, as the Minister. With all of the concerns in the community, from the concerns of the fire services, what have you actually done?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It is the Government's view that this needs to be a nationally consistent approach, and we'll continue to work with our other State counterparts to get this nationally consistent program.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I will redirect and rephrase the question, Minister. I understand and appreciate your comments about the national response. My question to you is: What have you done as the Minister in New South Wales to address this growing problem that is alarming the community?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We work closely, as Fair Trading, with our Fire and Rescue to inspect electrical parts—whether it is lithium ion batteries—to make sure that we continue to aid not only the products but also to educate our consumers as well.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I'm really happy for you to take this on notice. How many compliance checks has Fair Trading conducted?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: On?

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: On lithium batteries.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's a very specific question. I'm happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: How many seizures of noncompliant products containing batteries? Are you aware of that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm happy to take that on notice as well. It is quite a specific minutiae detail.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand, but it is important, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course it is.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: This is what you hear being talked about by people like Ray Hadley. They're talking about the concern. They're representing our communities. I want to know what you're doing. Do you think that Fair Trading has the resources to adequately enforce existing regulations and standards?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course, enforcing fire safety and consumer protection is a core part of what Fair Trading actually does.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand that. My question, to redirect you again, Minister, is: Do you think they've got adequate resources to do that, considering this is becoming such an emerging issue?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Fair Trading has over 785 employees to investigate consumer safety products.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So that's a yes, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll continue to, of course—continue consumer safety.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, can I ask you quickly about e-bikes? There's an emerging issue of some strata schemes passing by-laws that effectively prohibit e-bikes. Bike advocacy groups—and there's an article in the Herald—are saying that they believe this is an unjustifiable burden on cycling. What are you doing about that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Sorry, that was quite a long question. Can you repeat that?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes. No worries, Minister. We are talking about e-bikes and the issue of the fact that, because of the concern that we spoke about before about lithium batteries, some strata by-laws have said that they're not going to allow those things to charge. What are you doing about that? Because the bike industry says they feel that's an unjustifiable burden.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Strata schemes, of course, can make by-laws, as you're aware.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I know that, Minister, but what are you doing?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are, as part of the Strata Schemes Management Regulation, trying to examine that particular issue. You'd also be aware that the owners' corporation—I have advice they can adopt this.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm aware of all of those things, respectfully, Minister. But what I want to know is—and I've been asking you this all morning, Minister—what are you, as the Minister responsible, doing about that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: This is part of our strata reform agenda, and we'll continue to examine this.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So not allowing bikes to charge is part of your strata reform agenda?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Let me finish. As I said, last year we've already passed a number of strata legislation. This year we are in targeted consultation with our industry stakeholders, and this will be continue to be part of it. All strata schemes, as you will be aware, have their own unique by-laws.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I am, thank you, Minister. These are serious issues with serious questions and you are unable to tell me what you are doing.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, no. Can I also just say—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you. I'll pass over to my colleague, Minister.

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —the OCN has advised that by-laws do not propose a banning of e-bikes at all.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I don't know how anyone can have any confidence out there.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: The Hon. Bronnie Taylor is continually interjecting over the top of the Minister while he is attempting to answer the question. Not allowing the Minister more than five seconds to answer each time is a complete lack of procedural fairness. I draw members' attention again to procedural fairness resolution 19, which instructs members to treat witnesses with courtesy at all times. I particularly draw your attention to the footnote, which explains why. Thank you.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. There have been some inappropriate interjections. We need to allow the Minister to answer. As I said, I do allow for redirections, but not straight after the answer.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, a very clear question, yes or no, please: Are you committed to the goal of \$200 billion worth of trade exports by 2031?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Trade is important. I'll commit to growing our trade markets as much as I can.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I know, but I'm asking a very specific question about the NSW Trade Statement. Are you now walking away—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Just say yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: —from that target?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: It is not appropriate for a member to ask a question and also to direct how a Minister should answer it and then complain that the Minister is not providing a fulsome answer. The Minister should be able in complex matters to actually respond appropriately.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. I will also remind the Opposition perhaps only to have one speaker at a time, otherwise we will continue to hear points of order as well.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I am hearing that you are not committed to the NSW Trade Statement target of achieving \$200 billion worth of exports by 2031. Is that correct?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The trade statement is a document done by the former Government. We will have our own trade strategy and we are working through that trade strategy as we speak.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you will come to your own goal of trade export value by 2031. Is that what you are saying?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will have our own trade strategy, and particular for me I would say to focus on the fastest growing market in our region around South-East Asia, of course, our established markets. With the change of government, the Government is entitled to have its own policy agenda and its own policy direction. We are not going to adopt a statement or a policy that was in fact by your Government. I think we have a right for that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You are putting political points above trade policy, from what I can understand, and it seems like at this point in time New South Wales does not have any goal for the value of our trade exports. Is that correct?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our goal is to grow our trade exports as much as we can and we'll continue to do that with our own trade strategy and our own trade policy—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can you furnish me with that strategy?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —focusing on the market to ensure that we link our industry policy with our trade strategy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Does New South Wales then have a trade strategy under your Government, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are working through a new trade strategy, which will be different from yours.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So we don't have a trade strategy at this point in time? You think its more important to play politics?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are not going to adopt a trade strategy that's not the policy that the Government's implementing.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm sure the public servants here today will be very insulted by that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I know democracy and a change of government might be hard for you, but new governments are entitled and are allowed to change policies, to change strategy, to change its focus. It's called democracy and it's called a change of government.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, how do you expect our economy to grow if you don't have a plan?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I do have a plan.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Where is that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have a plan on the Innovation Blueprint that we are seeing at the moment.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's a four-page document, Minister, and it took nine months to produce.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are currently developing our industry strategy. We are developing our export strategy in particular around our South-East Asian market. I think it's such a big market that's growing. It's going to be worth \$3 trillion by 2040.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: We've heard that, thank you, Minister. Could I please redirect here. Minister, are you aware of the criticism that the Government is going to combine the European, Israel and Indian trade offices into one single office?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I haven't heard. Who said that?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm asking if you have heard. Is it true?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But who said it?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm not going to reveal my source, obviously. But is it true?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I haven't—it's news to me.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you're not going to combine the European, Israel and Indian trade offices?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's news to me. I'm not going to be making announcements on what we think would be the best operational requirements for our global network.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's the problem. That's exactly the problem. You're not making announcements about the best operation of our global trade network.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I don't know where you're hearing these rumours from. You won't disclose who it is. As I've said, we have no plans to do what these rumours are actually saying.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So the Indian trade office will be separate to the European and Israel trade office?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We have no plans to connect these offices together.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's good to hear.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Whatever your source is, I have to say, it's not very reliable.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, I'm pleased to hear it. I'm pleased to hear that the Indian trade office—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I would say—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can I please continue to ask—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government will continue to ensure that its overseas offices will work through its overall trade strategy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, can I please redirect you. I understand that you are focused on South-East Asia. Very commendable. Have you met with Helen Sawczak, our senior trade and investment commissioner for China, Hong Kong and Taiwan?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I have met Ms Sawczak. She was here recently.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You sought that meeting at—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: She was here, and I met her. China is an important market for us.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But did you meet over a table, or at canapés and drinks?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, we met at a formal event, as I recall.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you didn't sit down and speak about trade relationships? Do you remember?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have to say, these markets are really important. That's why we will continue to—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I know, but you are telling me that you haven't had a sit-down meeting with our senior trade and investment commissioner, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our trade and international is not a one-person show.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, but you have to interact with people—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will contact with stakeholders here—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: —who are responsible for that in those locations.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct. We will continue to correspond and to coordinate, but also talking about making sure we have established contacts, both domestically here with all of the associations for different regions—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But who are they?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: For example, I've met and had a number of discussions with the AJBCC, which is the Australian-Japanese business council. I have met with a number—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But have you met with government officials that are representing the New South Wales State overseas?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've met with our government officials when they were here, but also more importantly—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you're saying you met with them. You interacted with them in a public forum over champagne and canapés.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I reject that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Maybe it was red wine; I don't know.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I reject that too.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I hope it was Australian wine.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I know you're trying to paint this picture, which is untrue.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Point of order: Is this some sort of exercise where the Opposition gets to throw out derogatory remarks and make statements in attempts to lecture the Minister? Or do we actually want answers? Seriously.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's trying to find out what actually is happening.

The CHAIR: We have talked about this already this morning. Again, I just remind the Opposition about one person asking questions at a time, particularly if you are wanting to get some answers, please.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: If I can ask about the MOU with Hitachi. How is that going, if you're talking about Japanese trade relationships?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The MOU with Hitachi, I think that's under a USP process—is that correct?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay, so you don't know. It came through with the former Government.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Do you have a copy of that MOU with Hitachi?

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I can look for it. I'm not the Government Minister. It's not my responsibility to have MOUs. Without a plan for New South Wales trade at this point in time, with no plans to replace the senior trade and investment commissioners except with somebody else—they will have a different job title, I presume—and without a goal for trade exports at this time, what have you been doing for the last 11 months as the trade Minister except for going to functions?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: One, trade is important. I have met with some of our foreign dignitaries to ensure that we have access to those markets. We have been discussing with a number of industry stakeholders—like I said, the AJBCC, some of our Korean friends and, of course, the South-East Asian markets.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have they actually resulted in any relationships that we can tally up to grow our export market?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: These relationships are important. That's why we establish them.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I thought you said that it's not about one person. Is it just about you or is it not about you?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, no. As I said—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Who is it about?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Chair, I'm going to take another point of order, for the sake of Hansard. There are continually two people talking at the same time. The Minister is entitled to answer the question. The honourable member, I understand, is entitled to redirect, but she continues to do so in the midst of an answer and over the top of the Minister at length, with additional questions and additional questions. I would again point people to the procedural fairness resolution of the House, for goodness sake.

The CHAIR: It's on a fine line at the moment. I do give the Opposition some movement in being able to redirect the Minister, because I know it can be difficult when the answer is going into a different direction and we're under the clock. But please do so in a courteous way. I also just remind the Minister, if he is being redirected, to be mindful of Hansard as well. If there is something that you do want to put on the record, then let me know, but otherwise please allow the member to redirect you.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you, Chair. Minister, Queensland has 21 trade offices in 16 countries around the world. How many does Australia have?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We have a number of offices. We do a hub and spoke model.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But do you know how many offices we have?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We have a hub in London. We have a hub in China. We have a hub in Japan. We have a hub in the ASEAN in Singapore.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That wasn't my question. How about I redirect you to this: Are you concerned that Victoria and Queensland are overtaking New South Wales in our trade relationships, which is what many people in different industries are saying, especially when Queensland just celebrated their 10-year trade office anniversary? How is it acceptable that you're restricting the trade office spend and investment?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, trade and connection to trade is not just about how many offices you have overseas; it's about using your resources effectively. We work closely with Austrade. Our hub and spoke model is to ensure that we continue to connect with the resources of Austrade and also pursue and advance specific industries. As I said, if your view is to appoint a former politician in New York, if that's your international trade strategy, then—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, can I please redirect you, because you're playing political points instead of actually—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm actually merely stating a fact.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: —governing the trade relationships of our State.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct. Our trade relationships are—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What hope do we have?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —what we do. We have our hub and spoke. We'll continue—

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, could I please redirect you. Are you concerned that Victoria and Queensland, because of their significant investment in trade offices overseas from their own States, are going to eclipse New South Wales trade relationships in international environments?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: New South Wales has a strong trade export market. I don't measure, Ms Munro, that having as many offices as you can necessarily leads to the best export strategy. We need to work—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But what is the best export strategy?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The export strategy is to make—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Not employing Barra.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Again, political points instead of actually managing our trade relationships overseas and growing our economy.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our trade relationship works on a whole entire network. It's not based on one person, not based on one office.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I know, but it's a network.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's right. It's a network.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So what's the strategy?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, the network is about (a), working with our colleagues in Austrade, making sure that our resources are used effectively—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, can I please ask you this question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Can I just finish first if that's alright with you?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you've told me about Austrade.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Okay, I'll let you finish.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you think that Austrade is going to be treating New South Wales better than any other State? Is that what they're going to be doing? That's what you've secured with the Federal Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's why we will have our own networks advancing New South Wales. In all fairness—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So we will have our own networks?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We already do. We have our offices in these locations.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But they're being cut.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: If you want to talk about the credibility and the effectiveness of our network, you destroyed it. Your Government destroyed it by appointing—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This political pointscore is unbelievable, Minister. This is a good model.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We have to rebuild—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is our trade strategy, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You know what our trade strategy isn't?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is worth over \$100 billion.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: There's been a point of order.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: With all due respect, the Minister has a right to answer the question using comparative analysis between the previous Government and the current Government. I think he's doing that very diligently and he should be allowed to be heard.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What an embarrassment.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: We can understand why some people might be embarrassed by that.

The CHAIR: Order!

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are trying to rebuild our international trade credibility given that it was trashed by the former Government. What we want to do is work onshore and offshore to ensure we focus on areas and industries—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What are you doing, Minister, to improve our trade credibility when you won't even meet with our senior trade and investment commissioners?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've met with our senior trade commissioners.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, you haven't.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've met with them.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You've met with one. You have named one that you've met with. The other—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I met with—we conversed. That's great.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You can't claim that you have met with someone when you have attended a function with them and had a cursory conversation. That is not the purpose of being a Minister, with all due respect.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Doing trade is not a one-person, one-conversation process.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's why I'm asking about the network. You're focusing on one person instead of talking about a strategy.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I liaise and also discuss with the department. I continue to connect with the local onshore network.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But do you? How do you do that? You are telling me that you don't meet with the STICs.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You can just look at my diary disclosures to see the work that we are doing in this space.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you have named one STIC that you've met with, and it's unclear how that came about even. It seems like you haven't sought out meetings with any of the senior trade and investment commissioners or whatever roles, so what hope does the growth of New South Wales exports and businesses in New South Wales have under your ministerial responsibility?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Zero.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I reject that.

The CHAIR: You can answer the question, if the question has come in before the bell.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: He doesn't want to. He can't.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think my Opposition colleagues like to answer their own questions and that's fine.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Because you can't.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I can't get a word in. My conclusion is that when they answer their own questions, I do reject them.

The CHAIR: Minister, my office is often contacted about breaches of Australian Consumer Law by dodgy breeders and puppy farmers who have engaged in deceptive conduct. They're often selling sick dogs to members of the public, who have often raised concerns about the fairness but also the legality of contract terms used in these breeding arrangements. Have you been briefed on these issues?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I have been briefed about the puppy farm. I'm advised that the puppy farm is actually not in the responsibility of Fair Trading, Chair. Puppy farming is not in the legislative framework of Fair Trading. I understand that actually the sale of pets—of cats and dogs—is under the Companions Animals Act and also the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

The CHAIR: Minister, obviously, there's a crossover between the agriculture Minister, the local government Minister and yourself because there is also a consumer issue here.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: So what I'm trying to talk to you about now is the area of the consumer issue. The sale of cats and dogs falls under local government, the welfare of those cats and dogs that are being sold falls under the Minister for Agriculture, but the consumer issues fall under you. Correct?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The CHAIR: That's what I want to talk about.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In terms of the sale of pets in this case, Fair Trading does have a website, which talks about consumer rights when purchasing a puppy or a kitten. It also includes information about pet scams and consumer guarantees under that ACL.

The CHAIR: I'm aware of what's on the website, Minister. I'm just wondering if you have been briefed on the consumer issues that have been coming forward. I know Labor has a commitment to ban puppy farming. Have you met with the agricultural Minister or the local government Minister about this?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They are remits that are actually beyond me, Chair. I'll leave my parliamentary colleagues—

The CHAIR: I'm just wondering if you've met with them to discuss the consumer issues section of this.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: On this particular issue, I haven't had a full discussion with them. Certainly, when my colleagues decide to make amendments or move on this space, I would expect that we would have that conversation in due course.

The CHAIR: One of the consumer law issues that's really impacting the community came up in the 2020 inquiry into puppy farming, chaired by Labor MP Mick Veitch. There was a recommendation that was actually supported by Labor at the time to fund an anti-puppy-farm legal clinic to actually assist members of the public with concerns when there are consumer law issues. Is that something you're willing to look into?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll always consider ways to improve consumer protection and consumer law advances.

The CHAIR: The aspect around puppy farming, particularly for that sort of consumer angle, is this whole idea that we keep hearing about these guardianship arrangements and the legality of these guardianship arrangements. A guardianship arrangement, because I understand you haven't been briefed on it, is where a breeder adopts out a dog but requires that dog to be brought back for breeding. We've had people on the phone saying that they had these animals and they consider them their animals and they've brought them back for breeding and they've come back and a vet has said that they're too sick and they can't continue to be bred, but they're the legal property of the breeder and there's nothing that they can do. Is the issue of guardianship models something that you're also looking into, from a consumer angle?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As a general principle, Chair, of course we would always examine our consumer laws to make sure they are fit for purpose and, of course, contemporary as issues emerge or there is consistency in those issues emerging. But if there are specific issues that you have, Chair, please contact our office and we can ask Fair Trading to investigate or examine those accordingly.

The CHAIR: Are you aware, Minister, if Fair Trading has been doing any specific work on the consumer issues associated with this during your term?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Can I maybe ask the Fair Trading Commissioner to respond either now or this afternoon?

The CHAIR: I might come back this afternoon. I'm just wondering if you're aware if anything had been happening in that space. On 30 January I believe you attended the regional innovation round table at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct.

The CHAIR: I'm wondering why you attended the round table as opposed to the agriculture Minister, or did you both attend?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: My visit to the Riverina was actually to discuss the Innovation Blueprint and to make sure that regional New South Wales—which is, I have to say, a great place for innovation and technology advancement. It was an opportunity for me to engage with local businesses and local industries in the regions to ensure they understood where the Government was at in terms of its Innovation Blueprint, and also, more importantly, to hear their thoughts on how we can improve that space for our regional community.

CORRECTED

Agriculture—of course, there's innovation there as well, but this was really fundamentally about the Innovation Blueprint.

The CHAIR: Within the discussions at the round table, were there discussions around cell- or plant-based proteins and the potential opportunities they represent?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, we discussed a range of issues. We were there for a few hours, so I can't remember every single topic that was said, but certainly for me—engaging with regional businesses and understanding from them what governments can actually do better to support the ecosystem, in particular in regional communities. This may well have passed, but I can't recall every point.

The CHAIR: I'd previously asked you about funding for cell-based meat startups. Is there any update on whether the New South Wales Government is considering funding this very promising industry, knowing that there are companies that are very close to receiving regulatory approval now?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We have a number of funding programs for startups, Chair—whether it's the SBIR, the MVP, the RYEAP programs through the office of the chief scientist. I recall the funding envelope we've got is about \$90 million for the forwards, so any applicant who wishes, or meets the criteria, of course will apply—

The CHAIR: That's my next question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —and the department will then assess it accordingly.

The CHAIR: Are you aware if those cell-based meat companies would be eligible to apply for any of these grants, particularly the MVP one?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The administration of all applications of all grants is something for Investment NSW to manage. I'm happy for that question to be asked this afternoon of the department.

The CHAIR: Whether they'd be eligible?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have concerns, though, Minister, if they wouldn't be eligible? Obviously this is a constant problem for Ministers in regard to different issues falling outside of eligibility for a lot of grants programs, particularly in this space. Given that the cell-based meat industry is something that is growing in other countries and we're falling behind because of our regulatory restraints compared to other places, is this an area that you'd be willing to support or meet with organisations to see where grant programs can be made sure that they do fall into the eligibility criteria in the future?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: There are a number of questions in there. Can I probably just try to answer them broadly. That's why we're doing the Innovation Blueprint, Chair, to ensure that we have these discussions with particular sectors and with particular industries about the way forward. My vision and my view for the innovation and technology startup sector is to change and to move away from a purely transactional relationship. We need to think much broader about how we actually grow the ecosystem. My vision is that we need to find specialised advantage where industry and governments can focus on what I call the four I's quadrant of turning ideas, getting the investment, industrialising that idea and then of course, finding our export markets. In terms of the innovation sector and where we're going in startups and the future economy, we need to move away from just a basic transactional, financial—we need to think about a much broader perspective as to how we grow the ecosystem.

The CHAIR: I know I asked you a few questions at once there. One of the other questions was whether you are willing to actually meet with these cell-based startup groups and to talk about making sure that they are able to apply for grants?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have met with a number of agritech-based businesses and also the association as well. A meeting request when they submit, of course, will be considered accordingly.

The CHAIR: Can you let me know then on notice which cell-based startups you have met with?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: All my meetings are obviously disclosed. I met with the Agritech, for example, Chair, and of course—

The CHAIR: I don't think they are a cell-based meat company.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But they are part of the whole agritech industry. But in terms of meetings that I've had, they're all disclosed in my diary. I couldn't tell you every single meeting that I've had, because I've had quite a few.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Could I get a confirmation from you that you would be willing to meet with one of these cell-based startups?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Those who want to have a meeting, they are welcome to submit a meeting request and, of course, we'll consider that appropriately.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, are you aware of the practice that is taking place in relation to communications, so letters that are received by inmates, that there's blanket photocopying and the destruction of those original communications?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I am aware of that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that going to stop now?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I understand that the reason the copies are actually made is for a security risk and that often contraband can be used as part of the mailing process and hence that's why—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think it was introduced because of COVID. Naturally, if there is contraband then, sure, you destroy something. It's this blanket application. It was introduced during COVID, and I'm not sure if you are aware, but in the Inspector of Custodial Services report she has made it very clear:

We consider that the destruction of inmate mail should cease entirely. The persistent implementation issues mean we cannot support the continuation of this practice, even if it should be found to be lawful. In the absence of evidence that correspondence is imprinted with an illicit substance, original mail should be either provided to the inmate or stored in their property.

The recommendation is this practice immediately cease. Are you seeing to that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Can I firstly just say, in terms of contraband in the mail, it can be quite a sophisticated operation, Ms Higginson. For example, what I think they call buprenorphine is a paint-like substance that is actually put on paper material.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do we have systems to detect that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think certainly the detecting or monitoring of contraband is an important part of trying to keep our Corrective Services facilities safe. Yes, the Inspector of Custodial Services is an important function. We will find a way to continue to improve the way we operate, but I would also say it needs to be balanced with the security aspects.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I agree, balance is incredibly important. At the moment we have a blanket application of a procedure that the inspector has found is not in accordance with human rights requirements and fairness. Are you suggesting we are going to continue the blanket application?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think this is a technical and sophisticated operational matter but the overall principle—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, the inspector has made a recommendation. Do you take the inspector's reports as something that would guide your ministerial responsibilities?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Certainly. We welcome the ICS's reports because no organisation, Ms Higginson, should be static. We are always finding ways to improve and my expectation is that—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So when we come back to the next budget estimates, will you be able to give me a guarantee now that you will look into that and satisfy yourself that continuing to not implement the inspector's recommendation is the policy of the Government?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, the ICS will obviously examine a number of situations. As you are aware, the inspector's report was actually for a period during the 2022 year, if I'm not mistaken.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You understand though, don't you, we are talking about personal mail with artwork from children, tears, kisses, loved ones, all of that? That's what we are actually talking about. It's the real thing; it's connection.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes. It is a complex matter in trying to balance contraband with issues of personal mail. These are very complex security issues that need to be undertaken. Of course, I'm happy for the acting commissioner to provide answers for you this afternoon. But, in all fairness, it's not as easy as we would like it to be. There are rather innovative ways that people try to sneak contraband into our facilities. The ICS reports were done for a period up to 2022 for a number of our facilities. My expectation is that the department will continue to consider those recommendations and respond appropriately, where it balances the needs of what is a complex environment.

CORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I understand exactly what you're saying. It's very difficult to rationalise the balancing and a procedure that was introduced because of a COVID measure and that Corrective Services are going to continue that now under a new convenient banner. It would be very good and I strongly suggest that you be in a position to come back and say you've reviewed that and changed practices accordingly. It is your responsibility, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct. As I said, all reports are done. We will consider those recommendations and respond appropriately.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In the most recent inspector report of the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre, are you familiar with some of those findings, particularly in relation to the physical environment?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of the remand centre?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We welcome the ICS report into our facilities. Our remand facilities are a complex and difficult environment.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What are we going to do about her findings in relation to strip searches, staff shortages, limited time out of cells and limited access to essential services and legal services?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The remand process is very difficult and a complex environment.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Bearing in mind, Minister, the remand population is exploding.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It is a Corrective Services role. I don't determine what the court orders. What we do in our remand system is to make sure that those who come within our remand system are properly risk assessed. In terms of the specific technicalities and specific actions of that, I'm happy to defer that to the acting commissioner. As a general principle, of course, we take seriously the welfare and the wellbeing of everybody in our Corrective Services, whether they're officers or members of staff.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is Corrective Services NSW looking at the expansion of the use of body-worn cameras for all staff?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm happy to defer that to the acting commissioner.

LEON TAYLOR: We have had a recent program where we've expanded body-worn cameras substantially across the system. Most of our staff now in maximum security environments have access to body-worn cameras.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you finding that that is providing positive outcomes?

LEON TAYLOR: Positive for staff in terms of the protection of staff and positive for inmates in terms of the protection of inmates. The more CCTV footage that we have either from fixed cameras or body-worn cameras is better and safer for everyone.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And you're seeing that materially playing out?

LEON TAYLOR: Completely.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I just want to quickly turn to the buy-up system that we have, where products are available. I've received material that would show that buy-ups in prisons provided by private providers are different to those provided in our public system, and there is concern as to why that's happening—some prices are higher in some and the availability of things across the system. What do you or Corrective Services do to keep in concert with the private deliverer?

LEON TAYLOR: We provide buy-ups. It's a grocery service for inmates. They can buy groceries once a week and then there's an activity buy-up, where it's non-grocery items once a month. Corrective Services provides the buy-up service to Parklea and also to Clarence. Junee GEO provide their own buy-ups. The buying power of Corrective Services is—we're not a Woolies or a Coles. In terms of the prices that we buy goods for and then onsell them to inmates, often the criticism from inmates is, "This can of tuna costs me \$1 in Woolies and it costs \$1.20 in buy-ups." That's just a buying power issue. The department doesn't profit out of the buy-up service; it covers its costs.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If we're doing that, what are we doing to seek to provide the wages of inmates? What are we doing, looking at that? Have you got a lens on that, Minister, of the commensurate level of income prisoners are able to access and what they can afford to buy?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In general, the buy-up program is an important part of our rehabilitation process, and also an upskill opportunity for inmates. In terms of the specifics of each particular buy-up program, I'm happy for the acting commissioner—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Does it concern you, then, Minister, that there's been no increase in prison wages for the past 10 years but the cost of living in jails has actually gone up 250 per cent to 300 per cent?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But I'd also say, in terms of the work of our inmates in our facilities, it's more than just about their wages. It's also about their skills.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think there's some good news here. Is it less than 10 years?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: It is, CPI'd each year.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But no increase? Just CPI?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: It is CPI.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: But not commensurate to the increases in the costs of items in the prisons, which are obviously not just CPI'd. There's an increase in the prices of those products.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But, as I said, we also must see things in a broader perspective. It's about the skills, the training and the opportunities that inmates are provided in this system.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I put to you, Minister, that one of the concerns is that one of the increasing causes of in-prison violence and conflict is the gross poverty that these inmates are kept in whilst they're engaging in a system that has consumer trades et cetera as part of their custodial term?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Corrections facility is a complex environment. Of course our officers do a great job in trying to make sure we prevent violent actions within our system, which is based on things like risk allocating inmates into environments, obviously separating inmates when it's required and appropriate to do so, and also making sure the department continues to follow up on intel on that as well.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Clearly you've got an understanding of that. Do you see that the focus and the desire for rehabilitation and wellbeing, and recovery and healing—so that when people come out they are better than when they went in—that, looking at the wage system and what we're doing to inmates, review of that has merit? And including the idea of people having money when they come out?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Ms Higginson, rehabilitation and reducing recidivism is a core objective of our correctional services network and our operation. We will always look at ways to improve and provide opportunities so that, when our inmates are towards the end of a sentence, they are reintegrated into our society. I'm not closed to ideas that would improve reintegration and reduce recidivism.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And perhaps end the gross exploitation that's actually happening with inmates at this point in time.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, we will always consider if it's good. As I said, these are complex environments, but, certainly, all governments, I would have thought—we are all committed to reducing recidivism in our communities.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And labour exploitation inside the prison?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are committed to reducing recidivism and making sure we provide the appropriate rehabilitation and education programs for our community.

The CHAIR: We have two minutes for the Opposition.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, I have some short, sharp questions to get on them on the record. Have you met with the commissioner for the Americas?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I have.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That was a sit-down meeting that you sought?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It was a sit-down meeting with the governor, I think, of—one of the mayors or the governors from California who was here late last year. We had a meeting.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: And our commissioner to the Americas was sitting down in that meeting?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I recall that he was. That's correct—with the American representative as well.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Did you have a meeting with him specifically, though?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But it was a meeting amongst all of us to discuss the issues and relationship with California.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So as part of a wider group? It wasn't just directly with the trade commissioner for the Americas? Do you even know his name?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think your interpretation or your approach in somehow "this is a one person stop shop in trade" is not—it's not what it is.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, I think you've answered my question. So the answer is no.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have to say it's not the way our trade relationships actually work.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have you met specifically with Helen Sawczak for China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, where you have sat down and met and spoke about trade as the trade Minister and in her role as commissioner?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I said I met Helen.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But at a function. Is that what you're saying?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've met Helen and we discussed—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Not in a meeting context.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: What I would say is no one person is the single source of advice or wisdom to grow the markets.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: We've already heard that answer from you, Minister. Thank you.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We work with a range of stakeholders

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have you met with Malini Dutt?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: When our officers are actually based onshore—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So Moin Anwar isn't there anymore, but have you met with a representative for the Middle East?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I said all those who have actually come back onshore—we'll provide the opportunity to meet with them. Secretary, did you—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, that's not my question. I'm asking if you have sought—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Moin is actually—when our officers come back onshore, of course we meet with them. It's natural, of course.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you didn't actually meet with the commissioner when he came out here.

The CHAIR: It's now Government question time.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Thanks, Madam Chair. Minister, are you able to inform the Committee on how you're working towards a strategic approach to industry, innovation and trade investment to ensure the Government's approach is more than just a random collection of documents that don't go anywhere?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I can. Thank you very much, Mr Buttigieg.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mop up!

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: There are no documents.

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We have to take a broad and strategic approach when we think about our trade strategy. We have to connect our industry policy with our trade opportunities and also, underlining that, is to ensure that our Innovation Blueprint—our innovation technologies—actually supports all of those things together. In terms of our Innovation Blueprint, I want to move away from the former Government's view that somehow it's innovative just to hand out cash. It's more than that. It's about engaging with our industry stakeholders; it's about growing the ecosystem; it's about determining where government can best deploy its resources without actually crowding out what the market does best. The engagement that we've had in the

CORRECTED

Innovation Blueprint recently in Wagga Wagga, down in Charles Sturt, but also here in Sydney—and I'm doing a number of regional round tables on this front—has been nothing but enthusiastic and positive. What this demonstrates to me, Chair, is that perhaps they weren't being listened to previously.

They are engaged, they're enthusiastic and they are really concerned about where our innovation sector is going. As I said, there is nothing innovative, there is nothing inventive and there is nothing imaginative how innovation is just a financial cash transaction. The Innovation Blueprint that I've designed is about the four I's quadrant: It's about ideas, investment, industrialising and internationalism. How do we incubate the ideas aspect of it? How do we actually ensure that our skills base—how do we create a culture where people are able to come and experiment and choose Sydney and New South Wales as a place for them to come? Investment-wise, how do we actually ensure that we can better leverage private and public capital? We have to look at how we industrialise our supply chain, our capacity, and, of course, have a think about international markets.

The four I's quadrant is the strategy that I will be pursuing with our stakeholders to ensure that New South Wales is at the forefront of this sector. That, of course, will feed in—Chair, colleagues—to the industry policy. Industry policy was never a focus of the former Government. Industry policy needs to determine where the biggest growth industries are for the future of New South Wales. We are currently dominated by coal exports, Chair. It's about \$55 billion we explored in coal, which is, of course, important to the New South Wales economy, but we can't be naive to think that this is going to continue forever. We need to think about where the growth industries are. There are things like health and life sciences. It's about agriculture and agritech; it's about energy; it's about aero defence. These particular industries, not only are they significant growth, they are actually multiple growth. That, of course, will flow on to jobs and opportunities and skills and for the people of New South Wales. Then if you identify the sectors and your Innovation Blueprint and grow the ecosystem, you then think about your international trade markets.

Now, in South-East Asia, where Nicholas Moore, the Federal Government's envoy released a report, which will be the fourth largest economic bloc by 2040—it's going to be worth about \$3 trillion. There is going to be an estimated 190 million income taxpayers—about the Australian average would earn. That is a significant export and consumer base for all of our industries, whether it's education, whether it's agriculture in our regions, whether it's technology, whether it's health and lifestyle. This is one of the fastest growing markets in the world. We need to make sure that New South Wales has the right strategy in place, has the right connections. It's not just about having one-on-one meetings. It's not just about appointing your mates to an overseas post. This is about connecting with both onshore and offshore, working with the representatives here from the export countries, establishing these relationships and advancing New South Wales interests.

We are competitive and we are actually well ahead in a number of these industries. That is, therefore, connecting our Innovation Blueprint, finalising our industry policy and then connecting it with our trade and export strategy—is where it's actually all at. You need to have synchronisation and clarity about who you're going to sell it to, what industries are going to be the growth opportunities and, of course, how you incubate your local domestic system. It would be a rather narrow approach just to think that international trade networks or international growth is just about having one-on-one meetings. It's much deeper than that. It's about identifying opportunities and actually getting into those markets now before they mature, because other countries are doing the same. That's why the work that I've done, the work that I've instructed the department to do, engaging with particularly our ASEAN network—late last year we had a really, I thought, fruitful and productive discussion with a number of the diplomatic corps here to make them understand the opportunities and advantages that we have right here in New South Wales and how it can actually help their consumer markets.

It's by no accident that 40 per cent of international students study in New South Wales and a growing number of them continue to come from our ASEAN markets. Education, of course, is our second biggest export after coal but it's also one that continues to serve the New South Wales economy actually very well. Let's get away from nitpicking minutia and think about a much broader strategic view about how we develop our domestic ecosystem, how we identify the most industries, the big industries where New South Wales has the advantage and where governments can deploy the resources—and then understanding the consumer preferences of those in our nearest neighbours. We have great proximity to those markets. We have a wonderful diverse community in the diaspora here, which will no doubt help grow New South Wales industries.

I just think this is such a wonderful opportunity for New South Wales and for the country, I would say, to ensure that we have a suite of policies—not just one, not just one meeting, not just exporting as many international offices as you can. That's not value for money for the New South Wales taxpayer. We've got to make sure that we set the agenda, we set the strategy and we make sure that we focus on the areas where that's going to deliver the greatest economic and employment growth for the people of New South Wales. Also, to incubate these things now—the ability to create these things is not something you do overnight. It actually takes time to establish the relationships here onshore—of course, yes, also offshore as well—working with our diplomatic community,

CORRECTED

because they know their countries best. We want to understand what's going to open opportunities for New South Wales industries. Those conversations, those discussions identifying growth are really important for New South Wales.

The CHAIR: We will now break for morning tea and return at 11.15.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back to the next session. We will start immediately with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, if I may start, I just want to talk about the rental reform package by NSW Labor that was promised prior to the election.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Where are we up to with ending no-grounds evictions?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is obviously committed, as you would know, to no-grounds evictions.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, I know.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is considering the policy options that we have. As you will be well aware, Mrs Taylor, no-grounds evictions is quite a complex area of policy. I am, I have to admit, sensitive to any adverse or distortionary effects that it may have if we rush in a policy package that's not suited to the New South Wales market.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So, Minister, you are committed but there's nothing that has actually happened yet?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, a lot of things have happened—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm not being difficult. I'm just trying to be—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, I appreciate that, and I'm not suggesting that you are.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You said it was complex.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As you are well aware, we had an extensive consultation process last year.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I am.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The results of that are actually on the website. You might be also well aware that 90 per cent of tenants want things to move on no-grounds and 90 per cent of property owners don't want to move. You can appreciate—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I presume that's why you promised it during the election campaign, Minister, so I just want to clarify again. I understand that you said it is complex, that you've consulted and that it's on the website. But in terms of actually what has happened, that's it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, what has happened—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Okay.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We've had—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you, Minister. Another thing that NSW Labor promised going into the election campaign was implementing a portable rental bond scheme and also the banning of secret rent bidding.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Earlier on in questioning in this Committee, you actually had said that there was action on that. Do you want to explain how there was action on that? I understand there's legislation, but my understanding is that you had to pull out that part of the legislation.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: There are a couple of questions you've asked there, Mrs Taylor.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm not trying to be too difficult.

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, no. Since it's a relatively broad set of questions, can I just start with the portable bond scheme, which is our election platform commitment? I do thank the Parliament for supporting that. It is good policy.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Great.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But there are multiple stages in its implementation. One—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: To redirect you, then, could you explain what stage you're onto of the implementation phase?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of which one?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: We're talking about the rental bond scheme now, as you've just said.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Sure. The portable rental bonds—as you know, the Parliament passed that last year. There are multiple stages in its implementation.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, you've just said that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: One is about determining the rules about how the actual portable scheme will work, because, essentially, what you have is that you have two owners of the one bond. We have to determine what are the rules and the regulations around that.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I have limited time. Are you saying that now that's the phase that you're in—just determining?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, no, no. The phase that we are in is—as I said, we don't have to do things in sequence. We can do things at the same time.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You just said that before, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's not what I said. I don't think that's accurate.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I think *Hansard* will determine that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, I have to say, I disagree with that.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, if I may just redirect you again, please, to the question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, and I'm trying to answer it.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: What stage are you at?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Are you finished? Can I answer? Because I'm happy to let you keep on talking.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: No, Minister. What I'd really like is for you to answer my questions. That's your job, respectfully.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, and that's exactly—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Do you want me to repeat the question?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You're welcome to.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Or do you want to answer it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, you are welcome to repeat it, if you like.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: For the third time—for the record of *Hansard*—what stage are you at? Are you past determining that first phase of your implementation for a portable rental bond scheme?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The portable bond scheme, as you would be aware, is quite a complex system that we have to determine. Regarding the rules, of course we consider all the rules and we consider what repercussions that might have and at the same time determining what sort of—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So we are at determining?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, Mrs Taylor, don't make conclusions that aren't true. They are not accurate.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm just repeating your words, respectfully.

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, you're not, actually. You're putting your words—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can I redirect you then to talk about what's happened with banning secret rent bidding.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government has a suite of reforms with rental. We put that to the Parliament, as you know. It's a complex part of it, but certainly we continue to ensure that our rental reform package continues to meet where the rental market is at. As you would be well aware, as part of the reform package last year we did close a loophole that was in the legislation about banning rent bidding from owners and also from platforms as well. That was a loophole that we've closed.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: As I have limited time, and you are talking about, just to use your words, a "suite of reforms", where are you up to in your suite of reforms in banning secret rent bidding?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's all part of our suite of reforms. We've passed the first tranche and we will continue to our next one. But in all fairness—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You passed the first tranche?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, and we are considering at the moment. In all fairness, Mrs Taylor, you would be well aware, and you were in the Cabinet room, that nothing happened for 12 years.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, you've been here for 12 months now. We are asking you the questions. I think you've tried to answer that. I will move on to my colleague now. Thank you, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You had 12 years and I'm getting criticised for passing reform in the first 12 months.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Thank you, Minister. Can I redirect you and turn to the strata commissioner role. I know it was important for you because it was an election promise as far back as 2019.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Given that it was a Labor election promise, is the commissioner adequately resourced? I understand they only have one adviser and one secretary.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Thank you very much for your question. Strata reform is important. I am delighted that the department has appointed Mr John Minns, an experienced professional in this space.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Is he adequately resourced?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: He has access to the resources of the whole Fair Trading network. He will continue to work closely with the Rental Commissioner and also the Building Commissioner. As you would also be well aware, the statutory review of the strata legislation was done in 2021 or thereabouts, I understand. Of course, we passed the first tranche last year of strata legislation, things like making sure that we don't have additional bonds on pets, Chair, which I know you would be well aware.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Thank you. I think you are straying outside my question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But it's also part of the whole network. The strata commissioner has the whole network of the resources of Fair Trading and DCS and he will continue to provide the Government with appropriate advice.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Can I redirect you, sorry. I understand the Owners Corporation Network and the Retirement Village Residents Association have called for additional resources to meet the extra demand. I understand this because there are over 84,000 strata schemes in the office. Do you still stand by your statement that the commissioner is adequately resourced?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The commissioner has the resources of the whole Fair Trading, of over 785 employees, and that's just in Fair Trading alone and, of course, accessing the resource and working with the Building Commission, over 400 employees. The resources are available to the strata commissioner to ensure we implement the statutory—which of course was done by the former Government, but it's taken this Government to implement the first tranche. We are currently actually undertaking targeted consultation for the second tranche of the strata reform, which is important as more and more people live in strata schemes. You are right, it is more than 84,000 and more are coming on line. Hence the work, the strata reforms that we have passed, and with the support of the Parliament, I'm happy to acknowledge that.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I think you've answered my question, Minister.

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Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In what way? I'm not sure. I've answered it, but—

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I asked if it was adequately resourced and you've given me that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course, he has access to the resources of the whole network.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Does the commissioner's role—are there terms of reference for the role? If the commissioner did ask for extra resources, how would that be received by you, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Firstly, the role of the strata commissioner is important. He does have delegated authority under the Property and Stock Agents Act—it comes down from the Fair Trading Commissioner. His role, of course, is to continue to advise the Government on reform, liaise with industry to ensure that we get a balanced package in what is an important area of how people in New South Wales live—because more and more people will continue to live in strata. We've got to make sure that our laws are contemporary and relevant and actually meet the needs of our community. It is quite a complex area of law—

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes, I understand that, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —so certainly this year we started the targeted consultation on the second phase of the laws.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: As a follow-on from that, what are the key accountabilities for the role and how will they be measured?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I said that the role of the property services—like all public servants, is to provide the Government with advice on policy reform and the Government's agenda. As I said, strata is an important area of reform. We know more and more people are living in strata units.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: You've said that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's why—obviously in his direct performance he reports to his direct report—but, from our perspective, the Government's perspective is to ensure that the Strata and Property Services Commissioner continues to provide the Government with advice as it seeks to implement the next tranche of its strata reform agenda.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Minister, are the roles and responsibilities—is that a written document and, if so, would you be able to provide that on notice?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm happy to take that question on notice but, as I said, the role of the Strata and Property Services Commissioner is important and we want to ensure that we have laws that continue to meet the needs of our local community as more and more people live in strata.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can I just clarify—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Sorry, before that, Ms Munro, if that's okay—Secretary, did you—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Perhaps we can address the secretary in the afternoon if that's okay. Thank you very much for your understanding. I just wanted to clarify, Minister, has the commissioner asked for additional staff and funding to do his job?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: All considerations for resources will be undertaken by Cabinet in the due process.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Has he requested additional resources? Because you've said that he has the resources of the department, but the reality is he has two staff members. I think that, when we're considering appropriate resourcing, surely the commissioner would know the best level. I'm wondering if he has asked for more resourcing.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government will consider all bids for resources through normal Cabinet and budget-making processes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So he has made a request?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will consider all the applications before the Cabinet.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Will you advocate for that request in Cabinet?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As they're Cabinet discussions, I'm reluctant to disclose any discussions that are in Cabinet in a public forum.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm wondering about underquoting. Because we know that buyers' experiences at auctions where properties sell for well over their advertised price guides are occurring. Is this genuine competitive bidding or is this underground underquoting?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: If you're aware of specific issues around underquoting, please contact us. We're happy to investigate that for you. But in terms of underquoting, the behaviour of agents is covered by the Property and Stock Agents Act and any, of course, misdeeds, or people that are not playing—then of course Fair Trading will investigate.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is compliance reactive? Are you monitoring how many complaints you're getting and how many cases are being investigated?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: If there are issues or instances, Ms Munro, that you're aware of, please contact the office. We're happy to investigate.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Maybe you could put this on notice—how many complaints have been made to your department about this? And also the status of investigations—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Sure. I'm happy to answer it now if you're willing to hear it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, of course.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In 2021 we had 231 complaints. In 2022 we had 104 complaints. There are fines issues. As of the last calendar year, it was 168 complaints.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So it's increasing?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, but also those complaints are not necessarily instances of underquoting. There are market mechanisms in place.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you've got the complaints. If you could also provide information to the Committee about the outcome of those complaints, that would be helpful.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm happy to take that on notice, no problem.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is an annual quote at the moment. There are no six-monthly or quarterly amounts?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They're annuals.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you think that underquoting laws are broken more than they're being complained about? We're talking about arguably systemic issues in this process. How have you been proactive in actually addressing the problems? I've seen it myself and I'm sure you have too.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Any inappropriate behaviour by agents is covered by the Property and Stock Agents Act. There are expectations on how people behave in property transactions. In terms of underquoting, if you are aware of any instance, please let us know. I'm happy to investigate.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I think the Premier said last year that if these rules need to be strengthened, they will be. Will they be?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll consider to make sure all of our laws remain contemporary and relevant. We're not a static legislative government. If issues arise, we'll continue to examine those issues.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm asking if this is an issue that's arising. Sorry, you said this, not the Premier—my apologies. Is this, in your judgment as Minister, an issue that needs to be addressed through stronger mechanisms for oversight and compliance? It's up to you.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Protecting consumers is an important part of what Fair Trading does. We are always open to ideas or ways to improve.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But what are your ideas, Minister? Do you think that this is something that needs to be addressed?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think any breaches of consumer law, we would always look at investigating.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm asking about whether there are stronger actions. You have said specifically if rules need to be strengthened, then we'll act. Do they need to be strengthened and will you act?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You also have to bear in mind, too, Ms Munro, that selling or buying a property is the biggest transaction that I suspect everybody in this room will make.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I know, but I'm actually asking for your judgement as the Minister and in your role as Minister. You've said if the rules need to be strengthened, they will be. So are you saying that they do need to be strengthened or they don't need to be strengthened?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've said we'll consider changes to legislation and regulation as they are required.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is it required or not?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll consider all our laws to make sure they continue to be relevant.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: When will you decide if it's required or not?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will decide it in the normal process of stakeholder consultation with our colleagues.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is stakeholder consultation happening at the moment? How many complaints have to be submitted before you decide to take some stronger action?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Complaints can be done through the Fair Trading network and we will investigate them. In terms of the specifics of that, I'm happy to ask the Property Services Commissioner to answer them for you later this afternoon. As a general principle, Chair and colleagues, what government wouldn't be open to making changes where they are appropriate? We've got to make sure that the evidence—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm not asking about whether you're open or not; I'm asking about whether you will make a decision at some point and actually make a determination on what the reality is and what needs to be done. That's what I'm asking you for.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm responding to you that, of course, like any government, we will make sure that we continue to examine our laws to ensure they are contemporary and relevant.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Up front, I just want to ask, are you responsible for advanced manufacturing in New South Wales?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm the Minister for Industry and Trade. Are you talking about the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm talking about advanced manufacturing in New South Wales.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's part of our Innovation Blueprint to determine where—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you are? Minister Houssos answered my question in Parliament earlier this month pretty unequivocally. I asked who was responsible for manufacturing in this Government. Minister Houssos said, "That would be me." I wanted to understand if there is a distinction in your Government between advanced manufacturing, which has traditionally fallen within industry, innovation, science and technology, or whether that responsibility was moving to a different Minister now.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think, firstly, my colleague Minister Houssos, her title is the Minister for domestic manufacturing and procurement.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: And local procurement, in fact, Minister. I'm well aware. Thank you.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Her role is to ensure how do we use the public procurement process to stimulate the manufacturing sector?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So what's your role as advanced manufacturing—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'll get to that, thank you. My role as industry Minister is to determine the industry policy, which I explained prior to us breaking, to determine the sectors that we would grow best, because manufacturing, Ms Munro, is not a single-sector issue. You can manufacture in life sciences, in agritech, which is important to regional communities.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you are responsible for advanced manufacturing. Can I just clarify—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We work as a great team.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can I just clarify: Who was responsible for sacking the Modern Manufacturing Commissioner?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I understand the former Government didn't fund her position beyond the last budget.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: We had wage rises that weren't funded in the last budget but your Government managed to decide to do that. So you're not taking responsibility for something else that you could've decided to do?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Manufacturing and the development of manufacturing is more than a one-person process. We've got a voice in the Cabinet for manufacturing and I will continue that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is that you or is that Minister Houssos?

The CHAIR: The Opposition time has now expired. Minister, I was asking you about cell-based meat companies in the last line that I was speaking about with you. You said that you would consider a meeting with them if they put in a request. If I made a request to meet with you with the cell-based meat companies, would you agree to that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm happy to consider your request, Chair, of course. I'm always happy to meet you, you know that.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, at the last estimates you confirmed on notice that you had received a briefing on Closing the Gap.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The CHAIR: Can you advise what that briefing consisted of and what issues were raised with you?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Closing the Gap is a national response where all of us have a role to play. I was recently briefed also, Chair, by Corrective Services about our Indigenous deaths in custody. I suppose my role, in particular as the Corrective Services Minister, is to find ways to address our Indigenous incarceration rate. Obviously, that's the law that comes in. Of course, once there we want to provide all the support that we can for our Indigenous inmates. Closing the Gap is an important national objective. I think no-one would disagree that is a pretty complex area of public policy. It crosses all government departments: education, social welfare, skills and training, of course our justice system. It's a parliamentary responsibility for all of us to work together to address the issues identified in Closing the Gap.

The CHAIR: Did you say that you've had a further, more recent briefing again?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: This is from corrections' perspective around Indigenous deaths in custody. This is also more for my colleague Minister Harris. We did have a very productive meeting with CAPO, which is the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations. All of the Cabinet, not just myself, had a very productive discussion about how we address the issues for our first Australians, but also not being siloed in a particular—because they are all interdependent. I think that's important across all of government and also the private sector too to continue innovative ways to ensure that our Indigenous Australians have a life quality and expectancy of all other Australians as well.

The CHAIR: Can I ask, Minister, what new initiatives or work are you commissioning as Minister as part of Closing the Gap?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, certainly. I might just speak about Corrections in my portfolio itself.

The CHAIR: Yes, just you as Minister, what initiatives are you running?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course. We have a number of programs, Chair. For example, our Corrective Services strategic plan Towards 2030 is trying to reduce our Indigenous reoffending by 10 per cent and also increase the proportion of Indigenous staff to our workforce by about 8 per cent, and also our goal is to reduce those in custody by about 15 per cent. These indicators are also closely aligned with Closing the Gap targets. We have a very strong partnership, as I said, with CAPO, the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, and continually have this engagement. We continue to have a strategic overview of our targets. It is a sad statistic, Chair, as is publicly well known, that 30 per cent of our male inmates are Indigenous and 40 per cent of our female inmates are Indigenous. It is certainly a complex issue, but Corrective Services will play its role to ensure that those who are held in custody or on remand get all the support that is appropriate.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Minister, you mentioned a couple of the targets, and I know at the last budget estimates in some of the questions you took on notice you also mentioned targets to reduce adult reoffending in New South Wales by 80 per cent by 2030, a target of 10 per cent in respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I guess my question is how you plan to actually achieve those targets. What initiatives are you putting in place to get there?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: When it comes to policy issues regarding our first Australians it's not just Corrective Services, Chair; it's the whole network of government, whether it's education, health, employment, skills and our justice system. All of these things need to work in unison. It's not a one-department or one-policy issue solution. It requires, I think, great coordination.

The CHAIR: I'm assuming you would be involved in whatever initiatives are being put into place, even if you are working with other government agencies and organisations. Can you talk us through what you are doing in that space?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In the Corrections space, did you say, Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes, but specifically around this Closing the Gap, not more broadly.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: There are a number of programs that we have in place. It is important to the Government to try to close that gap. We do have a number of initiatives and programs that are in place. Certainly, in terms of the mechanisms or the specifics of programs, Chair, I'm happy to ask the acting commissioner to make some comments. But we are all committed to Closing the Gap. It is a multidisciplinary and multi-agency, departmental collaboration, and with the not-for-profit sector as well—and business as well—to provide those opportunities.

The CHAIR: I might come to you in a moment.

LEON TAYLOR: Sure.

The CHAIR: Minister, are there any programs that you are particularly interested in or excited about, or that you think will really help reach those targets?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Certainly. Corrective Services' role—and of course we will provide the appropriate programs and accommodation for our Indigenous inmates. But also I think, in all fairness, we are at the supply end of our justice system. There's a range of policy measures that every government department needs to work to. I am always open to any policy programs that help reduce Indigenous incarceration, also to provide the appropriate resources. But in terms of specific, I'm happy to ask the acting commissioner to provide those responses.

The CHAIR: Minister, will you be initiating or funding new programs to meet those targets?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government will always consider its programs and its budget allocation to the normal process of Cabinet.

The CHAIR: Are there any programs that you are currently considering or looking into?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will consider all our programs and all our bids as part of the normal budgeting process.

The CHAIR: Do you feel that the programs currently in place will be enough to reach those targets that you are quoting? Or are there actual programs you are looking at expanding or bringing in?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I will always take advice from the department about which programs work well and others that haven't worked so well. I think this continual improvement process is important to make sure that the policies and the programs that we have are actually effective and deliver the objectives we want for our Indigenous Australians.

The CHAIR: Do you have any plans, for example, around increasing support available for people leaving correctional facilities and reintegrating back into the community? Is that something you are looking into?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes. I think this is all a part—as I mentioned, rehabilitating and reducing recidivism is a core, key aspect of what Corrections New South Wales undertakes. Of course, we will work with my other ministerial colleagues to ensure that those who are about to reintegrate into our communities have the support in place. But, if you would like, Chair, a more comprehensive briefing about some of our programs, I'd be happy to provide that for you.

The CHAIR: My question was about increasing support available. Are you looking at funding or advocating for funding for more programs in this space, rather than what's currently in place?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: All programs, whether new or existing, will be reviewed as normal to make sure that they actually deliver for the people we're trying to help. In terms of the budget allocation, we will go through that as part of the normal Cabinet process, Chair.

The CHAIR: Earlier this month the Government received a fairly damning report from the Inspector of Custodial Services about the Silverwater Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre. The report identified serious safety issues for staff and inmates, particularly around hanging points throughout the facility. Can I ask you what you're doing in response, first of all, to that report?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I welcome the ICS's report. It's important for any organisation, whether it's Corrective Services or other departments, to continually find ways to ensure that we make commitments to provide the safest environment for our officers and for our inmates as well. In terms of the ligature points, the Government has invested, I understand, about \$7 million this year to remove ligature points. But I also say, Chair, that when we examine or we look at ligature points, it's actually part of a much broader risk management strategy for our inmates. It's things like risk assessment of their health and mental health wellbeing, intel in our systems to ensure to prevent violent interactions. It's providing the medical support for those who might be having substance issues and it's about providing and making changes. Ligature points are one part but they're actually part of an overall risk management process to ensure that we provide the safest and most modern facilities for our officers and for our inmates.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Good morning, Minister, and all of the officials here today. Can I start by asking what is the status of the NSW Defence and Industry Strategy that was set up by the previous Government in 2022?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is—unsurprisingly, with the change of government—taking a new approach in terms of our industry policy strategy. I'm not sure if you were here towards the end of the previous session, but I did outline what the Government is doing in terms of linking its industry strategy with its trade strategy and also with its Innovation Blueprint as well.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But in relation to defence?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That will be part of our industry policy and our development. As you might be well aware, 40 per cent of defence manufacturing actually happens in New South Wales. It's certainly a significant industry, particularly for our regional communities, where a number of companies are actually located. It's not only a significant employer but also a great contributor as well.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand the regional defence network was being funded to 2025 under the previous Government. I think it's just over \$1 million. Is that still ongoing?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will consider all funding arrangements through the normal process.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But at the moment it's still ongoing?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'd have to defer to the secretary in terms of that specific program.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Maybe take that on notice and you can come back to me in the afternoon on that. Have you been meeting with companies that are involved in the defence industry and arms manufacture?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I have. All my meeting disclosures are disclosed appropriately.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: On 9 November you met with four weapons manufacturers. What did you discuss at that meeting?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We discussed their ideas and opportunities for investment in New South Wales. As an industry and trade Minister, part of my job is to ensure that we find increased or different economic opportunities for the people of New South Wales.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you promoting arms export manufacture?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm promoting the industry, which is important, particularly to many of our regional communities.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Did you meet with the Israeli ambassador on 7 September?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, the ambassador requested a meeting and I met with him.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Did you discuss arms export at that meeting?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It may surprise, but I'm really reluctant to air private conversations that I have with anybody.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are we exporting arms from New South Wales to Israel?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have to take that one on notice. But the defence industry is an important part—particularly in regional communities. We want to make sure that we continue to provide opportunities.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We're in the middle of the biggest anti-war movement that I think we've seen in quite some time. In light of those concerns, will the New South Wales Government withdraw financial and other support from the arms industry? Or, from what you're saying, we're just going to keep feeding it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm not an expert in foreign affairs. It is complex. But my job as industry and trade Minister is to ensure that we continue to provide opportunities, in particular for regional communities, where a number of these companies are actually located.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So with the Ukrainian war going on, just a month after the outbreak of war in the Middle East, we have you meeting with weapons manufacturers. You're telling me that you are promoting the manufacture of arms for export from New South Wales. We also know that we're still funding weapons manufacturers and the defence industry in New South Wales. Do you think that the average person in the community thinks that's an appropriate thing for the New South Wales Government to be doing right now?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The role of the New South Wales Government is to make sure we provide economic and employment opportunities for people in our community, and in particular the defence industry—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Regardless of ethics? Any industry? Just industry?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I thought it would be quite ethical to make sure that there are jobs and opportunities for people in New South Wales.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In manufacturing weapons of war?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In all industries that are available for New South Wales.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Don't you think that they'd rather have an industry that wasn't contributing to the mass genocide of people in the Middle East or other things? Don't you think that maybe they want industries in clean, green energy production or, who knows, other things? Isn't it the Government's responsibility to shepherd towards sustainable and ethical industries and out of destructive ones?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think we are, and this is the point of the industry policy that we've got. We need to focus on a range of industries, as I said, but also understand where our greatest opportunities are. I think all issues or current events around conflicts overseas is not a matter for the State Government; it's a matter for the Federal Government.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I would disagree with you on that, especially if we're funding it with the export of arms. Perhaps we can move to something else, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Why is it that the New South Wales Government has still not signed on to the National Construction Code's minimum accessibility standards that every other State and Territory has signed up to except for New South Wales and WA?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As you may be well aware, the former Government refused to sign on to the NCC code with accessibility.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Supported by Labor at the time, I have to say.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They refused to sign, but I am open to it, Ms Boyd. I understand this has been an agenda that has been discussed at the Building Ministers' Meeting. I also understand and recall, if I'm not mistaken, that other States have signed but they've also delayed it as well. What we want to do is take some institutional learnings from those jurisdictions to make sure that they are applicable and work well. But I would also say, Ms Boyd, that the Government itself is committed and has done a number of developments that meet some of the codes around accessibility.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm well aware of that and well aware of how a voluntary scheme hasn't worked. We have been calling for this for many years. Is your position simply that the other States and Territories can do

CORRECTED

it first and we'll learn? Or are we actually going to be leaders in ensuring that we provide for people with disability and mobility issues?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: My position is in total contrast to the former Government's position, Ms Boyd, in not adopting it at all. I am open to it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But, with respect, it's not. In the past Parliament, when I put up a motion calling on the Government to do this, Labor was in lock step with the Coalition Government at the time in opposing joining the NCC minimum accessibility standards. This has been a long-running issue, unfortunately. Things have changed, though, now because we now have an additional incentive for you, which is recommendation 7.35 of the disability royal commission, which is calling for everyone across Australia to adopt the NCC minimum accessibility standards. Will you finally do it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We are open to considering the National Construction Code around accessibility. The former Government refused to even adopt these standards, but I am open to it and will continue to ensure that we take great institutional learnings from our colleagues in other States. But, as I recall, some of our other States have actually delayed their implementation of this scheme as well.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: They've done a staged implementation; they haven't delayed it. They've signed on and then they've done it in a staged way. We've not even begun to begin the process. I do welcome you looking into it and I hope we have a change.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We're open to it. Unlike our former colleagues in government, who were totally against it, we are open to it. We understand this is important for a section of our community.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I look forward to action that backs up those words. Coming off a question that I understand the Chair asked previously in relation to rental reforms, particularly in relation to making rentals more accessible for tenants with companion animals, which is particularly important when it comes to domestic and family violence as well, have you met with the domestic and family violence sector in relation to that reform?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have met with a number of domestic violence support groups—as I recall in my diary disclosures. I know the pet rental reform is important to yourself and also to the Chair as well, but we are going to move that as a broader package in terms of rental reform. I have to admit I'm not a fan of single, piecemeal legislation.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Your Government is. That is all we are getting at the moment.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's not something I agree with but, in terms of the rental reform package that we've got, it is a complex area. I'm being criticised by my Opposition colleagues for doing things in the first 12 months, and they haven't done anything in 12 years.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It was promised by the NSW Rental Commissioner, Trina Jones, for the first quarter of 2024. Are we on track for that reform?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is considering the reform package and we will implement that as soon as—but, as I said, I am sensitive to the packages of rental reform that we deliver, that it works for the New South Wales market. I'm not a fan of literally picking up another State's reforms and planting them in New South Wales, because that could have significant effects on the market, which will only hurt the very people we're trying to help.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How many meetings have you taken in relation to SIRA since they came under your responsibility?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As in, with the department?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In relation to SIRA.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I meet with the department on a regular basis.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, with the State Insurance Regulatory Authority—in relation to that. With stakeholders, with other people of concern—how many meetings?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Sorry, but I'm not sure I understand your question. Are you saying stakeholders within SIRA or SIRA themselves?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, I'm talking about people in the community, advocacy groups or other stakeholders who want to talk to you about SIRA now that it's within your responsibility.

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: All my meetings are disclosed as appropriate and all meeting requests from any stakeholders across my portfolios—we will consider them as they are put forward to us.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I'd like to turn to Corrections now. Minister, under the bed consolidation plans, how many beds will be closed at the five facilities? The five facilities I'm talking about are Goulburn, Bathurst, Cessnock, Long Bay and the metro programs centre.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: First of all, they're not closed. That's an incorrect description. They are being mothballed. You would appreciate that at the moment the network has capacity for 15,600 beds. At the moment we have about 12,300 inmates. So there is a capacity of about 30 per cent. The purpose of mothballing is to allow our officers and our inmates to be accommodated in the most modern facilities that the network has available. So it's actually not closing; it's just being mothballed. Of course, if there is a need to reopen those things, they can be done as well.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: As a follow-up then, in the individual—say, for Cessnock, how many beds are in Cessnock's four wings?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, the beds that were part of the contemporary site at Cessnock is 130 beds, I'm advised.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: And Bathurst?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In Bathurst, 209 beds.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: In Goulburn, 3 and 4?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: So 170.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: And Long Bay Hospital area 2?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That is 186.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Then the beds in the metropolitan program centre area 1?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'll have to take that one on notice. But, as I said, the mothballing strategy was also done by the former Government as well. It's actually part of our ensuring that we utilise the capacity within our system to provide the most modern environment for our officers and for our inmates.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: In providing that modern environment, can you assure the Committee and the correctional officers across New South Wales that this will not result in any job losses?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes. Our decisions on mothballing today has not resulted in job losses—

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: And that will continue?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —and has not made any major disruptions to our Corrective Services programs and industries.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Have you provided any assurances to the staff at those five facilities that they won't be required to relocate for employment?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes. I was in Goulburn a few weeks ago, and I had this discussion with our officers down there. I'm advised that in Goulburn, for example, there are no job losses, and our officers who were formerly rostered on to those wings that had been mothballed are actually just rostered on within the broader Goulburn—

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: So they won't be relocated as part of their employment?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They haven't been relocated, as far as I am aware.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: What consultation, Minister, did you have between the Public Service Association and Corrections?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As in between the Corrections and the PSA, or myself and the PSA?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yourself and the PSA.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The PSA is, obviously, the employee association that represents the vast majority of our officers which are in the network. It's important that I continue to have good dialogue with them.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Very important.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Also, I make sure that the department—Corrections—continues to have that dialogue.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Did you meet with them? Because the PSA have indicated that they didn't have an opportunity to discuss the mothballing, as you have said. Did you meet with them or was it just a general discussion?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Are you referring to Goulburn, in particular?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: No, I'm just—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Generally, I regularly meet with the PSA. I have to; they are an employee representative. They represent the workforce. I need to understand the needs of the workforce. In terms of the communication, we'll continue to get on with that.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: The correctional facilities that are being impacted and the PSA, will they receive a change management plan from you about what's happening?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will obviously continue to liaise with all stakeholders as decisions are actually made.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: In terms of programs, following on from Emily, if I can table this. On 24 December, there was a jail program that kept mums and bubs together that was halted at Emu Plains, which is a prison that has been mothballed.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: What are you doing for the mothers and babies in that Emu Plains facility—I think it was called the Jacaranda program. What has happened to those ladies and babies?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Certainly—and particularly for our females inmates—the environment is important, because they do have differences—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Specifically.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —particularly if you're a mother and a female inmate. Certainly programs that are—I'm happy for the acting commissioner to provide specific details on that program.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Take it on notice.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes, take it on notice. But in the lead-up to that, did you meet with a group called Keeping Women Out of Prison before this closure?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think I might have. I think you're talking about KWOOP.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's correct, yes. I'm happy to take that on notice but I recall I did probably meet with—

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: And to discuss this in particular?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We discussed it. I can't remember the full discussions of what we had. As you would be well aware, Ms MacDONALD, I obviously discuss any programs. But I am advised that with the Emu Plains decision, I understand that was actually done by your Government, with the programs and closures.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I will ask one more question before I hand over. Have there been any children that are now in the care system because of this program being closed?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In the care system of where? I'm not sure.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Because they can't be with their mothers so they are in the care system.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As in the DoCs network, you mean?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I might let you take it on notice.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The secretary might have something worthwhile to say here around this.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: We can do that in the afternoon. Minister, the modern manufacturing strategy was due last year and departmental staff confirmed that Ms Emmerson had been working on the strategy. It's now late. Could you please advise when it will be delivered?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The work of the modern manufacturing strategy will actually be used as part of the Government's broader reform in its industry policy and its manufacturing policy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But when will it be delivered?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It will be delivered as we go through our process.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: In a year, six months or 18 months?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Can I just say, again, Ms Munro, the strategy that we're talking about was a strategy of your Government; it's not a strategy of this Government.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: There will be no modern manufacturing strategy. Is that right?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: What there will be, it will be our modern manufacturing strategy. I know it's hard—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is not about you and Labor; it's actually about the people of New South Wales. There is no date?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I know it's hard that with a change of government and of democracy that your—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, I might redirect you because there's obviously no date. Could you please explain why you weren't at the \$275 million Cicada Innovations announcement that your colleagues were at? If you are the Minister for innovation, trade, industry, science and technology, why weren't you at that announcement?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I go to events as soon as I can.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Why weren't you at that announcement?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I am due to go to visit Cicada upcoming shortly.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Congratulations. But why weren't you at that announcement, if you are the Minister for Innovation?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I will accept invites as they come through the office.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Did you know about the announcement, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I will consider all requests for attendance.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This was from your Government. Your Government made the announcement. Were you aware of that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'll continue to attend events as I'm required.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility still within your purview?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That, I understand, is a fully owned subsidiary of the Western Sydney Parklands, so it's a matter for Minister Scully.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You're not involved at all in the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The facility itself is a matter for Minister Scully.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm asking if you're involved at all. Yes or no?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The research facility is under the remit of Minister Scully.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So no, you are not.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll continue to discuss these things. In terms of its operation and its responsibility, it's a matter for Minister Scully.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you discuss the operation of the facility with the Minister?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's under his remit.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You don't?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's not my remit. It's not an agency that reports to me or is under my jurisdiction.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You've said that you're responsible for advanced manufacturing but you are now saying you're not going to be involved in any discussions with the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces in relation to the advancement—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I reject that conclusion.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can you tell me if you are speaking to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces about the research facility?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I speak to all my colleagues all the time about ways—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But about this?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: About all of these things.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You are speaking to Minister Scully about the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I speak to my colleagues all the time about each and every opportunity to grow our industry and trade network.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you know if the facility is still on track to open midyear?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I understand the scope but that's a question you should ask Minister Scully.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is stage two still being funded and on track?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As I said, the AMRF is a matter for Minister Scully.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You're not advocating to have the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility continually funded?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The AMRF is an agency that is under Minister Scully. But I am advised that it is in preparation. It's in its final stages and I understand it will be launched in mid-2024.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you can't tell me about the stage two funding?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's a matter for Minister Scully.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, are you aware of the Semiconductor Sector Service Bureau, S3B?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes. I think that comes under the—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: How much funding will the S3B require in the forward estimates?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We will consider all budget allocations and all funding through the normal process.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you know how much funding was allocated to it in the last budget? Do you see its value continuing?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I see all sectors that can contribute to the growth of New South Wales and the innovation sector. We'll continue to consider where the Government can continue to play its role. I want—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have you met with Dr Nadia Court, who is the director of the S3B, about the funding of the bureau?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government will make its budget decisions in the normal course of its process. Can I just make this point, Ms Munro? Whether it's the semiconductor sector, whether it's the startups, whether it's the scale-ups, there's nothing innovative about handing out cash alone. It's actually much more broader than that. If that's your definition of innovation, I have to say that's a rather cerebrally constrained way of thinking.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, I never said that was my definition of innovation. People are wondering what the Government is doing to support these critical industries. Our esteemed chief scientist has said that the quantum technology industry has the potential to generate up to \$4 billion in revenue and create 16,000 jobs by 2040. Are you aware of the Sydney Quantum Academy, SQA?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, I am.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are you aware that SQA is waiting on an announcement from you about their future funding?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government will consider all its funding and all its budgeting in the normal process of its budgeting deliberations.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Why is the SQA still waiting for funding? They're limping along at the moment. Can they expect funding from this Government?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Anyone can expect that the Government will always go through a methodical, considered process in its budget allocation.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are you worried about losing our quantum industry to Queensland, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I want to grow as many industries as we can in New South Wales. As I said, Ms Munro, if your whole premise of developing industries is just a financial transaction, then I have to say that's quite limited. You need to grow the sector.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: How about this, Minister? The Queensland Government and the Victorian Government have both set up investment vehicles for startups and for innovation and for industry in their States. In Victoria it's over \$2 billion of an investment vehicle, a VC. In Queensland we've just seen an announcement—I think it was \$75 million. Now there's an extra \$55 million put into an investment arm to support venture capital into startups and innovation. What about you, Minister? What are you doing in New South Wales to invest in innovation, in startups and industry when our competitive States are doing so much? Why don't you set up an investment arm? I don't know if you've heard, but the CSIRO has said that, for every dollar invested into R&D and innovation, you get a \$3.50 value created and 10 per cent return on investment. Investing in these areas is about driving productivity and prosperity in this State, Minister. What are you doing? Will you commit to an investment vehicle like the other States have?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Thank you for the lecture, Ms Munro. But perhaps if you're such a strong advocate for the sector, so passionate—why did your Government cut \$450 million in the PEBU for the Future Economy Fund?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Unbelievable. You are responsible—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Here you are saying, "Yes, we need more money", but at the same time, "We'll just cut the PEBU by \$450 million." I have to say if there was ever a contradictory message, I can't beat it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, could I please ask you about the quantum industry. Are you aware of reports that Minister Husic has set up a secret EOI process that now the Queensland Government have fed into with a location purported to be set up in Queensland? Are you aware of that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Matters for the Minister—these are matters for the Federal Government.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is a matter between the Queensland Government and companies setting up in Queensland, and the Federal Government. And the Queensland Government are advocating to the Federal Minister to have industry and companies set up in their State. Are you doing that, Minister? Are you advocating on behalf of quantum companies to the Federal Minister to set up—the Federal Government is offering \$100 million in funding to help. If you're looking for money, surely this is a good way to get it.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'll continue to always work productively with Minister Husic.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are you advocating for the quantum industry in New South Wales?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I will advocate for any industry that is going to provide the growth opportunities for the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are you doing that?

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm advocating for every industry.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you've spoken to Minister Husic about New South Wales' quantum sector?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've spoken to Minister Husic on how we can develop industry in New South Wales. He's a great colleague, really interested in this space and—you know what?—a fellow New South Wales Labor MP.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes. Good point. I think the reality is, Minister, that we in New South Wales are at risk of losing serious industries that have been built up over time. SQA, for example, was funded to the tune of about \$15.4 million, I believe, under the former Government. Now they are waiting on funding certainty to ensure that they can have academic brilliance across four different universities—UTS, Macquarie, USyd and UNSW—and they are waiting on funding. Can you give them any certainty that SQA will be funded, or are we just letting this go to other States?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: One, the Government will always—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: We're working on the strategy.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —take a careful, considered approach in its budget. We will go through the known course of events. Two, as I have repeated, if your whole philosophy around innovation is to hand out cash, I have to say that's a rather constrained way of thinking about—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Why did you announce a grants program?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —the innovation system.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: If you think money's not important, why did you announce two grant programs in the last week?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Contradiction.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It is a factor, but it's not the primary factor.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What is the primary factor, Minister?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The primary factor is what we are doing an Innovation Blueprint.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's 1½ pages.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's a mistake. You've actually totally misunderstood the blueprint. It goes to show you haven't even done your basic homework.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, you have promised an Innovation Blueprint after the next budget.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: The Minister is entitled to answer the question. He is routinely interrupted and spoken over the top of. The questioning should not be aggressive or personal, as is stated under procedural fairness resolution 19.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. It is getting a little bit out of hand. I am sure Ms Jacqui Munro can pull it in.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Let me just table the discussion paper for the Innovation Blueprint, which I understand is being promised for delivery after the date of the next budget. This discussion paper for the Innovation Blueprint I understand is about 1½ pages of information, which I presume could have taken about a day to compile.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You shouldn't insult public servants like that, Ms Munro. That's very unfortunate.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's what's been done under your ministry in 12 months.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: It wouldn't be them; it would be you. You would have changed it.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Are you finished, Ms Munro?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I would love some answers from you, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Fantastic. One, you are totally mistaken and misunderstood the document. It is a discussion paper.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I said that. I tabled it.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's not the overall product.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, we don't have a date.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Goodness me.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: More importantly, we are having really good engagement with the sector out in the regions. I was out in Wagga not long ago. We had one here. I have to say, the energy and the enthusiasm, the feedback we're getting has been nothing but positive.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, could I please redirect you—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: What it also shows, Chair, is that they were—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, may I please redirect you to another question?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: These stakeholders were not being listened to by the former Government.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Regarding your diary, I have to ask, have you met with the Sydney Startup Hub yet?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: My diary is for public discussion.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You haven't met with the Sydney Startup Hub yet?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: My diaries are publicly disclosed.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have you visited Western Sydney Startup Hub yet?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I was at the startup hub in Sydney two days ago, I think.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Was that the first time that you have been?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, it wasn't actually.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Your diary disclosures don't say that you have been to the Sydney Startup Hub.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's an event.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Whoops.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: These are internal events, Ms Munro. I think you've actually misunderstood the rules around disclosure.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Not at all, Minister.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You've just gone hook, line and sinker.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's unbelievable.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You've misunderstood and mistaken the Innovation Blueprint. You've misunderstood the disclosures around startup. I have to say, that's a pretty innovative way to understand the rules.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, that's embarrassing. That is embarrassing.

The CHAIR: Minister, just going back a little bit onto the recent report in regards to the Inspector of Custodial Services, the report was released just days after a second inmate died in a suspected suicide at Sydney's Parklea Correctional Centre in recent months. Can I ask what steps—I understand that you said that there was seven million that has been put forward, particularly to get rid of hanging points. Can I ask what you are doing to improve the inmates' safety beyond that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Thank you very much, and of course Corrective Services does welcome the ICS report and we will continue as an organisation to find ways to make those improvements. In terms of the specific case you referred to at Parklea, can I firstly say that any death in custody is a real tragedy. Of course Corrective Services tries to minimise that across the network as much as we can. In terms of when an inmate passes away in our network, their family is notified, first and foremost, and then of course there'll be an investigation by, in particular, the coroner to determine what is the cause of death. Once the coroner hands down their report, it is my expectation and my direction to the department that they respond to those things appropriately.

CORRECTED

In terms of the situation about the individual who recently passed away, I am loathed to make a conclusion about the cause of death because the coroner hasn't finished their findings yet. I do think it's important for us to allow the coroner to do their work to carefully determine the cause of death, and of course we'll respond appropriately. This particular individual, I understand that he was on remand, and that those who are sent by the courts—as I've said, he's on remand—are assessed on a range of factors to identify the risk situation. I have committed \$7 million towards the removal of ligature points. But can I reinforce the fact that ligature points is one aspect of the risk management approach when it comes to modernising and ensuring that not only our inmates but also our officers work in the safest environment. Corrective Services is a complex environment.

The CHAIR: I understand that for this particular case you're waiting for the coroner's report, but obviously there's still risk management strategies that can be put into place now. I appreciate that you say removing the hanging points is one aspect. I'm just wondering what those other risk management approaches are that you are advocating for, that are changed now, before that coroner's report comes back?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As inmates present to our remand centres, our officers and officers in Justice Health—or the health facilities, depending if you're in corrections or a private—undertake a medical and a mental health assessment. Also, they look at the profile of the inmate that's coming through our system. They determine, for example, whether there are issues around substance and, of course, provide the appropriate medication. As we spoke a bit earlier, our mothballing is also one of the ways for us to reduce risk within our system in general. So ligature points are one, but they're not the only one. Part of the actions—

The CHAIR: That's what I wanted to know. What are the others?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I've just said, it's about risk assessment of the individual, understanding their profile, understanding whether they need any specific medical needs, and also doing things like internal intelligence within our Corrective Services so that we're able to prevent violent inmate altercations. These things are always ongoing and are a part of making sure that we provide a safe environment for our officers and for our inmates.

The CHAIR: Can I double-check, though, Minister, my question was about what new strategies are being put in. Can I confirm that the strategies that you've just listed have already been in place?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They are currently in place. So inmates are—

The CHAIR: Are there any other new aspects that are being put into place outside of removing the hanging points?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: There are those. We'll continue—

The CHAIR: But they're already in place. I'm talking about new—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Yes, new ones. We'll consider, or the department will always consider ways to improve how we reduce risk in our correctional facilities. If there are new ideas, I would expect the department to brief me appropriately, and we will consider that.

The CHAIR: I have a range of questions that may be somewhat specific, so I might move between you, Minister, and Mr Taylor, who might be able to assist. I'm wondering if statistics are collected in regard to the number of people in custody for animal cruelty offences?

LEON TAYLOR: They are. There are currently nine inmates in custody with an animal cruelty related conviction.

The CHAIR: Are you able to tell me if any of those are bestiality-related offences?

LEON TAYLOR: No, I'm not.

The CHAIR: That's not recorded?

LEON TAYLOR: I'm not sure. I'll take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Thank you, if you could take that one on notice. I know that there are a range of animals in Corrections initiatives, which we've talked about in the last budget estimates. Do you we know if any of these nine inmates have any interactions with animals as part of those programs?

LEON TAYLOR: Those nine inmates all have an alert on their inmate profile preventing them from being involved in any of our animal-related or our agricultural programs that involve animals.

The CHAIR: Can you also take on notice how many people have been in custody for animal cruelty-related offences over the last five years?

CORRECTED

LEON TAYLOR: Sure.

The CHAIR: Minister, I understand—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Do you mind, Chair, if I just add a little bit to your questions?

The CHAIR: Jump in—that's okay.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our animals programs—we do conduct a number of those programs. You might be well aware or you might be pleased to know that we have greyhounds as pets at our Dillwynia and our Wellington correctional facilities.

The CHAIR: Sorry, Minister, I've got some questions about some of those different programs in a moment.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Sure.

The CHAIR: The first one I wanted to talk about, actually, was the range of day work release programs for inmates in correctional facilities that then work inside slaughterhouses. Are you aware of this program?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I defer that specific question to the acting commissioner.

The CHAIR: The question is are you aware of the program? I don't know if the acting commissioner knows if you're aware.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Specifically, I'd have to take that one on notice. But I'm happy for the acting commissioner to respond accordingly.

The CHAIR: Putting on a previous hat, I used to work as a psychologist. There's obviously a lot of research out there in regards to the negative experiences for people working inside slaughterhouses: increase in interpersonal violence, increase in substance abuse, increase in domestic violence. Do you have concerns about some of the psychological impacts, Minister, of people who are already vulnerable because they're obviously inside a correctional service, then working within these slaughterhouses?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Obviously, we would always take the appropriate action to reduce the vulnerability of our inmates. Where we can, we'll take the appropriate action.

The CHAIR: Have you considered the violence inherent in slaughterhouses and the impact that this might have on inmates actually working inside these facilities?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In terms of this, I might have to defer that to the acting commissioner.

The CHAIR: You may have some additional comments.

LEON TAYLOR: Chair, look, I'll give a full answer on notice. As I understand, the Junee facility operated by GEO, as we know, at the moment, has a work release program into the abattoir in Junee. The two large employers in Junee are the prison and the abattoir. I think there are three inmates that are participating in a work release program in that facility.

The CHAIR: Is that the only program that's running in New South Wales that you're aware of?

LEON TAYLOR: I think so. I will answer on notice, but to my knowledge I think it's just the Junee facility that has work release into an abattoir.

The CHAIR: Minister, have you been briefed at all about these day release programs, particularly to slaughterhouses?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Not that I can recall.

The CHAIR: At the last estimates we briefly discussed programs involving animals, which you just started speaking about now, specifically ex-racehorses and also racing greyhounds. It was explained at the last estimates that the correctional officers are responsible for the greyhounds and the horses. Is that correct?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I might have to defer that to the acting commissioner. It's quite a specific question.

LEON TAYLOR: Yes, the programs are certainly led by the officers, but most of the work that is done with the animals, both the horses and the greyhounds, is work that the inmates do.

The CHAIR: But the ultimate responsibility rests with the correctional officers?

CORRECTED

LEON TAYLOR: Correctional officers and Racing NSW and also the greyhound organisation, yes.

The CHAIR: How often are they present?

LEON TAYLOR: I will have to take that on notice, unless my colleague knows, I'm sorry.

The CHAIR: That's okay. Thank you. I'm wondering what training is provided to correctional officers and inmates to look after these animals, particularly given that these are animals retired from commercial racing and obviously have behavioural difficulties and require a different sort of attention and care to other companions.

LEON TAYLOR: The thoroughbred racing program at St Heliers has a full-time person from Racing NSW with all the equine expertise that runs that course. He is a very experienced handler of horses. I'm not a horse person, but he rides those horses, he cares for horses and he very much works with the inmates in terms of rehabilitating those horses with the plan for them, ultimately, to become pets. It is very supervised by the Racing NSW people, whilst our Corrective Services industries people—we have equine people involved on staff. The program and most of the skills, in terms of handling the horses, come from Racing NSW.

The CHAIR: What about the correctional officers? Are they offered any kind of additional training for the work that they do in connection with the animals?

LEON TAYLOR: I'll have to take that on notice, in terms of formal qualifications that they might have to participate in that. I'm sorry.

The CHAIR: Thank you. You mentioned that there was a full-time qualified person in regard to the horses. What about the dogs?

LEON TAYLOR: The dogs I'll have to take on notice. I don't think that's the case. There are eight dogs at Dillwynia and six at Wellington. The greyhound people certainly support and train and provide assistance. They provide the food and the things that are all associated with that program. I'm not aware that their presence is as full-time as the horse program.

The CHAIR: Are there dedicated correctional officers looking after those dogs, or is that something that they need to do while also doing the rest of the job's responsibilities as well? Are they split across the different areas?

LEON TAYLOR: Yes, that program happens in parallel with the other industries that happen in those prisons and the other things in the structured day—education, work and the other things that inmates participate in. So it's not a full-time program. Certainly, the thoroughbred is more of a full-time activity that inmates participate in; the dogs less so.

The CHAIR: It was mentioned last budget estimates that there may or may not be greyhounds still living on site at Hunter. Are you able to—

LEON TAYLOR: The program at Hunter ceased. I think it was mentioned in estimates last time there was an incident up there—someone was bitten, and the program ceased up there. It hasn't recommenced at Hunter.

The CHAIR: But my understanding is that it wasn't clear whether there were still greyhounds living there?

LEON TAYLOR: There are no greyhounds there at the moment, no.

The CHAIR: This might be something that you need to take on notice, but how many greyhounds are living on site at Dillwynia, and how many have been rehomed in the last 12 months?

LEON TAYLOR: I can't answer the second part of your question, but there are at eight dogs at Dillwynia and six dogs at Wellington at the moment. Insofar as how many have been through that program and rehomed, I'll take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Minister, have you been briefed on these programs or have you been out to visit any of the animals and the programs running?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No. Certainly, I'll continue to have discussions with the department around issues that I know are important to you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Minister, what about the centre at John Morony Correctional Complex that also holds wildlife? Have you been to that facility?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, I have yet to visit John Morony, but I'm scheduling to visit a number of our facilities in our regional communities.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Have you been briefed on the program that's run at John Morony?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Not at this stage, but I'm sure, I think, after this that the commissioner and I will certainly have discussions about the whole program itself, which I know is important to you.

The CHAIR: The Corrective Services website describes the John Morony wildlife care centre as the largest of its kind in New South Wales. Are there other correctional facilities with other wildlife centres in New South Wales?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Commissioner?

LEON TAYLOR: That's our only wildlife centre. We have other—and I can mention some other pet rehabilitation programs that may not be on your list. The wildlife centre at Geoffrey Pearce is the only one we have of that nature. It has around 250 animals. We receive those animals—mostly natives—from customs, and reptiles and other things that are seized by the customs service, and from WIRES.

The CHAIR: The website also says that 250 animals are accommodated at John Morony—animals that have been abandoned, distressed, seized et cetera. I understand that animals arrive from rescue organisations and the RSPCA. What's the process or criteria for John Morony to take on an animal? What's the limit on the number of animals that they can actually take?

LEON TAYLOR: There are two—the RSPCA and the wildlife centre are separate programs out there. The wildlife centre, as I mentioned, takes animals from customs and WIRES—native animals. I'm not sure of the criteria out there, but most of the animals there—they stay there and they live there and they see their life out there. They're not animals that are rehomed unless they can be released into the wild—again, through WIRES.

The dog rehabilitation program out there is a joint venture that we have with the RSPCA. That takes rescue dogs from the RSPCA, and we were with those rescue dogs. We rehome them. The inmates do a Certificate II in Animal Care and they train those dogs and rehome them. We have a similar thing down in Cooma as well.

The CHAIR: You mentioned that some animals are released. I'm assuming that animals that come in from WIRES that can be rehabilitated. Could I get from you on notice the number of animals that have been released over the last three years?

LEON TAYLOR: Sure.

The CHAIR: Thank you. How much government funding does this program at John Morony receive?

LEON TAYLOR: I'll take that on notice. We have a couple of staff that staff that program. The inmates work there as well. Then there's the cost of running the facility. But I'll respond to that on notice.

The CHAIR: Minister, is it your understanding that the funding for these programs is adequate or are you looking at extending the funding to these programs at all?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: In the normal deliberation of our budget allocations, Chair, we will consider that in the normal process as we determine our budgets for the next financial year.

The CHAIR: I also understand that these offenders at John Morony participate in formal training courses provided by TAFE NSW, with the opportunity to gain a Certificate II in Animal Care. Are you able to advise how many inmates have actually obtained their certificate as a result of the program?

LEON TAYLOR: Yes, sure, on notice.

The CHAIR: There were a couple of questions as well that I was asking before that the Minister suggested that you may be able to give some more information on. I think it was in relation to the other initiatives and funding programs that are being put in regard to setting those targets of 8 per cent and 10 per cent and what programs were actually being put in place to actually achieve those targets.

LEON TAYLOR: Sure. I have a whole list of Aboriginal-specific programs that we run across the State to contribute to Closing the Gap. We're particularly focused on target 10: reducing incarceration by 15 per cent. There are probably two or three themes that I'd probably prefer to respond to in answer to your question. There is a growing remand population for all inmates across the State, but even more so for Aboriginal people. We're particularly focused on things that we can do as Corrective Services to assist people on remand to get bail. There's a conversation we're having with Legal Aid about providing all inmates better access to legal services when they come into custody to access bail. There's a program at Silverwater women's, particularly for Aboriginal women and the Aboriginal Legal Service, to assist Aboriginal women to get bail.

CORRECTED

One of the things we're particularly focused on is improving the supervision that we have of Aboriginal people on supervised orders in the community but to provide the services that we provide as business as usual, but to do that in a more culturally informed and more targeted way. We have a number of programs across the State and a number of trial sites. We are working with Aboriginal-controlled organisations to really tailor in a more culturally appropriate way the services that we do. I was down at Nowra community corrections a couple of weeks ago and was able to observe firsthand what some of those activities mean. We have a yarn first, business second approach to some of our interventions with people on community orders. That has proven to be really effective in terms of opening up communications and breaking down the barriers that we have with our staff when they routinely sit across the desk with someone under supervision.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I wanted to speak about an article that was in the paper on 27 February in regard to a correctional officer and the alleged sharing of inappropriate photos. I do have the bureaucrats here in the afternoon, so what I really wanted to know from you—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Don't show me the photo.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: No, I don't have the photo. I'm not into that. Minister, what I would like to know is it is alleged that the person who sent these is still working within corrections New South Wales. Are you aware of that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's an operational matter. All staffing matters are a matter for the department. I'm happy to ask—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's fine. I'll do that in the afternoon with Mr Taylor. Have you intervened at all or asked any questions or received a briefing on this as the Minister responsible?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: All staffing matters are a matter for the department. It would be inappropriate for any Minister to involve him or herself—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So you haven't discussed anything and you have no concern?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I'm aware of the issue. We have had communication with the department around this but, given it's a HR matter, it is really a matter for the department to manage.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Understood, Minister. It is, but you are the Minister and you are ultimately responsible. I would imagine, knowing the little I do know about you, that you would not condone this type of behaviour. It is very alarming and concerning. Would you agree?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Of course. Any HR matters are really for the department. They will make that appropriately.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand that and I'll be prosecuting that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, you've made a lot about your Innovation Blueprint process. You announced it last year, I think, in November. That was at least six months after you became Minister. Since then you have had a day of meetings with people and you have released what is a page and a half of text—the discussion paper. So that's taken 11 months. I note in the discussion paper that it actually calls out specifically the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility as being part of the consultation. You said before that you hadn't actually been advocating for the continuation of funding to Minister Scully about that. Have you read the Innovation Blueprint discussion paper? Were you aware that the AMRF was in it?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's my document; of course I've read it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So you've got the AMRF in it. Are you advocating to Minister Scully for the continuation of funding?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The budget allocation that the Government takes will be taken in the normal course of the way we deliberate things. On the Innovation Blueprint, can I firstly correct you, we haven't had one meeting. We're going to have a series of meetings. I've been down to Wagga, to Charles Sturt University. I have to say innovation in the regions has been good.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay, so you've had two innovation round tables.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: No, we've had a number—a couple and we've got a number scheduled up. The feedback that I've had has been nothing but positive. It has been enthusiastic.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's because they've been neglected for a year under you, Minister.

CORRECTED

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It's because they were actually never listened to in the former Government.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Could I please redirect? Minister, in your own media release, you have said about the Coalition's record:

We have a thriving community of innovators and their supporters in NSW, with a 325 per cent increase since 2013 ... NSW now has a vibrant ecosystem of innovators.

I couldn't agree more. That is under the responsibility of the Coalition Government since 2013. What you're actually decimating by not focusing on this industry and not acting with speed and scale—is the destruction of that industry. I'm wondering, if you were so interested in this Innovation Blueprint discussion paper process, why, in the departmental media release about this, weren't you even quoted?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Can I firstly say I reject the conclusion you made right at the start. I've met with many people, many stakeholders within this State. It's important to continually engage.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Well, you've met with five unions in your diary disclosures and three people about innovation, science and technology policy.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I have to say I think you're mistaken on that front.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, please check your own diary disclosures.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We'll continue to engage with our stakeholders. I think, as I said, your philosophical view is innovation is just handing out cash grants.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, it's not, Minister. I have never said that.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I think it actually is. That's all I'm hearing.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm asking what you're doing as Minister to progress—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: What we're going to do is link the Innovation Blueprint with our industry policy and with our trade network.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But when will you deliver that?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: A strategic coordinated approach—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You can't tell me anything about those things.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Well, we are working through, hearing the words from—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can I redirect you, please. In your own survey, Minister, one of your four I's—if you were less concerned about alliteration and more concerned about actually delivering policy, maybe we'd be in a better place. But one of your four I's is investment. It says, "How can we increase the amount and diversity of finance available to startups and scaleups?" You're asking how you can increase the amount in your own survey. You're asking about the rate of ideas coming to fruition. That's about speed. But where are you demonstrating commitment to any of these things?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: Our Innovation Blueprint is a reset to the sector to make sure that the relationship with the Government and the sector is not one of just simple cash grants. There is nothing innovative or imaginative of a grant-based program.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you haven't developed any relationships, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We need to grow the sector. We need to create a culture within innovation where people come and experiment and come to have their ideas challenged.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: We are losing these people to other States, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: We need to find an alternative private and public finance to make sure we can continue to invest in this sector. I have to say, it's a bit of a deliberate lacuna if we think that this is just cash grants. That's all I'm hearing from you, Ms Munro, "Let's just hand out money without thinking how we actually grow the sector and how we imbed the institutions that we have"—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Not just handing out money, handing out money to mates.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You're in Government, Minister.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's right.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You are in Government.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's right.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You're talking about union mates over here and handing out money.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: That's exactly why we are resetting this relationship. The enthusiasm and energy that I have had from stakeholders, I have to say—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's because you've neglected them for a year.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —what I suspect is a real contrast—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: They're delighted that somebody is finally speaking to them.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: —to the relationship that they had with the former Government.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's just not true.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I love your passion, Ms Munro. I really do.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: If only you shared it.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: But the question you need to ask yourself, if you're so passionate, is why did your Government cut \$450 million in the pre-election budget?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are we still having this conversation?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: You're so passionate, but "I'm going to take half a billion dollars away".

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Jesus, this is unbelievable.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: "I love this sector so much, but I'm going to withdraw the money."

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Maybe you should put some more media releases out.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You're in Government now.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Put some more media releases out about all of this passion.

The CHAIR: We're now on to Government questions. Does the Government have any questions?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: No, Chair.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: The Opposition has done great for us.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, for attending this hearing. We are finished with the question session for you. The Committee will now break for lunch and return at 2.00 p.m.

(The Minister withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: We might get underway, it being two o'clock. I will pass to the Opposition for questions.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you very much for being here this afternoon. My questions are for the NSW Building Commissioner. I will be directing all my questions to you at the moment—sorry, Commissioner. I want to first thank and congratulate you on the outstanding work that you have done, particularly on the Mascot Towers. I think you have been commendable on that. That is very much a bipartisan thing across the Parliament, I am sure. I know it was a long process and you have worked hard on it since you were appointed. I would like to know, just to start with, can we have an update on what's going on there please?

DAVID CHANDLER: The contracts have all been sent out to the leavers. At this stage it looks as though about more than 75 per cent have signalled that they are intending to leave. That is really good news because they are going and being able to get on with their lives. I don't quite know the number that are going to finally be the stayers, but we will know those numbers in the next week or so. Contracts should be all back for acceptance by the purchaser by 20 March. Then the intention would be that settlement and/or the Government's support initiatives would play out by 3 May. Hopefully for these people—I know it is not a fantastic outcome, it's not what they all hoped for—it is a release from this nightmare. Hopefully, by 3 May we will be there.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Again, I do say, it has been—I think, to use your words—it's been a pretty awful situation.

DAVID CHANDLER: Terrible.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I can't imagine what it's been like for them. On behalf of everybody, we thank you for that as well. I am sure that is shared by everyone here. Commissioner, your office worked pretty closely with these home owners, didn't it?

DAVID CHANDLER: Off and on. Of course, I had a fair bit to do with them when I was appointed as Building Commissioner. So in that initial stage, while they were trying to discover what the scope of the issues were, the Government at the time provided some expert advice through me to assist them to at least navigate that early journey. Then it really disappeared into about two years of a void where they were in litigation. First of all, they were in litigation with the Peak Towers developer next door. That matter was run and settled. Then of course they decided that remediating the building was beyond them. They then went through the Supreme Court process to wind up the owners corporation. Of course that was unsuccessful by the judge deciding on 24 November last year that she was turning down that application. That put everybody back where they were.

We were working with the owners through most of last year on what we were calling the sale of building strategy where we anticipated that the judge would say, "You can dissolve the owners corporation and sell the building", and that we would have had largely a similar sort of support set of arrangements that we've currently got on the table. But when the court decided that they weren't going to award that, we varied the strategy into what's called a sale of lots strategy. That means where instead of everybody collectively deciding to go together, we just simply said there will be some who want to stay clearly—because there were people who were in the litigation who were objecting to being pushed out. Those people will stay, but the rest will hopefully proceed to leave this behind them.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: On the back of all that good work that's happened, that has been done, I imagine very difficult. A lot of support's been promised in the media and in comments made to you, to the office by the Government. I am wondering how that's coming along?

DAVID CHANDLER: As you know, I have sat through the journey with both sides of government on this, so there's edges to it that probably are inappropriate for me to defer to. Since the election the mandate has been to get involved in helping bring this to an end. We started at the beginning of last year looking at what the options were and that's moved itself to this point. The shaping of the support packages came from an initial meeting with the Minister and the owners that I attended. I put it to the owners at a meeting prior to that to say, "What's your shopping list of things that you would like?" Of course they would have liked compensation at market value and then perhaps just to get their original purchase price back. I said, "Well, I assume not on your shopping list would be that in fact we had a debt mitigation strategy sitting at the front of this, and that means that all owner-occupiers could walk away with no debt." Because I felt that if we were ever going to get a transaction here, we had to get the owners out in a way where their banks would allow the sale of the building to be settled.

Fortunately we've had very good meetings with the major banks. There are 15 banks involved. I've said to them, "Well, you're in it, and everybody's got to take some pain. The owners are taking pain, the Government will take pain and I'm afraid the banks are going to have to take some pain." To their credit—and I want to call out to their credit—the banks have, I think, been both pragmatic and responsible, and they've stepped up to say that they're prepared to take a 40 per cent discount on their mortgage. That has been done through our lawyer. That's pretty well settled. There's bit of formality to go on there just to tidy that up, but let's assume we'll sort that out in the next week. The contracts for sale are out. They'll start to come back up to 20 March, and they should be able to be accepted. We've also received affirmation from the prospective purchaser that they now have funding to acquire the project. We always wanted to make sure we weren't wasting our time, because I'd hate to take these people to the top of the hill and bring them back down again.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Absolutely, yes.

DAVID CHANDLER: We were quite settled in our mind. We now have strong advice that, in fact, the transaction will happen. Really, they're the pieces, and the jigsaw is just sort of a lot of work by everybody. I've got to say, across the department we've got some really good people who've worked on this tirelessly. It's not just me; it's been a whole bunch of people.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I completely acknowledge that. As I said, I genuinely, genuinely mean that. It is not easy. I think that you should all be commended for that. I just want to move on. I'd like to ask a few questions about the Government's commitment to create a NSW Building Commission. The Building Commission was a key election commitment. What progress has been made since the Government's announcement in May? I want to keep it really clinical: what that progress is since May.

CORRECTED

DAVID CHANDLER: As you're aware, the Government announced that they were going to have a Building Commission. I would say to you, by the way, that earlier on in my role as Building Commissioner, I wasn't entirely accepting of that as a conclusion. But I am firmly in that camp that says this was necessary and that had to be the outcome.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Understood.

DAVID CHANDLER: It was clear to me that once we'd got all of the new reforms and legislation and everything stood up, we really needed to create a capability around subject matter expertise which just didn't exist in its prior settings, so that's what's happened. We worked towards setting the commission up on 1 December. Of course, we had to go through a budget process.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, and the progress of that?

DAVID CHANDLER: Well, everybody took a haircut in that process as well, but we came out the other end with a commitment to set the Building Commission up with a \$24 million support in addition to the business-as-usual budgets.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: How many staff were promised to create and run the Building Commission?

DAVID CHANDLER: Basically, it was a lift-and-shift of everybody who was related to building inside Fair Trading coming across, so that number's settling now. But the total number, including the 25-odd that were in the Office of the Building Commissioner—the number, now, is sitting at about 466. Am I saying: Are all of the people of the type or capabilities that we need? I think we probably need to move to more boots on the ground type effort than in the past. That was always something that I think both sides felt was necessary. So we'll do that. And, of course, we're working within the constraints of the budget, and so I think—I'm going to defer to the secretary here just to put the right words around this, because at times I don't get it quite right. We put a business case up for the initial funding. That was in that setting of everybody really being under the pump, particularly—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: How much was that for, that original business case?

DAVID CHANDLER: I can't recall the number.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Could you take that on notice?

DAVID CHANDLER: Yes, I will take that on notice.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm just using, too, this whole thing about move and shift, or that word that you used, because—

DAVID CHANDLER: Lift and shift.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Lift and shift, thank you. I understand that, but I want to know, too, because this is very specialised work. You were set up to do a very specific thing—in the last term as well, and now this has been a promise and a commitment—but that takes specialised staff and specialised people. It's not just a lift and shift, I would imagine. How many staff do you currently have at the moment that are specialised to do—

DAVID CHANDLER: There are 466 people who have come across.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, but they've come across, that's not—what I'm trying to get to is who are those—

DAVID CHANDLER: Can I touch on that, because there are some very specialist people who have subject matter expertise in building. Perhaps what they haven't, in the past, been is as joined up to work seamlessly together as they will now be. Work in licensing, for example, is a very specialist piece of work, and we have some very good capability coming across with us. Intelligence is another area where there are specialist capability; we still haven't quite settled on the final numbers coming across, but we've got the base build of the team we need for intelligence and that will be expanded. The inspectorate has come across as the inspectorate. There are currently about 20 positions in the inspectorate that need filling, and that's simply because of vacancy; that's for no other reason. Then there is the enforcements area. So, again, we have a core of enforcements people; we'll probably need some more. Right now there's a mixture of funded and unfunded positions as we get to 30 June.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: How many unfunded positions are there? Would you like to take that on notice?

DAVID CHANDLER: I think maybe the secretary can put some context on that.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Head?

GRAEME HEAD: I think the thing that needs to be stated quite clearly here is that, as Mr Chandler has outlined, there's been an initial allocation to establish the Building Commission.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Which is \$24 million.

GRAEME HEAD: Yes, in addition to some other measures that are outlined in the budget papers.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Head, there's \$24 million that's been given to establish the Building Commission. The rest are staff that are moving over into the Building Commission, right? I'm just talking about new money that's there to head them up. That's \$24 million?

GRAEME HEAD: There's a specific \$24 million allocation to establish the Building Commission in this year, and future year budgets will be determined in the normal way through the budget process.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand that, Secretary; I don't need that explained. Originally, how many staff were promised to create and run the Building Commission?

DAVID CHANDLER: There was no number promised, basically. This has been a separation and I think what I would say to you is that it's not as neat as it could have been. For example, some of my powers are still under the oversight of the commissioner for Fair Trading, so there are some issues that we need to work our way through.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: What are we doing about that, Secretary?

GRAEME HEAD: On 1 December the former Better Regulation Division in the department was disaggregated. The Building Commission was stood up as a separate part of the department, as was SafeWork on that day. There are a range of processes to go through around the way in that disaggregated model. Previously existing delegations will work now that these things have been separated.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: If I can redirect you, Secretary. My question is when will those things be put in place to allow the Building Commissioner and commission to work as it was intended to do?

GRAEME HEAD: The Building Commissioner already has delegated authority from—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, but the bits that need to come over—when will that happen?

GRAEME HEAD: We're working through those things that will require legislative change.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand. So when will that happen?

GRAEME HEAD: As I said, it's happening now. There are existing delegations—powers that the Building Commissioner uses under the legislation, delegated from both the Fair Trading Commissioner and also, for those bits of legislation where I'm the delegate, delegated from me. There will be a process of progressively tidying up that up, but that doesn't—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand all that, Secretary. So the process of that has started?

GRAEME HEAD: Yes. The Building Commissioner—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I will put it another way, Secretary. I'll redirect you. When do you think that process will be complete?

GRAEME HEAD: I can't give you a specific end date.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Okay. That's fine then. That's what I needed to know. I'll go back to you, Commissioner, if that's all right. I understand there are big numbers. Four hundred-plus sounds big, right? I want to know from you, in your expert advice to this Committee, if you have the people and the skill mix required to be running this organisation of the Building Commission that we need and that everybody wanted?

DAVID CHANDLER: Sure.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand this is a difficult question and I understand you're under—

DAVID CHANDLER: No, it's not a difficult question.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But I want to know if you have the people that you need and the budget you need to be effective in the way that it was intended.

CORRECTED

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Chair, I'm going to jump in here. I think this is straying very close to requesting an opinion from a public servant, which under the procedural fairness resolution is not allowed—paragraph 13, I think.

The CHAIR: I think that's fine. I'm happy for that to be a heads-up to the public servant not to give an opinion. I'm happy for the member to continue with that.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I want to reply to the point of order, Chair. I am not asking for an opinion; I am asking him as an expert. It's a fair and reasonable question.

The CHAIR: I'm happy for you to continue your questions.

DAVID CHANDLER: There will be a number of positions that will be funded and determined in the next budget round. We've got all the budget we need to get to the end of this financial year. We have an issue, which has recently been cleared, and that is that, not knowing the forward budget, it's hard to make appointments that go beyond that date, so there are obviously quite clear rules around that. I think the secretary is able to clarify what those rules look like, but I feel comfortable now that I can engage all the people that I'm currently needing to engage immediately. There are 39 people plus the 20 inspectors.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Commissioner, do you have the people that were promised to you?

DAVID CHANDLER: Yes, we do.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you. Then you'll be waiting now until further out to do what the work is and awaiting the next budget cycle?

DAVID CHANDLER: If I can just make one refinement to what I've told you? Looking at what's come across, we are largely a metropolitan-centric organisation. We are not necessarily set up to be a statewide organisation. We received additional powers through the Parliament, you'll remember, on 1 December as well, which actually brought the inspections of class one buildings into the space. We're yet to build out that capability because that's a new power, to intervene between when a house starts and when a house finishes. That's the first time we've had that power. So we haven't got the talent bank at the level I'd want, but the first thing we're doing is we're doing a deep analysis across the State to work out where every type of building that we now regulate happens to be, where we believe the riskiest players are overlaid on the top of that, and then where do we need to build regionally centred capability around the State to service that, because the housing strategy in the next couple of years is going to be less than metropolitan focused.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I don't like hearing that things are metropolitan focused, Commissioner, but thank you very much. That's going to give me another thing to pursue. I have very limited time, so I want to ask Mr Taylor: When I spoke about the issue in regard to the alleged illicit photos that were sent to someone by a corrections officer, is that corrections officer still working for corrections?

LEON TAYLOR: The officer is still employed. The police have now—I'm sorry, can I answer with a bit of a chronology? Would that help?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I just have really limited time. This person is still employed?

LEON TAYLOR: The officer is still employed. We had commenced a misconduct process. We have advice now that the police are having another look at that matter, having informed us previously that they weren't likely to pursue any criminal charges against that employee. So it is now pursuing a misconduct process and, until that misconduct process concludes, the officer's employment remains.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: As the leader of the organisation and the alleged—these are serious allegations. I find them really offensive. I'm sure everybody does. It's gross. How is it possible that someone is still working within an organisation that has such serious allegations and has an active investigation going on?

LEON TAYLOR: The rules of procedural fairness need to proceed so that the misconduct process can take its course and the outcome of that process can include termination of employment.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But if there were serious concerns, wouldn't someone then stand aside for a time on pay?

LEON TAYLOR: That person has been out of the workplace on either suspension or special leave since November 2022, when the referral—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But quite some time after the alleged—

LEON TAYLOR: They were suspended three days after the referral was made to our professional standards.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So they're not actually actively working at the moment?

LEON TAYLOR: They have been out of the workplace for that period of time.

The CHAIR: Mr Taylor, we were talking before about some of the Closing the Gap initiatives. I think we stopped to allow other questions.

LEON TAYLOR: I mentioned before we paused that bail was one of the things that we were looking closely at to try and do everything we can to reduce the number of people we have in custody. Given the growth of remand in recent years is continuing, that continues to be a focus for us. I spoke about more culturally appropriate supervision for people on orders in the community. Similar to that, we have a real focus on improving access to diversionary people—Aboriginal people. One of the programs that we're spending a lot of time getting the best use out of is the Balund-a program. The Balund-a program is a diversionary program for Aboriginal men. It's on a property up at Balund-a, which is near Casino on the Mid North Coast.

Participants in that program are found guilty or plead guilty in court. Before the magistrate or judge sentences them, they are bailed to that facility and they participate in a six-month program. It's on the Clarence River. It's an amazing property; it's a working cattle property. We have 15 Aboriginal staff there, including Elders, that work with the men on cultural programs. At the same time, they're doing education and they're doing treatment for addiction and other programs. The men who successfully conclude that program go back to the court after six months and almost none of them are then sentenced to custody, whereas otherwise they would have got a custodial sentence. We are really investing heavily in that program.

We have a similar program for women that's based in the Cessnock area. We're working with a business and also philanthropist to potentially expand that program substantially in the diversionary space as well. Housing is a big issue for us and getting people out of custody and into stable housing, particularly for Aboriginal people. Being able to post bail and having stable housing contributes to the remand numbers for Aboriginal people. We work with some NGOs around housing but we also have some of our facilities that we are able to make available to vulnerable people, particularly Aboriginal people, as a housing option, either as a bail option or as a transitional option from custody.

The other thing in those kind of themes that I mentioned around Closing the Gap that we're really focused on is working much more closely with Aboriginal controlled organisations, particularly for our people in custody. We're expanding our Aboriginal community mentor program, which brings in local Elders, particularly in the regions, where the Elders come into the facility and run cultural programs with the inmates. I was in South Coast a couple of weeks ago and in maximum security some pretty serious inmates who have spent some serious time in jail were participating in a fabulous program with a local Elder down there doing a cultural program, making spears and doing traditional dance. For those inmates, they said to me they'd participated in many of our normal programs, which are our normal programs for violent offenders and the normal programs we run, and that's the first time they've actually been involved in a cultural-type program and they had connected with their culture in a way that they hadn't before. It's programs like that that we are seeking to make more routine and more available for Aboriginal people as a significant part of our Closing the Gap strategy.

The CHAIR: Before I move on, in regard to the different programs that involve animals in correctional facilities, are any of these programs run through the female facilities? Are they available to female inmates as well?

LEON TAYLOR: Yes, they are. I might take the opportunity, Chair, to correct the record on abattoirs we have. In Cooma, we also have a few—four inmates work at the Monbeef facility in Cooma on work release.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: It is very appreciated.

The CHAIR: I believe there were inmates also going to—it might be an older program—the duck slaughterhouse in Western Sydney?

LEON TAYLOR: We used to have work release to a duck farm in Western Sydney. I'm not sure they're still a work release employer of ours. I'll confirm that on notice. They certainly were in the past. You're right, Chair.

The CHAIR: I remember that from a long time ago. I just wasn't sure if it was still running.

LEON TAYLOR: We will confirm that, but I'm not sure. I have a feeling they're not, but I may be incorrect. In answer to your question, programs for women—we mentioned before the greyhounds program at Dillwynia. I'm just looking at my list here. I'm not sure we have other programs for women, but I will confirm on notice. I'll look to my colleague—it doesn't seem like we do.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: You mentioned that the duck facility might no longer be part of the larger program. Is that because they've pulled themselves out? How does somebody end up moving out of or into these programs?

LEON TAYLOR: We put a lot of effort into reframing the work release program. Last year we had over 300 inmates participate in the work release program. Before COVID, it was kind of 40 or 50. We've had a real focus on partnering with employers that provide real vocational outcomes for inmates. Notwithstanding, perhaps, the welfare perspective of that facility, to get work experience in a facility of that nature is not really the type of work experience that's likely to lead to a career.

Through that lens, there are a number of employers that we haven't continued a relationship with on the basis that we want to transition inmates into jobs that give them well-paid industry wages while they're still in prison so that they can exit custody with some money in their bank to assist their transition into the community, and also workplaces and vocations and careers they're likely to be able to continue working in when they get into the community—well-paid jobs that help them change their life. We're really focused on industries that pay well and will likely give people with a criminal record and time in history a continuing career. Construction is a good one. Civil construction and manufacturing, engineering—those types of industries that pay well and are a little more forgiving for people that have a background that might include time in jail.

The CHAIR: Are you able to take on notice—if the duck facility is no longer used—the specific reasons why that fell out of the program?

LEON TAYLOR: Sure.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much for that. Earlier I was asking about cell-based meat to the Minister. I'm not quite sure who is best placed to answer this, but he mentioned that somebody might be able to give me some more information this afternoon about the MVP Ventures program and whether or not cell-based meat startup companies would be eligible.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I think either our chief scientist or Ms Knight—the chief scientist, probably.

LEON TAYLOR: Chair, we're not involved with the duck people, but I will respond on notice.

The CHAIR: Thank you, I appreciate that.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, we're significantly involved with the cell-based meat culture companies as a group. A year, maybe 18 months ago, we ran a program which funded infrastructure in synthetic biology and biological manufacturing, and some of those were recipients of at least parts of the grants that were involved, and that helps them basically scale. The big problem in this industry is not startups as much as scale-ups—how they go from developing an idea into something that's manufacturable and so on. That's certainly been occurring. We haven't made the announcement of who's got it yet, but we've just run what's called the biosciences fund for which they are obviously eligible. It's a competitive fund, but that's more aimed at companies which are pre-seeding or pre-series A investment—if you see what I mean. So we do have eligible programs for companies like that at reasonable scale, as in millions of dollars.

The CHAIR: If a company was set up in another State but they wanted to develop infrastructure here and then scale up, is that still available for those companies?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes. The rules we generally have are that the majority of the work has to be done here. It doesn't necessarily mean they have to have headquarters here, but to be honest, the funds have managed to attract a lot of headquarters to be moved here, which is a good thing.

The CHAIR: Fantastic. If this is entirely out of the portfolio, please let me know. I have just had another thought in regards to evidence that we heard quite a while ago in an inquiry into the use of animals in experimentation. Somebody came to give evidence around their startups building different cell structures and cell lines to actually replace the use of animals in experimentation. Is that something as well that would fall under these grants?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, they are eligible for those. They are all competitive programs. Obviously the bio fund funds things that are genuinely around the biology area and that includes cultured meats and things like that and also synthetic organs and organoids, as they are called, and many other things. But obviously other funds are more directed, EEIF, physical sciences, all that sort of thing, yes.

The CHAIR: Wonderful, thank you so much.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Good. Nice to be asked a question.

The CHAIR: You did very well.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: If we only had more time.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: And fewer portfolios.

The CHAIR: I have some questions for Fair Trading. I was talking before about puppy farming and dodgy backyard breeders selling sick dogs. I am wondering if Fair Trading has been doing any work on the consumer section of this in the last 12 months?

NATASHA MANN: Yes, thank you, Ms Hurst. We've had conversations at earlier budget estimates sessions about the application of ACL to puppies. There is a real question about whether Australian Consumer Law is appropriate to deal with animals when they are sentient beings. There was a recommendation out of the report that the then fair trading Minister should bring that to the consumer Minister's meeting, and he did that. He acquitted that but I think I would say that nothing really progressed following that meeting. It is something that we're looking at. Puppy farming obviously doesn't sit within Fair Trading's remit, but puppy scams do and we do a lot of work around puppy scams. We saw a lot of puppy scams, as you know, during COVID. We do annual consumer awareness campaigns about puppy scams. That is something that we're definitely doing.

The CHAIR: Has the number of puppy scams increased recently, or have we seen a decrease after COVID?

NATASHA MANN: We've seen a decrease after COVID. In the height of COVID we were seeing about 125 complaints in 2020 and 178 in 2021, but in 2023 that's down to just below 100. They are going down in terms of the reporting rates to Fair Trading.

The CHAIR: I want to talk about free-range egg labelling as well. In 2017 a National Information Standard for free range egg labelling was adopted by New South Wales. I understand it sets out the maximum stocking densities egg producers can have in order to use the free range label on egg cartons. I am wondering if there is any work being done by Fair Trading NSW to ensure that this standard is complied with in New South Wales?

NATASHA MANN: Not that I'm aware of, but if I can take that on notice I'll let you know if we are doing anything.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I do note on the website it says that it's both the ACCC and Fair Trading. I would be interested to know what that division is and what Fair Trading has done. I am also wondering, if Fair Trading became aware of an egg producer that was in breach of these standards, what actions Fair Trading would take or would be able to take?

NATASHA MANN: Ms Hurst, this is not something that's come to me in my time as Fair Trading Commissioner, but I will certainly take that on notice and come back to you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. The other thing I wanted to ask about was around the rental laws. I think it probably falls under the both the Rental Commissioner and yourself as well. We were talking this morning about rental laws with animals and one of the questions I asked the Minister was: What do people do at this point in time now if they're experiencing, or potentially experiencing, houselessness or facing houselessness because they can't find a rental property with animals? What steps can they take while we're waiting for the legislation to come in? I think he said that they could go to Fair Trading. Do you have more information you can provide on that?

NATASHA MANN: Yes, I do. I've got my Rental Commissioner standing right next to me, so I might ask her to sit down and respond.

The CHAIR: Perfect.

TRINA JONES: Good afternoon. On the matter of where renters are finding it difficult to find a rental home with a pet, this is something I'm obviously very aware of and something that renters raise with me all the time. I think your earlier question was about what advice would you give to those renters? Aside from the work that's happening on the reforms, which will make it easier for renters to have pets, I acknowledge the difficulty right now. What I would say to those renters is that there are some things that you can do to potentially support your application for your tenancy. For example, you could create a pet résumé. Alongside your tenancy application you can put a picture of your pet, you can put your tenancy history, you can say the good things about them—their behaviour—and get others to say how great your pet is, which is not a bad thing.

I would also say that I'm trying to provide some advice to renters that it's illegal for anyone to ask them for a pet bond. That is not permitted in New South Wales. If they are being asked for a bond, I would strongly encourage them to contact Fair Trading and do not pay additional funds on the existing bond. The other thing I would like to give advice to renters about on that matter is they can't be refused if they have an assistance animal. There are protections in place for that, and anyone who's in those circumstances cannot be refused. That's in law.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: While I've got you, are there any further updates that you can give us from the work that you were doing in regard to the animals in rentals space since we last spoke at budget estimates?

TRINA JONES: Yes. Since we last spoke the survey results were released on the consultation to the question around in New South Wales, a pet can only be kept by a renter if the owner agrees—that's the current state—unless it's an assistance animal, as I've said. Right now, as you're aware, owners don't need to give a reason to refuse a pet. What we heard back from the 16,000 survey responses and over 400 long form submissions was 93 per cent of renters strongly supported changes to the law to require an owner to give a good reason for why they can't have a pet or to go to the NCAT tribunal if they want to refuse a pet.

Renter-owners, where we have people who own their property but rent it out to someone else and rent somewhere else, also supported this change. However, owners and real estate agents did not support the owner needing to give a reason to refuse a pet. We talked through that process about notification periods, and part of the question in that discussion paper was around how many days notice would you need to give the owner from a renter's perspective? Renters were pretty neutral on whether 21 days was too much time. Renter-owners were neutral that it was the right amount of time, while owners and real estate agents thought it was the right amount of time, at 21 days.

Based on all the responses, though—I think to get to the crux of where people are coming from—the top three reasons to refuse a pet were: the pet is a restricted animal or an animal is declared dangerous or menacing, the renter keeping the pet on the property would be breaking other laws, and also that the property is not suitable for the pet. The suitability is a discussion that I have in a very live way all the time with stakeholders. One good example that I can give is you're a farmer and you've got a secondary dwelling. You may have sheep and the person may have a large dog that may not be suitable in proximity to those sheep. Those were types of examples. But I've also heard examples—like, will someone keep chickens in their cupboards in an apartment? I think it's about being pragmatic and ensuring that any reasons might be reasonable and pragmatic.

The CHAIR: What's your role now in this reform, going forward? Has it gone on to the Minister now and your part of that is done?

TRINA JONES: I continue to meet with stakeholders. I have regular meetings with the RSPCA. I have been linking in with Lucy's Project and others. I really see that as part of my role, in terms of the implementation as well as the recommendations for change. So I'm continuing those meetings and continuing to monitor changes in other jurisdictions, as well as internationally, to ensure that any advice is up to date and informed by the people who will be impacted.

The CHAIR: I know that these reforms are coming later than expected. Did you or your office request an extension on time on this?

TRINA JONES: At the time of the extension of time, it was right after the survey consultation, and it was really important to get out and talk to people. So I met with over close to 70 organisations and groups, including renters and landlords, and I was able to have more detailed conversations with them. As you can see from the survey responses, it's often one way or the other. But when I got out to speak to people, I found there was much broader acceptance when you actually can talk in more detail with people directly.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: The Acting Commissioner, Mr Taylor, just following on, we didn't get to hear from you about the mothers and babies program.

LEON TAYLOR: Sure.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Is it going to be housed somewhere else? What has happened?

LEON TAYLOR: I might ask my colleague Deputy Commissioner Martin to mention that. We are reopening Emu Plains at the moment. We are working to bring that facility back online, and I'll ask Dr Martin to talk to that in a minute. What I'll point out to you, the Emu Plains facilities closed when the floods came through the Nepean River in 2022. The women that were in that program and their children that were with them were moved in two ways—they went to one of our transition centres or the women were released to external leave under section 26 of the CAS Act. That's a part of our Act that has existed for a long time and permits the commissioner to release female inmates with children or a child to serve their sentence in the community. It was a little-used piece of our Act that we now use more frequently.

What has happened with that program is lower-security women who can serve their time in the community with their children are now doing that. We've had 13 women diverted under that piece of our Act. The numbers are actually quite low. Whilst the facility has been low, we've been doing some infrastructure works out there so we can house higher-security women, who it's not appropriate to grant external leave to under that clause. We can

CORRECTED

reopen it with some additional security measures and make that program really viable. Do you just want to mention where we are now?

ANNE-MARIE MARTIN: I will, thank you. As Mr Taylor was saying, Emu Plains and the Jacaranda Cottages, which is outside of the main part of the Emu Plains Correctional Centre, has a new fence erected around it. What that means is we can cater up to category 3 or higher security classified group of women. When it was decanted around the time of the floods, it was more minimum-security women. It had some real challenges in being sustainable. We're very keen to do the best that we can to minimise harm to children when their mum comes into custody.

When it reopens and with this new fence, which, when you're in it, the cottages around the outside—the fencing actually falls down in a dip. So when you're in it, the fence isn't too prominent from the inside, which is a good thing, particularly if children are going to be there. Up to 15 women will be accommodated there; up to 23 children will be accommodated there. We're working with our infrastructure and assets team, particularly, and alongside Justice Health around the clinic, because before it was all-women; now it's going to be separate. Main will be for men, works release; Jacaranda Cottages, women—need to make sure that's all safe and separated. We're hoping—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: What were the challenges?

ANNE-MARIE MARTIN: Around?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You spoke about challenges. You said that—obviously it was flooded. It wasn't there and now there are challenges. What are the different challenges that were there before it was flooded?

ANNE-MARIE MARTIN: Some of the challenges were at the back end or the end of a person's sentence. We're focused on work release. We're focused on ensuring all programs have been completed, access to various medical health-type services. There was particular criteria in terms of being minimum security and appropriate behaviour to go there. Once all of those filters were applied, the numbers were very, very low and not sustainable.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I don't know a lot about corrections. I only sat on a committee for a while, but I just would have found that one of the main priorities of people being able to rehabilitate themselves is for them to stay with their children. But you're saying there is not a high number of women being incarcerated that have children?

ANNE-MARIE MARTIN: No, that's not what I'm saying. I'd like to correct that if I've given that impression. What we know from our intake screening process is around 60 per cent of women in custody have got children. Around 20 per cent had a child in their care when they came into prison. So that's a smaller number. Then, when we filter out association issues, when we filter out other competing demands according to their case plan, that number was becoming quite low. I do not want to give the impression that women aren't parents, that there's a low number—nor that there wasn't a need.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I wasn't suggesting you are. So 60 per cent of women that come in have children, but you have to go with a classification, so then you have to decide in corrections whether they're eligible for that facility or not?

ANNE-MARIE MARTIN: That's right.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'd like to explore this a bit, but I need to move on—because I find that quite alarming because I just think they should all have access to that. Mr Taylor, how many people are on workers compensation within the prison system—how many of your employees? I know that's really particular so I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

LEON TAYLOR: Do you mind—unless the secretary has the numbers handy.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: We will take it on notice if we may.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Secretary, would you say that there is a higher than average amount of people in the Corrective Services department that are on workers compensation compared to others?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes, I would. The 2022-23 financial year was not a good year in terms of claims. The growth in claims is very focused around psychological injury. That at the present time is the focus of a number of strategies, including a much more bespoke, tailored, flexible approach around return to work.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Secretary, would you be able to provide to this Committee how many Corrective Services officers are on workers compensation over the last three financial years and what percentage that is across other departments and the difference in—how it's higher?

CORRECTED

MICHAEL TIDBALL: When you say "other departments", other parts of DCJ?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Across government. Because I'm told it's very high.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I certainly can do that for DCJ. I can't speak for other departments.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I completely understand. The Minister said before—which was great news—that there would be no job losses across any of the mothballing, to use his words, of the beds. I'm just placing this out there because I don't know, I don't have access to the information—but would those no job losses correlate to the fact that you have a high proportion of people on workers compensation and so those roles are being used to fill that?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: No.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I might go to the chief scientist or possibly Investment NSW. It is about the quantum industry and how New South Wales is advocating to the Federal Government for, shall I say, quantum supremacy. Does that sound too sci-fi?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Quantum?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes. I presume you're aware of this "secret" EOI process that the Federal Government has been going through?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are you aware of New South Wales Government advocacy to support New South Wales based quantum companies?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, we are very strong engagers with the Federal Government in the quantum area. We've been actively involved in the growth centre program which has been announced and also the investment fund and we were heavily involved in the way that that was formulated. We had a number of people from New South Wales, also, on the taskforce that developed it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do we know how much funding we're getting from that?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: No-one knows yet because although the proposals have gone in, no-one knows the outcome.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Has the Minister been involved with that advocacy?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, he's been very supportive of the quantum work.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But supportive of your work, rather than specifically advocating himself.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, in the quantum area, absolutely.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: In terms of that \$100 million that might be available through this EOI process from the Federal Government, is there any time line at the moment that New South Wales is working towards for an announcement of that?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: I'll just be careful here. The Federal Government has announced what amounts to a quantum growth centre. They called for proposals. There was a bid, a very competitive bid, put forward by—led by New South Wales, but clearly involving lots of other people across the country. We do not know the outcome of that yet.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are you concerned that things like ANFF are—we've obviously got locations in New South Wales, but that we're moving towards a Queensland-centred industry rather than a New South Wales industry, particularly if we lose SQA?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: As it stands at the moment, we have a very strong quantum industry—not just computing, but sensing and devices—in New South Wales, and SQA is still there. It has not disappeared and it's not about to disappear at this point either, so I'll make that clear.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But when you say it's not about to disappear, they haven't got any recurrent funding confirmed yet.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: They've never had recurrent funding; let's be absolutely clear.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's right, but they're running out of funding now and they haven't been given any more funding yet.

CORRECTED

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes. I can't say anything about what the budget process will be this year but, clearly, they have a lot of strong advocates. They've done an excellent job. We've just had a very detailed review done of what they've managed to achieve, and SQA have put New South Wales head and shoulders above anyone else in this country.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I very much agree with that. That sounds hopeful. I feel hopeful—I hope that there's work being done. Because we've got limited time, I might move on to the MVP grant program, which is probably for Ms Knight. Thank you very much, Professor Durrant-Whyte.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, two questions—check.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's tough to fit it all in!

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Great use of your day.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Ms Knight, I'm wondering about the operation of the new MVP grant program. Obviously it was scaled down significantly in terms of the amount of funding that was allocated and the amount of funding that was available for startups and for founders. One of the hallmarks of the announcement, given it was a reduced amount of funding, was that it would be a quicker and simpler approval process. But after a promise of a 15-day response time to that initial submission, founders have been waiting for over two months to get a response. It was promised at 15 days because of the reduced funding, but they were waiting for over two months for any response. I understand there were a lot of applicants, and that's obviously because all the applicants last year were not able to receive any funding, so there was interest. But do you think it's acceptable that we've got startups waiting for two months when they were promised a 15-day turnaround?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Chair, I'm just going to jump in here again—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Sorry, let me rephrase my question. What steps are being taken to ensure that deadlines are adhered to?

KATIE KNIGHT: Yes, we acknowledge that there have been some delays in some processing. We have had a very large number of expressions of interest, and we are certainly diverting our resources to manage those as quickly as possible. But what I would say is that we are communicating frequently and we're being very transparent about where we're at with that process. We have processed a huge number, acknowledging that there are still some to go.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: How many have you processed so far, would you say?

KATIE KNIGHT: We have received 349 submissions and 172 have been assessed against the eligibility criteria. Twenty-three have gone on to request a detailed application, because it's now a two-stage process. Of the 23 applicants that have been requested to submit a detailed application, nine have submitted them, with three being approved for funding, and the remaining six are being assessed.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay. From last year's grants, my understanding was that there were 154 MVP ventures grants applications paused in April-May, May-June last year, and that none of those paused applications actually received funding in the end through the MVP ventures grant. Is that accurate?

KATIE KNIGHT: I'd have to take that on notice.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you. I am wondering if, given that there was a blowout in the response time to those applicants, if startups can be confident about the tech vouchers program, which is a fairly similar grant program to be honest, and they don't get the funding which is matched until they complete the program. They have to conduct all their work, including gaining matched funding and actually complete the work, and then they get the funding at the end of when they've done it, but that part of the grant program is that they have to be ready to start within three months of submitting their application to the department. How can they be confident that they will be getting responses in time to actually start producing work?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Chair, I'm just going to jump in again.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: It's clearly a request for an expression of opinion here.

KATIE KNIGHT: Sorry. Are you talking about boosting business?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Tech vouchers.

KATIE KNIGHT: Which is part of the same program, yes.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes. What steps are you taking to ensure that startups can be confident that they will receive an application response within a particular time period, given the department is putting their own time periods on parameters?

KATIE KNIGHT: My understanding on Boosting Business is that we have the agreements with the delivery partners, which is the publicly funded research organisations, and that those tech voucher amounts are now being issued to those delivery partners. They are being administered through that process rather than directly with the SME.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This tech voucher, how it works, says that eligible projects must be ready, starting within three months of submission to the department. You're saying that that's not accurate?

KATIE KNIGHT: I'll have to take that on notice again.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay. We could talk about the Boosting Business Innovation Program for a long time because, unfortunately—could I please ask somebody: Is the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility within the purview of this department?

KATIE KNIGHT: No, it is not.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Why is it included in the 1½-page discussion paper for the Innovation Blueprint?

KATIE KNIGHT: Hugh and I could probably talk about this for a while. Whilst the construction facility is not within the purview of this department, it is within the Western Parkland City Authority. We still have a lot to do with that facility in that the chief scientist is very focused on the semiconductor capabilities and the work that will be going on in building two. Do you want to talk about that? I'll let you do that.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Please do.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Can't thank you enough.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: At least we're making someone happy today.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Look, the AMRF has been ongoing now for about three or four years and I've been involved all the way through. The chief scientist is involved with lots of things, not just in their own department. As I said, it's effectively run through the Bradfield thing and through planning and so on, but we provide a lot of technical input, particularly around the second facility. Clearly, we have input in terms of the way we might attract investment. I sit on the investment committee, for example, and we're engaged also about skills development and a whole range of other things that impact the manufacturing part of the strategy, which investment and the chief scientist office are also delivering.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you know if stage two funding has been confirmed?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: For the second building?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay. That's on track?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: It's ongoing and we're refining it now.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's very, very good to hear. Thank you.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: It'll be electronics and semiconductors.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes. It's very exciting. I'm sorry, this is a different portfolio now.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: That's okay, good.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm going back to rental reforms, actually. I just want to understand who's the best person for this?

The CHAIR: The Rental Commissioner?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Possibly. It's more on the departmental side. It's around portable bonds and where this is really up to. It was difficult to get a response this morning.

TRINA JONES: I'm happy to talk to that.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you.

TRINA JONES: I'm leading on the development of the portable bond scheme within Fair Trading. We have a team established that are dedicated to the discovery work that is currently underway on the program. That includes how it will work and who will be involved, and that's progressing well.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there a deadline for putting that to the Minister?

TRINA JONES: There's advice being provided all the way through. Ultimately, some decisions will be a matter for the Government. At this stage we are in the discovery process, and the next stage—if there is agreement—will be to go into procurement. I can't give a definitive deadline about when the program will be in implementation because it will be subject to the procurement process and then the vendor of that, but at this stage we are progressing well.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there a deadline for the discovery period?

TRINA JONES: We are working as fast as we can on this because it is so important to people.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Totally.

TRINA JONES: Right now it's really about what the logistics are, how that might work and how it would interact with other aspects of government, so we're doing the diligence on that. Because we've got the largest bond holding in the country—close to \$2 billion of bonds and over one million bonds—it's really important that we are doing the diligence, not only on how the scheme will work but how it will interact with the current system.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But are you working to a time line to actually furnish your report and recommendations?

TRINA JONES: Yes. That's all underway at the moment. And, as I said, that advice is being provided regularly.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have you got a date in a spreadsheet somewhere where you're aiming to have that compiled?

TRINA JONES: Yes, but I would say those aspects are also subject to the commercial feedback that we get once we go to procurement, because once we start the conversations with industry about how long would it take to build, we're still subject to some of those unknowns at this stage.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are we talking for this discovery process months, weeks or years?

TRINA JONES: I am certainly not talking years. We're absolutely prioritising this and I'm confident that it's progressing well.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you.

The CHAIR: I'm going to throw a couple of questions in before I go to Ms Boyd. I've got one more question for you as well. Are you involved in any changes around the no-grounds evictions?

TRINA JONES: Yes.

The CHAIR: Can I get an update from you about where that's at and what that could potentially look like in New South Wales?

TRINA JONES: Similarly with the pet reforms, the no-grounds evictions is the priority renter reform that's underway at the moment. I've spoken with all of those stakeholders that I talked about earlier. Those were the two key issues that I spoke to them about, alongside issues around closing loopholes around rent increases. What's been really important at this stage is to look at the other jurisdictions, to be able to ground our advice in what changes have happened in those areas and be able to give that advice based on the impacts to the people that we're speaking to, but also what's happening in other areas across Australia. Right now the timing will be a matter for government, but we are continuing to meet with the people that will be most impacted and are closest to this issue, including renters, and regularly meeting with them.

The CHAIR: I've got a couple of follow-up questions for Ms Mann as well. Before, we were talking about puppy scams, but I'm wondering if there's data as well that's collected in regard to animals that have been sold, for example, with genetic health issues and those sorts of complaints?

NATASHA MANN: They would come under our—

The CHAIR: It still comes under the scams portfolio.

NATASHA MANN: Yes, under that same data.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: I know that you said—and I agree with you—that sentient animals shouldn't really be regulated under the ACL. Has any work been undertaken to consider the best way to regulate these issues that arise out of the sale of animals, both for people and the animals, given that it's quite different to selling a couch or something like that?

NATASHA MANN: Yes. We are very aware of the report of the Legislative Council select committee on puppy farming. We know that recommendation 18 was around the Minister for Fair Trading at the time raising that very issue with his colleagues. As I mentioned, he did do that at the meeting of Australian consumer Ministers. Since that time—I was with the then Minister at that meeting—there was a good conversation around it. I don't think anyone has any solutions to it. As you well know, it's a very complex, difficult thing and there are no easy answers.

The CHAIR: One thing that also came out of that inquiry was around an extended liability scheme where breeders are actually responsible for selling an animal that has health issues within the animal's first year of life. This was also supported by the breeders that gave evidence at that inquiry. I'm assuming that might be something that would fall under the consumer law area. Is that something that the department looked into as well, at any stage?

NATASHA MANN: Yes. I know that my team has that proposal under its watch. It is looking into that proposal.

The CHAIR: Is this extended liability and some of the other regulations around the sale of animals, is that something that you've had the chance to brief the new Minister on?

NATASHA MANN: Not as yet—not the new Minister. I suppose, Ms Hurst, just to add one other point, obviously the ACL is a national law so any changes would need to be progressed through that national process.

The CHAIR: I will throw now to Ms Abigail Boyd for the remaining 16 minutes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Fantastic. Thank you, Chair. I'm not sure I will take all of that time, but we will see how we go. Could I ask you, Dr Casey, first of all, where is Mr Dent?

PETRINA CASEY: Thanks for the question, Ms Boyd. I've been acting in the chief executive role since 29 January. Mr Dent is absent from work at this time.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is he on leave, or—

PETRINA CASEY: I might let the secretary—

GRAEME HEAD: Ms Boyd, if I can just explain briefly the SIRA staffing arrangements. In fact, the CEO of SIRA is a person employed in the department to be the CEO, so I hold the employer functions for Mr Dent and all of the staff in SIRA. These are the arrangements that were put in when these reforms were introduced—are actually employees of the department. So I hold the employment functions for—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So where is Mr Dent?

GRAEME HEAD: Mr Dent is absent. It might assist you if I explain that I'm aware of the issues you've raised previously in the Committee about the management of conflicts of interest and also other matters that you've raised relating to complaints handling from external complainants in SIRA. I've determined to examine those matters and I've determined to act Dr Casey while I examine those matters. I don't wish to go into the detail. No inference of any wrongdoing on anybody's part should be drawn, but I've examined the issues that have been raised before and I'm examining those matters.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Then perhaps I should ask you—you let me know, Mr Head, if this is something that should go to you or to Dr Casey—the people I mentioned in my last estimates had asked if they could have a meeting with Mr Dent or with the chief executive. Is that something now that you will be taking on? They're asking where that's up to, or if they can have a meeting with Dr Casey.

GRAEME HEAD: I guess the first part of the response is I think we should be affording those people an opportunity to meet. The institutional arrangements are a bit atypical for SIRA, because SIRA is the agency—I don't work in SIRA but I employ everybody who works in SIRA. I think it's probably more appropriate that the complainants meet with Dr Casey, and I understand that she's been in contact with at least one. But, that said, I'm also looking to make sure that the process that I'm undertaking affords opportunities.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand.

CORRECTED

GRAEME HEAD: I'm quite happy to provide additional information on that down the track. But the first principle here is we should provide access to those people who wish to speak to us so that they can. But I think Dr Casey will have the meeting first.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. This is going to be even shorter than I thought it was going to be, Chair. I will ask just one last one. I understand that there was an election commitment from the Government—and this one will be for you, Dr Casey—in relation to providing presumptive PTSD under the workers comp system for firefighters. Is that work that SIRA has been looking at in terms of the modelling and that kind of thing?

PETRINA CASEY: Yes, Ms Boyd. SIRA has, in addition to other agencies, been working closely with icare and Treasury. Some briefings have progressively been given to a couple of the Ministers in relation to that. There is no outcome, but certainly it's something that we've been looking at and providing advice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Great. That's all I needed to know. That's great, thank you.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I don't know if it's to the secretary or the acting commissioner. With regard to Junee, I am concerned about the community of Junee in that I know that Corrective Services will still be there but GEO's level of investment in the town of Junee for, say the last five years amounts to about \$77,000 in scholarships and \$172,000 in sponsorships and donations. What happens, basically?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I'll begin. I would say that the straight answer to the question is the nature of engagement with the community will be different. Those types of donations or financial contributions will not continue under Corrective Services, and there's only one way of saying that: that is that they won't continue. What I think Acting Commissioner Taylor, however, can speak to is that Corrective Services, in a number of what I would characterise as prison towns—Goulburn, Bathurst, and there are others—has a long and proud history of engaging with those communities. It does that in a number of ways, and I think that in Junee that work will really strengthen and take on its own character with the transfer of Junstae back to the State. At that point I will defer to Acting Commissioner Taylor.

LEON TAYLOR: Thanks, Secretary. It's not lost on us, the affection with which the GEO Group is held in the Junee community. So as part of our transition we are making sure we make every effort to make sure we fill as much of the void in the Junee community as we can with the work that we will continue to do in that community with our inmates. As the secretary mentioned, we are engaged in many communities around New South Wales, and many regional communities, and we are deeply engaged with community groups, councils and other organisations in those communities. We are involved with fundraisers with hospitals and charities. We construct things from time to time. Down on the South Coast we have been building benches more recently for a women's refuge, just by way of example.

We do a lot of grounds maintenance, churches, cemeteries, sporting groups, pony clubs, you name it, community halls, and certainly we will engage in the Junee community in that way. We support a lot of regional events, regional shows. At St Heliers we support the Muswellbrook Show, the Celtic Festival up at Glen Innis, the Tumbarumba Rodeo out of our Mannus facility, art shows and we do a lot of conservation work, rubbish removal, cleaning up river banks, landcare-type work. It is those types of activities that we will engage deeply in in the Junee community. We are meeting with council. We are meeting with the groups that are engaged at the moment in community-type work through the GEO Group. And, as the Secretary said, as a public organisation we will be engaging in different ways to some of the ways that a private sector organisation does.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Taylor, just to redirect, those different ways—I am from down near Cooma and I cannot commend you highly enough about the workplace programs. I hear incredible things every day. I think it is amazing. But that is completely different to the question that my colleague is asking you. The question was quite specific and it talked about over \$77,000 in scholarships and \$172,000 in sponsorships and donations.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Children will miss out on opportunities.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Will you be doing that? Yes or no?

LEON TAYLOR: Direct sponsorships are not the type of thing we can do—direct cash sponsorships.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I expect that answer, but obviously we have got a job to do here. The community is going to be worse off by that investment, although you will do what you normally do anyway, which is probably what has been happening, but there will be none of that.

LEON TAYLOR: That direct sponsorship, no.

CORRECTED

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: At the moment the GEO Group undertakes work in parks and gardens. This will continue?

LEON TAYLOR: All that type of work, yes.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: This is what you outlined before?

LEON TAYLOR: Yes, those types of things, certainly.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: They do Meals on Wheels. It is only a small number, but they do that each day?

LEON TAYLOR: Yes. The Meals on Wheels program—we have done Meals on Wheels in the past in other facilities. We have made the commitment that will make sure there is not a void there. We will either continue that service if it can't be transferred anywhere else—we can give that assurance.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: They have the licensed scholarships and sponsorships, but there's also the local businesses in town—the local butcher, the baker and supermarkets. Will the procurement policy enable those local businesses, who then grow their families—will they still be able to interact with Corrective Services in the same manner that they have been with GEO?

LEON TAYLOR: Corrective Services procure on a statewide basis, as you might expect. There are some items that we procure locally. It is probably a really nuanced answer, and we'd have to understand—

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: We're talking about \$7.5 million a year that local businesses in town are supplying in goods and services to the Junee correctional facility. You don't think that will continue at the same level?

LEON TAYLOR: Those businesses will have access, potentially, to the broader procurement through government procurement—insofar as the procurement practices of the GEO group. Quite obviously—corrections—we operate a system rather than a single facility, so it would kind of depend on what sort of procurement you're specifically interested in.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Do you know if, under Corrective Services NSW, there'll be 24-hour medical assistance available to the inmates?

LEON TAYLOR: Justice Health run the health facilities within—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So, yes?

LEON TAYLOR: It's a question for Health.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But surely you would know whether that's going to be available?

LEON TAYLOR: Our inmates have access to 24-hour health care, but as for how they run that and their nursing complement during the evening, that's a matter for Health.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Taylor, those conversations and discussions have been had with Murrumbidgee LHD then, to staff that process?

LEON TAYLOR: Justice held the meeting with the stakeholders in the health space, but it's a matter for Justice Health and the Minister for Health.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Is the security classification level of the inmates going to change once correctional—

LEON TAYLOR: No, it will be the same—maximum, medium and minimum security, men and women, on transit and in court.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: What is the current prison population in New South Wales?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: As of today, 12,323.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: What about the number of people supervised in the community, whether it's on community orders or parole orders? What is the current number there?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: The total community corrections population is 36,281 as of 14 January 2024.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Of that 12,323, how many of those are on remand compared to those that are sentenced?

LEON TAYLOR: It's 5,321.

CORRECTED

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: That's for a month?

LEON TAYLOR: About 43 per cent of the prison population are remands, yes.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: And Indigenous?

LEON TAYLOR: Indigenous is 30 per cent. It's 30 per cent for men and 40 per cent for women—round numbers.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: And on that, how many females are currently in custody?

LEON TAYLOR: Some 800.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: As of 12 January, if that date works for you, 779.

LEON TAYLOR: I'm sorry, 700.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: That population, as you said, is going down in the prison population. Can the same be said for people being supervised in the community? Are the reoffending rates going down in the community as well?

LEON TAYLOR: We'll take that on notice—unless someone can pass me something. Certainly, the fall in the community corrections numbers are nothing like the prison numbers. In fact, a lot of people are diverted from one to the other, but perhaps if we can answer that on notice.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Just one more question. With regard to supervising in the community, in 2016 they introduced a practice guide to interventions—like cognitive behaviour work sheets. Is that still happening in the community setting?

LEON TAYLOR: Yes, it is. Those exercises continue since—I've got a figure since 2016. We've done 1.8 million sessions. I mentioned in evidence earlier that we were looking at culturally appropriate ways to do the things that we do, and that includes how we deliver many of our cognitive-based therapies, including the PGI. We're also looking at how to best structure those activities to really tailor our interventions for people where they need us at when they come into our offices on orders. But, yes, certainly, the PGI is something that continues.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: The EQUIPS programs—you're still doing those in the centres?

LEON TAYLOR: And in the community.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Ms Mann, could I please ask you some questions? In May last year you created a file note relating to the Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister Cotsis, and her office. Do you recall this one?

NATASHA MANN: I do recall this, yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You mentioned that there was a conversation in which the Minister's chief of staff sought to interview a DLO candidate that was not recommended by the independent panel. That's correct?

NATASHA MANN: I don't have the file note in front of me.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I do have it here, if you would like a copy, just to check. I just wanted to make sure that I was verifying—

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: Just with regard to the document that the member is referencing, my concern is—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's a public document.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Could you clarify if it is a publicly available document?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, it's a public document, so I'm happy to furnish it. It seems from this document that you warned the chief of staff—sorry. My question is you warned the chief of staff a couple of days later that there were risks to this DLO candidate that was not recommended, and you recommended against actually going through with this process that had been commenced.

NATASHA MANN: Ms Munro, I might just say that I think I'm appearing here today in support of Minister Chanthivong and this portfolio. I think the questions that you are asking relate to Minister Cotsis. That budget estimates hearing occurred yesterday, and I think the secretary put on the record, very clearly, the circumstances in relation to that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand that, but, obviously, we have the document today. I understand there's no restriction on the questions in terms of—I mean, you are here in your portfolio capacity.

CORRECTED

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: For a question to be asked, it needs to be a legal question, which means it must fall within the portfolios that we're considering now, under the rules for budget estimates committees.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Where is that?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I would just ask for your ruling, Chair, that this in fact is a matter—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Could you point to that?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: It falls outside the committee—section 11 of the Parliamentary Evidence Act, "Invited witnesses cannot be compelled to answer questions. Summoned witnesses can only be compelled to answer lawful questions. Unlawful questions may include those seeking answers that contain privileged information, e.g. legal professional privilege, published"—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's not privileged.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: "All questions that fall outside the committee's terms of reference." I can read you the entire point, but I'll just leave it on that, "outside the committee's terms of reference". Also, witnesses can't be compelled to answer a question, because they're invited.

The CHAIR: Were you going to say something further?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: We add that as a second point for your consideration.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: To the point of order: It is not using something that is unlawful. As the honourable member has said, it is a document. If the witness feels that she's unable to answer the question, then that's what needs to be said, but it is a question that should be allowed to be put.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: To the point of order: It's not unlawful in the sense that you're going to take it before the High Court. It is unlawful in the sense that it doesn't come within the purview of the current inquiry.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: How about I ask a different question, but it is related to Ms Mann's responsibilities now. I'm wondering when you were removed from the position of the head of SafeWork NSW?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: To the point of order, Chair. This is again completely outside the Committee's terms of reference. The witness has answered the question. They cannot be compelled to answer the question asked in a different way.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is a different question.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: I would ask you to draw the honourable member to order in this regard. The witness is here in an invited capacity and can answer the question as they see fit.

NATASHA MANN: I just would like to clarify the record, though, Ms Munro. I was not removed from that role. It was part of the decoupling of Fair Trading, Building Commission and SafeWork. I was previously responsible for all three of those regulatory functions, and under the new Government, there has been a decoupling, of which I support. As a result, I retain the Fair Trading role but the SafeWork role and the Building Commissioner role have moved out.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Could you tell me who told you about this decoupling and when you would no longer be part of the head of SafeWork role?

NATASHA MANN: It was a clear commitment of this Government coming into the election that they were looking to—we had been under a super-regulator model, which we were aligned along functional lines. While I think the intent of setting it up, as that model, was a good one, it was working for around two to three years and it was quite clear that there were problems with it. People were spread too thin. They working across multiple regulatory functions. So this Government came in with that as a commitment, so we were all very aware of it. I personally support the decoupling.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But you were in that role with the new Ministers appointed, and you were acting in that role in relation to responsibilities to Ministers for a time?

NATASHA MANN: That's correct. As the secretary said earlier, the official date was 1 December, where the three regulators were established in their new form. I was the head of SafeWork until—I don't have the exact date. It was around—I think I passed over the reins perhaps a month or so earlier than that.

GRAEME HEAD: If I could just clarify, the secretary of the department is the head of SafeWork until such time as it is established as a standalone regulator. Prior to me starting in late November, Secretary Hogan

CORRECTED

was the head of SafeWork. That's a feature of the Act; the secretary is the SafeWork regulator. What Ms Mann has been describing is what I mentioned earlier, which is the disaggregation of a division where all of those functions were done jointly and in accordance with government policy, which was—and is—to have those as standalone functions. We discussed in the relevant committee hearing yesterday the matters related to the stand up of SafeWork, including matters related to this issue.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I am mindful that we have a minute and a half left. I can go back to some questions I have on innovation.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Just to clarify, you have told the Committee, which is your right, that you will not answer that question about that document.

NATASHA MANN: I'm not sure what the question about the document was.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: The question was in regard—

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order—

The CHAIR: There's been a point of order taken.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: The Chair didn't rule.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can we wait for the Chair to rule then?

The CHAIR: I might seek some advice from the Committee clerk during the break on that question and we can come back to it.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Chair, may I just say that I don't think it's a matter of the witness refusing to answer. I'm arguing that the question itself should be ruled out of order.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I just want the correct thing reflected.

The CHAIR: It is whether it's within order. I understand. I'll seek some advice from the Committee clerk during the break. Does the Opposition have a different question for the last 30 seconds?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm wondering if somebody can please tell me if a modern manufacturing strategy will be delivered.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I'm happy to answer that and then perhaps Ms Knight can add some more information. As the Minister spoke this morning, there are a couple of pieces of work being produced this year—the Innovation Blueprint and the industry strategy. The modern manufacturing aspect of the industry strategy will be covered in the industry strategy. There may or may not be a standalone document relating to modern manufacturing, but we'll determine that as we're doing the industry strategy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there a deadline for that?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I don't know that there's an exact deadline but it will be perhaps around the third quarter of the year.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We will now break for an afternoon tea break until 3.45 p.m.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back. Before we go to the Opposition, I just wanted to check if anybody had taken any questions on notice that they'd like to give the answers to now.

LEON TAYLOR: Chair, I have a few. You asked earlier how many offenders are currently in custody for bestiality offences. The answer is eight: three for bestiality and five for the possession of bestiality material. You asked also how many offenders in custody—

The CHAIR: Sorry, was that eight for bestiality and five for—

LEON TAYLOR: Sorry, three for bestiality and five for the possession of bestiality material. You also asked how many offenders are in custody for animal cruelty over the last five years. For 2019 to 2023—that's four years—there are 121. That includes animal cruelty and bestiality. I have one more. You asked about the duck farm and the work release relationship. That relationship ceased in 2022 for two reasons: It wasn't determined as meaningful for sustainable employment and the inmates spoke of the work in derogatory terms. They didn't like it.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: I've got one follow-up question just based on those questions. When you said that there were five inmates for the possession of bestiality, could I also get the number of those inmates who are also in the possession of child abuse material or had other child abuse convictions alongside the bestiality convictions?

LEON TAYLOR: On notice, sure.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I didn't mean to give you more work today.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand you're waiting for advice, Chair?

The CHAIR: I am waiting for further advice.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I will ask the chief scientist, please, and then we can let you go. There are some Icelandic ponies that need you.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, there are. Let's not have that in *Hansard*, shall we?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm just wondering, over the forward estimates what does your budget allocation is looking like?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: I'm going to have to take the generic question on notice. What I can tell you is where our funding now currently stands. We have \$15 million over two years for critical research infrastructure, so it aligns with the Federal Government NCRIS program. We have the combined biosciences and physical sciences fund, which is \$15 million over the next four years. We have what's called the RAAP—the Research Attraction and Acceleration Program—and that is an average of about \$7 million for the next three years and then it rises to \$10 million. Then we have the SBIR program, which is only this year, which is \$10 million. We're also running the build of the RNA manufacturing facility and the investment fund, which is a combined total of \$219 million, and it runs over 10 years.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is a fairly technical question.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Good.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: It's very rowdy in the gallery!

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's about the R&D tax incentive, which is obviously a federally implemented program, I guess you could call it. I am aware that founders receiving grants in New South Wales are being deemed ineligible for R&D tax incentives because those grants are deemed not at risk, as they are in other States. Are you aware of that distinction?

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: No, not at all. I wasn't aware of it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is something that's been brought to me as quite problematic and concerning, really, because it doesn't necessarily accord with the reality on the ground.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: It's the first I've heard of it. I'll take it and it's something we'll look at.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: The follow-on is how do we make sure that we're advocating at a Federal level to ensure that our grant recipients are not basically punished for grants? If you're not aware of it, I don't know who else would—maybe I can just ask that of the Minister.

HUGH DURRANT-WHYTE: Yes, I'll take it and we'll take a look at it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That sounds good. I think that's probably it for now. I'll put everything else that comes up on notice. Ms Knight, could I ask you a couple of questions, please? Thank you so much, Professor.

(Hugh Durrant-Whyte withdrew.)

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: We obviously had that CAISH report last year. It had a number of mechanisms to support the success of different programs, and the measurement and understanding of how different startups are impacting the New South Wales economy, and how funding had been beneficial or otherwise to them. Are they being rolled out in all grant programs—the kinds of mechanisms to measure that were included in the CAISH report?

KATIE KNIGHT: Yes, certainly it is a body of work that did produce a bit of a framework for us now to think about how we measure the impact of those CAISH entities going forward. I don't think that we've reached a conclusion on how we will do that, but certainly with new grant programs—MVP will finish this year. In the forward years, when we roll out the new program guidelines, that's something that we'll consider.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay, so MVP is finishing this year?

KATIE KNIGHT: We have funding for multiple years, but we may choose to change the way the guidelines are structured each year. But the funding exists.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there a plan to have a measurement framework in place for grants? Obviously the implementation of them and the type of grant might be different, but I suspect the actual reporting should be fairly similar across the whole department.

KATIE KNIGHT: Yes, that's right, and for each grant program we do perform a program evaluation. But, yes, what we've learned from the CAISH reports has been very really valuable, and we'll start implementing some of those learnings into our future programming.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do we know when that will start?

KATIE KNIGHT: I can't give you a time line on that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So it's not being applied to any existing grant programs?

KATIE KNIGHT: We're sort of in flight. We've got two existing programs open, as you know. But for the future years, it's something we can consider looking at for those forward years.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: In the media release related to the new tech vouchers and Boosting Business grant, the Minister mentioned that he wanted to help businesses and startups commercialise, and yet I understand that this grant program is really focused on research and linking up businesses with institutions. I think it was 13 or 14 research institutions—something like that.

KATIE KNIGHT: Publicly funded research organisations, yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Could you help me understand how, without industry, there is commercialisation as a focus of this grant program?

KATIE KNIGHT: That is the focus of that particular program. As you know, MVP Ventures is another commercialisation program that we run.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But in that Boosting Business and tech voucher connection, what's the support for commercialisation, beyond research and product development, with an institution?

KATIE KNIGHT: The idea is that the SME who uses the tech voucher, with the support of the research organisation—their product, service or whatever it is will be taken further along the TRL scale so that it can be commercialised to take them further.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay, but it's not specifically looking to assist with the commercialisation end of that TRL scale. It's about developing a product and research more than industry commercialisation.

KATIE KNIGHT: Sorry, what was your question?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What grants do we have available at the moment that are related to commercialisation in the sense that a product is already being developed and is actually going out to market—like industry connections or scale-up grants?

KATIE KNIGHT: We provide support in a number of ways across the sector. You are aware of the support that we provide to the hubs?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes.

KATIE KNIGHT: We support Techstars, an accelerator program, we support a social impact accelerator, and youth entrepreneurship programs. So we have a number of programs that are supporting the sector and helping, depending on where they're at in their journey—whether they're very early stage. MVP Ventures is really the program, though, I guess, that is most applicable to commercialisation. Then, obviously, there are more programs—the Industry Growth Program—that are the next point where the next round of funding kicks in for high scale.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So it's more that the Federal Government is taking on that responsibility of later stage growth?

KATIE KNIGHT: At the moment, yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That is helpful. Thank you. This is probably one for Professor Durrant-Whyte.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You let him go.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I know. What have I done? Ms Hurst spoke earlier about the role of cell-based food technology. Obviously there's been a number of programs and support given to companies like Vow. I understand that there is a problem with the classification of that product that is created as food in international markets. I understand this is a Federal Government responsibility.

KATIE KNIGHT: Correct.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is the New South Wales Government—your department—doing any work to advocate for the change in that classification so that businesses can access those international markets?

KATIE KNIGHT: Certainly, in terms of international markets, our offshore team—we have a team based in Singapore—worked very closely with Vow in getting their regulatory process sorted over there so that they were able to commercially sell that product—with Vow, that is. As to what we're doing, I can't speak for what the chief scientist is doing. He does have a good working relationship with Vow Foods. I wouldn't want to speak for him, but perhaps we can take it on—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's not just about Vow, obviously.

KATIE KNIGHT: But regulatory pathways more broadly. We can make introductions to the relevant Commonwealth agencies, where necessary. We do have those contacts. That's one of our service offerings, I guess, for investors.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there any specific advocacy to the Federal Government to change regulations in Australia to reclassify those products?

KATIE KNIGHT: Not particularly in relation to those products, no.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Did you want to say anything, Ms Mildwater?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: No.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is the department looking into investment vehicles like what Queensland have just launched for, like Breakthrough Victoria?

KATIE KNIGHT: We are always looking at ways that we can support our innovation ecosystem. I've mentioned a few ways that we do that today, and we will continue to support the Minister however we can. But what I would say is that the budget process is underway at the moment, so we probably can't say much more than that at the moment.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Have you provided briefings to the Minister about creating an investment arm like that?

KATIE KNIGHT: We brief the Minister on a range of things—a range of options, I guess—reasonably frequently. I think that's probably all we can say about that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay. Have you submitted a pre-budget submission?

KATIE KNIGHT: I can't answer that question.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay. There are four new programs that were announced in August last year that were around diversity. They were mostly run out of universities. There was Wollongong, Newcastle, UNSW I think did one and also there was one at Tech Central. They were billed as being "four new diversity programs to support startup diversity". I was wondering if those programs are being required to report against particular diversity measures in terms of anything?

KATIE KNIGHT: Like gender targets?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes.

KATIE KNIGHT: Not that I'm aware of, no. But I'm happy to take it on notice and check, if you like?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, that would be helpful.

KATIE KNIGHT: That's fine. We can ask, yes, but they're programs run by the universities.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But are they funded by the department? They're on the department's website.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I think that might be the chief scientist, I hate to say. But we'll take it on notice and get back to you with the detail.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's helpful. Do we know if the Sydney School of Entrepreneurship will be funded after the funding runs out in 2024?

KATIE KNIGHT: I'm not across the—

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: That would also be a part of the current budget process.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So that is definitely part of the budget process?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We can take it on notice and see what we can give you, but I suspect that's the answer.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: All right. Have you had much feedback about the Western Sydney Startup Hub and how it's going in terms of its operation? There have been some concerns raised with me that the facility isn't being managed in a particularly helpful way.

KATIE KNIGHT: We haven't had that feedback.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No? All right. I will direct that person to make comments.

KATIE KNIGHT: Yes, that would be great. We would really love to hear about that, because that's no good at all.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What's the best way for people who are willing to give that feedback to get in touch with you?

KATIE KNIGHT: They can reach out to me directly. Because we have an operator in there—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, I understand. Can I clarify, was the Cicada Innovations announcement earlier this week run through your department? It was a \$275 million grant that was announced. The Premier was there. Minister Houssos was there.

KATIE KNIGHT: They're programs offered by the Office of Energy and Climate Change, so it was led by Minister Sharpe and her office.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Interesting. Was your department involved in that at all?

KATIE KNIGHT: No, we often don't get involved in media situations, but we—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But in the advice to create the grant and the program?

KATIE KNIGHT: No, but we're very well aware of it—of the grant process, yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That is a very exciting potential industry.

KATIE KNIGHT: Very exciting.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: There are obviously lots of really exciting startups coming out of Cicada, as I'm sure you all know. Was there any ruling?

The CHAIR: Yes, I can give that now, if you'd like?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes, please.

The CHAIR: In regards to the point of order taken earlier concerning Ms Mann's file note, I rule that Ms Mann is there to represent Minister Chanthivong and not Minister Cotsis, so it is reasonable for her to object to answering the question at today's hearing. However, I further note that the Public Accountability and Works Committee has a current inquiry into the appointments of Josh Murray to the position of Secretary of Transport for NSW and Emma Watts as NSW Cross-Border Assistant Commissioner, and senior executives and department liaison officers in 2023. The terms of reference for this inquiry would allow such a question to be asked and the witness would be obliged to answer.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: We'll have to call you to that. Sorry, I'm thinking aloud. Can I ask about the ruling? If the witness would like to do that now, are they allowed to do that?

The CHAIR: I think you need to call them to the Public Accountability and Works Committee inquiry.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Okay.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I have some questions about the pattern book of designs. Is that the Building Commissioner?

DAVID CHANDLER: Planning.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Nothing to do with you at all?

DAVID CHANDLER: We're talking to the department of planning, but it's their project.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay, but you're talking to them about the pattern book of designs?

DAVID CHANDLER: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you know when there will be an outcome for a finalised pattern book of designs provided?

DAVID CHANDLER: No, we've just had some consultations and it's a project that they're leading.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So what's your engagement or role in that process?

DAVID CHANDLER: There is obvious interest in what is the transition from a development application to the achievement of a construction certificate. We're interested in making sure that that's as smooth a pathway as possible, so we're really just providing some feedback as to how that interface could work.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is that designed to be an interface with builders and developers in getting them through the process quickly?

DAVID CHANDLER: We have just had a couple of touchdowns with departmental people. We've not been involved in the general conversation so, really, it is their project and probably best for me not to comment on it.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Ms Mildwater, I think this might be for you. The Minister earlier said that all DLO appointments are your responsibility. Was he referring to the fact that they're the responsibility of the secretary? I want to ask you. Is that okay?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I don't remember him saying that, but he may have. I'm happy to take questions.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I don't think I'm misrepresenting. I think that's what he said. Is it common and proper practice to appoint active party members of political parties in the role of a department liaison officer?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I'm not an expert on that sort of matter. I could only speak to the DLOs we've got in our department at the moment.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So it's not common practice, then?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I don't know what common practice is.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: On your own experience, Secretary, if you're responsible for appointing DLOs to ministerial offices, is it common and proper practice to appoint active party members? If it was my office and it was an active member of the National Party, or if it was the current Minister and it's an active member of the Labor Party, is that common practice?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: It is around seeking an opinion from a public official. Under paragraph 10 of the procedural fairness resolution, opinions should not be sought from public members.

The CHAIR: I think some of the language was bordering on what could lead to an opinion. I ask the Hon. Bronnie Taylor to reword that question.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I really fail to see how—I'm just asking, is it common and proper practice to appoint active party members in the role of a department liaison officer?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I can only speak to how our DLOs are appointed. In our case, we put forward all the DLO names to the Ministers, and they were appointed into the roles that way.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Do you ask the DLOs if they are active members of a political party?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I'm not aware that we do.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I see. This may border on that, so I presume you'll take a point of order, but I'm going to do it anyway.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Thanks for giving me a heads-up.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Do you think it's possible to be politically neutral while actively campaigning for a party?

CORRECTED

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: It's definitely an opinion being sought there.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: It's all going to come out. It's just if we make this excruciating or not.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: There's a procedural resolution that's in place for a reason.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'd like to move on now to ask a question to whoever is in charge under the Fair Work Act. Which secretary will that be? Basically, what I want to know is if the Minister was briefed on section 431 of the Fair Work Act during the recent maritime shutdown that occurred.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Can I clarify, is that a Federal Act?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: It's in the Fair Work Act 2009, section 431. No, actually, it's not. It is a ministerial declaration that can terminate industrial action that's available to the State Minister.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Thanks for clarifying.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I can't believe I actually knew that. Anyway, I am married to a lawyer. Can you tell me, please? Was he briefed? No-one can tell me.

The CHAIR: Do you have someone specific you want to—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Does someone want to take it on notice?

GRAEME HEAD: I'm not sure who should take it on notice.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Secretary Head, I think someone better take it. Perhaps you'd like to take responsibility and then decide who's going to do it.

GRAEME HEAD: I'll take it on notice.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Can I check, Chair, whether or not this is straying into the previous ruling around being outside the Committee's terms of reference, given that the honourable member has referenced the Fair Work Act. Surely that would be a matter for the Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Work Health and Safety.

The CHAIR: I do think that, if it is going to be requested to be taken on notice, maybe the Hon. Bronnie Taylor might want to identify who she believes might be able to answer that question. I think there's a bit of confusion as to—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I think Mr Head—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I do believe that I do know what I'm asking, but I'm very happy for that—

The CHAIR: I know you understand the question. I'm trying to work out who it is to, so we can ascertain the—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But surely that's something they need to work out, with respect, if I've asked the question.

The CHAIR: But throughout the day someone has put their hand up, but at this point nobody sort of seems to be saying, "That would be my responsibility."

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Secretary Head, may I ask you that question—to please take it on notice—and then you'll provide the Committee with the appropriate response as to whether it's your responsibility or not?

GRAEME HEAD: Yes. It may be, as you've just alluded to, to say the responsibility was over here.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's fine. Minister Head—sorry. You never know your luck, do you, in the big smoke. With the rate today's gone, it might be on the table. Sorry. Secretary Head, may I ask you who appointed you to the position of secretary of the department?

GRAEME HEAD: You would be aware that the Premier makes all appointments to secretary roles. That's been the case for a very long time.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Was there a recruitment process for your position?

GRAEME HEAD: Yes, there was a recruitment process.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I understand.

CORRECTED

GRAEME HEAD: That's a matter for Mr Draper.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Right. Thank you very much. That will be good. I'm just going to my next one. Does anyone want to jump in for a second while I find my spot?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Me?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: No, not you. Sorry, this is your penance for being in government on the backbench, Emily. You have to wait your turn.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I asked the Minister earlier about the MOU with Hitachi and I think there was a note passed through, so I just wanted to follow up on that one.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I think you're asking about the MOU relating to the Western Parkland City Authority. It's about Bradfield.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: That's a question for the Western Parkland City Authority.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm ready to go again. I just want to know what feedback and concerns have been expressed by stakeholders regarding the operation of the short-term rental property register in New South Wales.

NATASHA MANN: The short-term rental accommodation register sits with Fair Trading. It's out of scope for the current review into short-term rental accommodation, but we do accept complaints, and we do deal with matters under the register.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Sorry. I'm not obviously—so it's out of scope. So when we say, "What feedback and concerns have been expressed by stakeholders?" you're telling me it's out of scope for them to be—

NATASHA MANN: Sorry, there's a review currently underway in another part of government in relation to short-term rental accommodation. My point was just that the STRA register, which Fair Trading administers, is out of scope for that review, so there won't be stakeholder feedback on the STRA register. If you're asking me whether I have consumers raising issues with Fair Trading about the register—is that the question?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes. It's regarding that operation of it. What feedback and concerns have been expressed by stakeholders regarding the operation of the short-term rental property register in New South Wales? That's my question.

NATASHA MANN: I think it is fair to say that there's probably confusion out there around roles and responsibilities. I think sometimes complainants will come to Fair Trading with noise complaints or things about criminal behaviour happening at short-term rental accommodation and they think that Fair Trading is able to resolve those complaints when in actual fact the register doesn't give us any power to do that. The resolution of those complaints still sits with council or with police and then, if those complaints are made out, they can report them to me as Fair Trading Commissioner and I can consider action under the register.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can we just go back to the question?

NATASHA MANN: Sure.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm not trying to be—obviously it's frustrating for you because you know a lot more than I do, but I just want to know if there has been feedback and concerns about the property register, the STR, in New South Wales. Are you saying that there aren't and that the things that come to you are not really relevant because they're not—

NATASHA MANN: Sorry, we might be speaking at cross-purposes. I'm talking about a code of conduct that we administer in Fair Trading. It's actually Planning that deals with the actual register itself where you lodge when you're wanting to lodge your short-term rental accommodation, if you're wanting your accommodation to be rented out in that way. We have the code of conduct—sorry, I should have been more specific. We have the code of conduct, but the actual register—the platform—is a department of planning issue. That is in scope of the current review by the Government.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You're not making this easier for me. What insights can be shared about compliance efforts and enforcement actions taken in relation to short-term rentals in New South Wales?

NATASHA MANN: I think that was the point that I was trying to make.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So help me.

CORRECTED

NATASHA MANN: Yes, I will try my best to help you. We have the code of conduct in Fair Trading. To my earlier point, I think there may be some confusion amongst consumers about where they go where there is a complaint. What I was trying to clarify is that, just by virtue of Fair Trading having the code of conduct, it doesn't usurp the resolution powers of council and police, who are the proper authorities to deal with noise complaints or complaints of a criminal nature.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Sure. But obviously people come to you after they've probably done that or been to do that. If there is confusion, what are we doing to make sure there isn't confusion?

NATASHA MANN: This is a project that my office has been working on, because the problem is people are not going to council or to police; they're coming straight to Fair Trading and thinking that we have the ability to resolve those noise or rubbish or other complaints. We have just done a big review of all the collateral on our website to make it absolutely clear that the first point of call is either council or police, and then to us. We are trying to get the message out there, because I think at the moment there is that confusion. And we're also wanting to work with local government to make sure that when consumers are making complaints to councils, that those councils are rightly accepting and dealing with those complaints rather than what we are hearing anecdotally, which is those councils are referring to Fair Trading.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's a bit of an issue, isn't it, then?

NATASHA MANN: Yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That they don't even know that they're not supposed to refer to you?

NATASHA MANN: That's right. There is a bit of confusion in the space. As I said, it has been a project that my office has taken on. We've got a whole lot of collateral in terms of fact sheets, the website, stakeholder engagement, just to try and make that crystal clear for consumers.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Surely that's something, then, if someone is renting, that should be given out by real estate agents that are renting out properties to tell them? Not everyone goes on a website, especially when they're very IT challenged, like myself.

NATASHA MANN: My recollection is that there may be a requirement for the agent to provide some of that information at least to the host, but I can take that on notice.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's fine. Don't give yourself an extra job on notice. I just find that really strange.

NATASHA MANN: Thank you, Ms Taylor.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: In what capacity are the planning department, Office of Fair Trading and Treasury involved in the recent review of the short-term rental sector? Can you answer that for me?

NATASHA MANN: My Rental Commissioner, Ms Trina Jones, is actually, I think, involved in that working group, so I'm happy if you'd like her to come and talk to that.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, come on up. I love listening to your accent anyway, so it will make me very happy.

TRINA JONES: I'm just glad that you can understand me, so that's good.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I absolutely can. Do you want me to repeat that question?

TRINA JONES: No, that's okay. I'm involved in the working group that's being led by Planning and Treasury to undertake public consultation on short-term rental accommodation in New South Wales. A discussion paper was released, and we are currently actively in the middle of that consultation right now. As I said, that's being led by Planning and Treasury, and I'm attending as many of those consultation round tables as I can. I was at one earlier this week with providers, and I'm attending a couple of others next week as well. We're hearing lots of different feedback in those environments. Short-term rental accommodation accounts for about 1 per cent of all of the properties on the rental market and there are strong opinions being held in community around the impact from both sides—the benefits but also the perceptions of negative impacts.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Sorry, may I just redirect. You're saying 1 per cent? Because I had numbers around 3 per cent—as short-term rental accommodation makes up less than 3 per cent. You would know more than I.

TRINA JONES: It is less than 3 per cent.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Wow.

CORRECTED

TRINA JONES: Some areas would have higher percentages than others. You take certain aspects of the State. But if you wanted to get the absolute figure, can I take that one on notice?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes. So it is less than 3 per cent?

TRINA JONES: Yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I am really interested in that. I think you were going to say this. I'm trying to phrase it as a question before I get called to order by the Hon. Emily Suvaal and her book. I want to know because that is low for short-term rental accommodation. Would you agree or not agree that, out in the community, people feel that it is a major contribution to the challenges that we're finding in people not being able to find suitable rental accommodation? Because that's very small.

TRINA JONES: I think what we're hearing in the forums is that in some communities it is, in fact or in perception, a bigger issue than in others. That voice from community can sometimes be applied to the whole State and so I hear your point that there may be a perception that the numbers are bigger than they are.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: In your expert—not opinion, but in your expert advice or whatever you want to call it, because you're the expert, you're the Rental Commissioner—am I flying by the seat of my pants—do you think that there is a disproportionate view out there? Obviously there is a terrible rental and housing situation. I don't deny that. I'm not trying to be tricky, but that is a very small proportion when we're looking at government policy, investing—which is the government's decision, I understand, not yours—in doing all of these issues in regard to short-term rentals, when that is a very small proportion of rental stock that is actually short-term accommodation.

TRINA JONES: I think it's important that we recognise that when it comes to—as you've rightly pointed out—the rental crisis, people are concerned about any potential impacts on the rental market and the long-term rental market. This project that's being led by Planning and Treasury—which I'm only just a participant in; again, it's being led by another department—is really focused on ensuring that we hear from communities so that any recommendations around the regulation or the changes to the short-term rental accommodation sector are informed by the impacts to people right now. Because it is different in every area, there are benefits but there are also challenges. It's really about listening to that right now.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I hope this doesn't come out the wrong way, but you've been appointed into a very important role that's really affecting social, economic—all sorts of fabric. I really commend it. I think it's great that you've come on board and it's a great initiative of the Minister that appointed you. But would it not be your job—with your position that you have—to inform the communities that that short-term rental accommodation is very small and that you are looking at other things and are focusing on other things? This is a real problem in the community. I'm worried that people will get targeted and people will get distracted by something that might be an easy thing to jump on when it's actually not—I don't mean to say it's not the truth, because that has come up. But do you know what I'm trying to say, very respectfully, to you?

TRINA JONES: Yes.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order: This is very much straying into other Ministers' territory and asking a public servant to express an opinion more broadly on the Government's policy around housing, around all of these issues confronting us. I'm just concerned. Ms Trina Jones is here in a very specific capacity and that is not to express opinion on the merits of the Government's policy.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: To the point of order: I'm trying really hard to not ask for an opinion. I say that very genuinely. This is a factual question about data that the commissioner has now given.

TRINA JONES: Can I clarify on the data? Non-hosted short-term rental accommodation is 1 per cent. You're right. The total number is less than 3 per cent. Non-hosted, I was referring to.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Understood.

TRINA JONES: Which is the one that causes the most concern in community.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: To the point of order: The commissioner was appointed to solve a problem or to contribute to provide expert advice and I'm asking a question about a fact.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Further to the point of order: This is budget estimates—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: It's our only opportunity.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: —and paragraph 10 of the procedural fairness resolution is that public servants should not be asked to express an opinion about the merits of a government policy.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm sure the commissioner won't do anything she's not supposed to.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: The question about the quantum of the number is completely in order. The question that then goes to ask the public servant to then pick apart what that means in the bigger picture is completely out of order.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: My question was a factual question to the commissioner saying, "Is it not the job of the role that she has been appointed to to inform the community about these sorts of statistics to demonstrate the real issues that exist?"

The CHAIR: I do understand where the Hon. Emily Suvaal is coming from. I just encourage the Hon. Bronnie Taylor to be mindful of how she words her question.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm very happy, if you don't want to answer it, to say that. If I was trying to be really tricky, you'd know about it.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: You worded it really well the last time you asked it. That was the last iteration. Carry on.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Don't think aloud. Did you want to answer?

TRINA JONES: I think, to your point about what has the feedback been for the forums that I've been in and for where I go to speak to renters and owners, being able to have use of a person's property, for the benefit of the community, is important to people, but also it's important to people that they can have a place to live. So getting the balance right is very complicated and difficult, but I'm absolutely committed to promoting the evidence and the data, and I take your point.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: All we've got, really, isn't it, is evidence and data? I know you're only an active participant, as you said, but is there any time line as to when this process will be completed?

TRINA JONES: The consultation is open for four weeks. And, once the consultation closes, we'll be working together to review all of the feedback and make recommendations through Planning and Treasury's Ministers.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Will any of those consultations be held in rural and regional areas?

TRINA JONES: Can I take that on notice? That is being led by the department of planning. That would be better directed to them.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Absolutely. Thank you, and thank you very much for your patience in all of what we do.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I have a couple of questions. Mine are related to trade—possibly Ms Mildwater.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Yes, or Ms Knight.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you. The commissioner in India is an acting commissioner at the moment. Is that right?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Malini is an acting commissioner, yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there a plan to have a permanent commissioner there?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Yes, there is. We're shortly going to look at the more permanent model across the network that we're rolling out as the senior trade and investment commissioners have rolled off, but India is one that we will address soon.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Obviously, I think, you advised earlier that Mr Anwar had left—

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: No.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's not right?

KATIE KNIGHT: No change.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: No. I'm not sure where that information—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Apologies. I must have misunderstood.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: There's no change.

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Excellent. Is Mr Anwar still based in Abu Dhabi?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's not what I understood from the Minister earlier.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I think he didn't answer. I don't think he knew. But, no, there's no change to that position.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Good to hear. Thank you. Obviously, Mr Newman has recently resigned. Do we have somebody who is leading our delegations for his responsibility areas at the moment?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We will shortly go to recruitment there as well. We have had someone in the market for a week or so following that, just for the intervening period, but we will also go to recruitment there.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That's good to hear. I was curious about this deal that was announced last week or a week and a half ago with a Japanese firm who has now set up a battery plant in Townsville. The company names are—sorry if I mispronounce—Idemitsu and Sumitomo Electric. Sumitomo Electric is actually headquartered in Tokyo. Obviously, we had our visit very recently from the mayor. I'm curious if these companies and this project was raised with the department at all.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: They are companies that we do interact with. That particular project was not raised with us, that we're aware of.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It didn't come to us?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: No. It's in Townsville, as well.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm trying to understand whether or not we advocated for that project, basically.

KATIE KNIGHT: I'm not aware of that project.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Were there any trade MOUs signed when that Tokyo delegation came to New South Wales?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: There were two MOUs signed—you're talking about the Tokyo mayor?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: There were two documents. One was a sister city renewal. And the other one was—

KATIE KNIGHT: It was the hydrogen memorandum of understanding—

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Yes.

KATIE KNIGHT: —with the Tokyo Metropolitan Governor.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is that document public, that hydrogen MOU?

KATIE KNIGHT: I'm not sure. I don't believe it to be public, but it was led with Minister Sharpe's office and the Office of Energy and Climate Change.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is it normal that your department—including trade, obviously, and investment—would not be involved in MOUs?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We were involved in certainly—

KATIE KNIGHT: Bringing it to government.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: But it was led by the other department.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: When did that process commence, like bringing it to—

KATIE KNIGHT: I would say probably—these visits by the Tokyo Metropolitan Governor, they're a long time in the making.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes.

CORRECTED

KATIE KNIGHT: I would say towards the end of last year there were discussions around her coming, and, in connection with that, we were exploring opportunities for the New South Wales Government to partner more broadly in that sector, in addition to signing the sister state agreement with Tokyo.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Good to know.

KATIE KNIGHT: But we didn't lead on the content of the MOU because it's a hydrogen-related MOU.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand. Going back to the Innovation Blueprint and the discussion paper, obviously, the department had a media release about that, and Minister Chanthivong wasn't quoted in that at all. I'm wondering was he asked to be quoted in that? Did he decline to have a quote?

KATIE KNIGHT: He certainly reviewed the discussion paper. I can't speak to whether he—

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Are you asking about the media release or the discussion paper?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: The media release came out of the department. I'm curious to understand whether a quote was requested from Minister Chanthivong, which he declined, or he didn't get asked at all.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Chair, can I just jump in here? I'm just wondering, in terms of the Committee's terms of reference, if this is a media release that's being led by the Minister for climate and energy.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, it's not.

KATIE KNIGHT: No, it's different.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Sorry. My apologies. I withdraw.

KATIE KNIGHT: Our comms team would have worked closely with the Minister's media team. I can't speak to what involvement the Minister wanted to have or not on that media release, but certainly he was aware and reviewed the discussion paper as well. Sorry, I've just been reminded I don't think there was a media release. I think it was uploaded onto our website.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I think there was a media release.

KATIE KNIGHT: We have to check on that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay.

KATIE KNIGHT: I think it was just—the Have Your Say portal was open with the discussion paper, and I think there was something on LinkedIn through Investment NSW about it being open.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is it normal that there wouldn't be a media release about something that the Minister has said is, basically, his signature policy?

KATIE KNIGHT: What I would say is that it's just part of the consultation process. We're conducting quite a broad consultation. We had the summit; we have a number of round tables. It's just part of that consultation process more broadly.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: In terms of the blueprint discussion paper—and, I'm sorry, I really don't mean to be disparaging about the discussion paper. I would say it has not got a great deal of—I mean, it's a page and a half, and I'm curious about how long that took to put together, given it doesn't really have any new research or insights about the industry or any prospective plans to comment on, in particular. So I'm just wondering how long that took to write.

KATIE KNIGHT: It's not intended to be any feedback or policy position. It's intended to invite consultation on some broad topics so that we can hear from industry as to what their views are on those topics.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So how long did that take to prepare that document?

KATIE KNIGHT: I don't know. What I would say is that we've spent a lot of time working on this Innovation Blueprint. It has been a really thorough process, and I think the department has done a really sterling job in putting together this—the work that we've been doing. As to the amount of time it took to write the document, I think that's—I don't know. How many people, how much time—yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Would you take that on notice?

KATIE KNIGHT: I don't think we could find that out on notice because we don't measure—

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We don't keep time sheets or anything.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But when did you start working on it?

CORRECTED

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can't you just ask someone who wrote it?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Point of order: The witnesses have answered that they don't work for a law firm where every 30 seconds is accounted for. They work for a government department, resources are pooled.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Where we should be ultimately be accountable.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The question has been answered.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, it hasn't.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The Opposition keeps pressing for something that's not there. I suggest we move on.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: To the point of order: We're asking about resources that are paid for by the taxpayer and trying to understand how those resources are utilised to produce work for the Government, so I think it's reasonable to ask what those resources are.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Further to the point of order: The question was answered and that is that the accounting processes in the department do not account for people's every second. The question has been answered. I don't understand why you keep pressing.

The CHAIR: If the Hon. Jacqui Munro has variations of that question, she is still entitled to ask them, but it is up to the witnesses how they want to give their answers.

KATIE KNIGHT: Could I say this: The feedback we got from the summit was that people wanted to provide feedback on broad topics. That was how they wanted to be consulted, and that is what we're doing.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: To the work as well, the work on the blueprint is not just about the paper that you saw in kicking off. There's a whole program of engagement ahead, so there has been a lot of work going into designing that and facilitators and everything else. It is not just that one thing.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It's certainly not the kind of feedback that I've been hearing myself, but—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: May I ask it in another way? Would it be possible to provide the Committee with when the department started to work on that blueprint and then when it was finalised and uploaded to the website?

KATIE KNIGHT: Do you mean the discussion paper?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: The discussion paper.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Yes, we can take that on notice.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you. Very helpful.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: This is about the MOU. I want to know when the Minister was provided advice on the MOU from the wine industry.

KATIE KNIGHT: I can speak to that one. The memorandum of understanding with the wine industry expired on 30 June. We worked with regional on that and we have not been approached by the wine industry in relation to the MOU.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's not the evidence that's been given in prior budget estimates about the MOU for the wine industry. There's been no brief to the Minister about progressing an MOU, seeing that it expired in June for the wine industry?

KATIE KNIGHT: From us?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: From whoever is responsible.

KATIE KNIGHT: No brief from us, no, because I believe the MOU that has now expired was with the Department of Primary Industries or Department of Regional NSW, I think, and we support the wine industry in a number of other ways.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But this is an MOU that's actually quite important to them and important to have, and it's expired, and it's trade. I'm wondering who would provide that advice to the Minister on the necessity of having some information about an expired MOU with the New South Wales wine industry?

KATIE KNIGHT: We provided advice around the export programs that are currently in place and the work we do with the wine industry from an export perspective. We have regional export advisers. We support them in a number of other ways. That was the advice that we provided.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can you provide that advice to the Committee on notice?

KATIE KNIGHT: I will have to see if we can do that.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: It is bit of a constant flow, but you are after whether there is any particular document advice. I think when Katie is talking about—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I don't know if there is, and I'm not fishing for something that I think is there that I don't know about, Secretary. What I don't understand is how a major industry like this has an expired MOU that hasn't been worked on by what is a very effective department.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: I think the answer was because it didn't sit with our department. It sits with another department, and we support the industry in other ways. I'm happy to take the question on notice and see whether we did actually brief the Minister.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I think so. I think we really have to get to the bottom of this, so that would be great. I'm just trying to find out.

KATIE KNIGHT: Yes, no problem.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Secretary Head, how many DLOs do you provide to the Minister's office? I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

GRAEME HEAD: Yes, I will take it on notice, thank you.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Understood. Secretary Mildwater, how many DLOs do you provide to the Minister's office? I am happy if—

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: No, I can answer that. I think it is just one but let me check. Yes, it is just one.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you very much. Secretary Tidball, how many DLOs do you provide to the Minister's office?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Three.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Secretary Head, you'll take that on notice?

GRAEME HEAD: No, actually, I can answer. The advice I have before me is three.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Three?

GRAEME HEAD: Three.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Three, three and one—is that right? Thank you.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Can I expand on my response?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, Deputy Secretary Tidball.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Three, as I said, two DLOs through Corrective Services and a subject matter expert DLO from DCJ.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: All of those DLOs are given the advice and the remit of what their work entails and that it's DLO—

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: And that's all been given and provided to all of the DLOs currently in the Minister's office?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Is that correct too, Secretary Head?

GRAEME HEAD: Can you just repeat the last bit again?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Sorry. I was saying that with the three DLOs from your department that you're secretary of that you provided to the Minister's office, they've all been provided the appropriate information as to what the remit of their role is and that it's non-political?

GRAEME HEAD: That's as I understand it, yes.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Okay, great. Thank you. I'm going to go back—I'm almost there—to the Building Commissioner.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Maybe it's Ms Mildwater. To clarify, with those senior trade and investment commissioners, what will their title be? Will their title remain the STICs title?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: No. As you're aware, there was an election commitment to remove the senior trade and investment commissioner role. So it is most likely that, in our hubs at least, we will have trade and investment commissioners, who are still quite senior, but they're not the senior trade and investment commissioner role.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So will there be any senior trade and investment commissioners or is it literally removing a word?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We are removing the position, the senior trade and investment commissioners.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: And replacing it?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: But the trade and investment commissioner is an existing senior position in some offices. We'll just move to a model where everyone is at that level.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay. So no-one is considered senior; everyone is just a trade and investment commissioner.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: There's no senior title, other than the two that are remaining, because the commitment was as the contracts expired. So there are two still in situ.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: On the London, UK, EU and Israel, is that process underway to—

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We're about to start them all. We have been looking at what the model would be. We need to scope up position descriptions and all of that, but we will be in market soon.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: How long will that process take?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: How long does a recruitment process take?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Yes.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: It will be the usual process, except that it is, of course, international, so that can be a little slower. But we will be going to market quite soon.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm sorry to focus in on this a little bit. Will you be recruiting from a group of people who already live in those areas? Do you have a preference?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We haven't actually decided that. I would imagine we will recruit globally and see whether the best people are already in market or need to be relocated. That may differ from country to country.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: In terms of the model that you spoke about, what is that now? What will that be if not what it is now?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Very similar in terms of geography. The Minister referred to the hub-and-spoke model, so very similar. It's just we won't have those senior trade and investment commissioners in the hubs; we will have trade and investment commissioners. We will continue to look at the rest of the resourcing around that over the next few years as trade and investment changes, but we just won't have the senior trade and investment commissioner roles.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Finally, the Minister declined to commit to the NSW Trade Statement and the \$200 billion goal of 2031. Is the department working to any goal or target at the moment? There's a 2024 target.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: All of our geographies have targets—both trade and investment, businesses supported, that sort of thing—that they report against.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Could you please provide what they are on notice for each of those?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We could, yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you.

CORRECTED

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We use those for management reporting, and we are developing new ones for the coming year. But, as the Minister also said, we are developing a new industry policy, and a trade and Investment strategy will be developed alongside that once the industry policy is developed.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Okay. So that will be in Q3?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: The industry policy is certainly targeted for Q3.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: And the trade element will be in that?

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: We'll do it alongside it. Whether it's the same date or not, I'm not sure.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: So it will be a separate trade statement.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Whether it's called a trade statement, I'm not sure. But we will look at our trade and investment, yes.

KATIE KNIGHT: If I can quickly expand on what Ms Mildwater said on that trade statement. One of the first goals was to reach \$130 billion by 2024. We've actually already exceeded that. We're at \$150 billion already.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Good to hear.

KATIE KNIGHT: We're well on track to hit that \$200 billion by 2031.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Fabulous. I hope to see more ambitious targets, in that case, at the end of the year.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can you do more for wool, please?

KATIE KNIGHT: Wool?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, a very good, green, clean fibre—declare a conflict! When I asked Secretary Head, Secretary Mildwater and Secretary Tidball for the numbers of DLOs, would you please also be able to provide, obviously not names because that would be unprofessional, but the grade of those DLOs that are in the Minister's offices, please? I'm happy if you take that on notice.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Yes.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes.

GRAEME HEAD: I'll take that on notice.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Commissioner Chandler, I want to quickly recap what we were discussing before. Correct me if I am wrong: You have, in new money, \$24 million for the Building Commission?

DAVID CHANDLER: In addition to the money that's coming across for the people who are transferring from Fair Trading.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'll get to that in a minute. I just have to put this in compartments for myself. That's new money that's coming across to employ people and set up this Building Commission. Correct or not correct?

DAVID CHANDLER: Correct.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: And then we talk about a number of 466 people that are going to work for the Building Commission. Correct?

DAVID CHANDLER: Yes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: How many of that 466 are existing positions that have been moved over?

DAVID CHANDLER: The majority.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: How many?

GRAEME HEAD: We won't be able to give you a precise answer on that today because there are still a couple of teams in the former Better Regulation Division where we're still separating the numbers.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Would you like to take that on notice?

GRAEME HEAD: We'll take that on notice.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm perfectly happy for you to say no, but is it 90 per cent of people that are going to be moved over of that 466?

DAVID CHANDLER: The 466 are the identified persons who will be coming across.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Who are the new people with the expertise for the particular role that they're going to be in, out of that \$24 million? How many extra people that will have specific expertise related to the establishment, Commissioner, of—I don't mean to say "your organisation", but do you know what I mean? The commission. How many will be just that, or is it just the people who are coming over?

DAVID CHANDLER: It's the people who are coming across, but the recruitments that will go forward now will seek to bring that additional expertise that is subject matter focused.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I don't want to place you in a difficult position.

DAVID CHANDLER: I'm not in a difficult position. I'm just trying to—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Of the 466 people that you say are going to exist in the commission, does that mean, then, you're waiting for redundancies or people to leave before you start to look at those very tailored roles that are required within this new commission?

DAVID CHANDLER: We currently have 39 positions that are available to be recruited, so there's an opportunity there for us to start to bring in any additional capability. I just want to point to the fact that there's an enormous amount of capability in the team that's come across.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I'm not casting aspersions, Commissioner. I'm just trying to understand if there's any new people that have been appointed. You've just mentioned 39 that you are recruiting. Is that 39 that have come out of people that have left from the 466?

DAVID CHANDLER: No, they were positions that weren't filled that we can now fill.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can you say that again?

DAVID CHANDLER: They were positions that weren't filled that we can now fill.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That weren't filled from where?

DAVID CHANDLER: There's always going to be a vacancy factor across the agency.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So those are positions that were vacant already existing in the agency—

DAVID CHANDLER: Correct.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: —that are now your—not your positions but your commission's positions to fill?

DAVID CHANDLER: Correct.

GRAEME HEAD: Ms Taylor, if I can, I do think we can provide more assistance, given that there is still a couple of teams being worked on, if we can give you a breakdown on notice of the staffing movements.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Secretary Head, whatever information you'd like to give me on notice I will gratefully receive. I am just trying to get down to this because to me it just looks like there's—I think it's great we've got the commission and I think it's great we're using existing staff but I'm just really concerned that we need special people that are really tailored in for this. I'll be very much looking forward to that information. The Government passed legislation last year that gave you, Commissioner Chandler, more powers with respect to builders—I hate the word "dodgy"—that perhaps weren't being compliant under the code. Can you give us an idea of what kind of resources you'll need to enact those new powers or to act within the legislation? I want to make it sound a bit better than that; it makes you sound like this powerful person—which I'm sure you are.

DAVID CHANDLER: The commission has quite extraordinary powers. You'll know that we received the RAB Act powers, the DBP Act powers and the Building and Development Certifiers Act powers, progressively, over the last couple of years. We've been standing up that. We are going to make sure that as we recruit, for example—about 12 of the top positions in the commission are currently in recruitment, so we have an opportunity to make sure that we're really tailoring those appointments to suit our needs. We're in a real build opportunity here. We're also in an opportunity to look at where is the best place for these people to be across the State. All of that work is going on right now. We're also in the process of finalising and submitting the papers for the future budget for 2024-25 and the years out, so that's all in Cabinet and confidential at the moment.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, and I understand you can't share that here, and that's fine. I get it. Do you have the resources to enact your new powers? You're telling me that you've got these vacant positions that you can apply for that'll be specialised positions, which is great, and then you're saying that you'll be applying for the budget. I'm presuming that that means you will need more resources to do the job that you were intended to do when this commission was set up.

DAVID CHANDLER: You can anticipate that the numbers of people in the commission will grow, and that will form the basis of the business case that's been submitted.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So we'll look forward to seeing that in the budget papers.

DAVID CHANDLER: Right now we will need to stretch out some of the resources that might have, for example, to attend to the class 1 powers, and I want to correct the date: We got those powers on 11 December, not 1 December. But we've already started to move people into that field of work, so we'll build that capacity out. But the forward—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Which I imagine is a challenge, with current recruitment, just generally.

DAVID CHANDLER: Some of these positions have been hard to fill, so we'll work on more innovative ways of filling them.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: It's hard for everyone, isn't it? Thank you very much, Mr Chandler. My final questions extend those questions that I asked the three secretaries about the DLOs. Are party political memberships checked when DLOs are appointed? I honestly don't know; that's why I'm asking. Will you take that on notice?

GRAEME HEAD: Yes.

ELIZABETH MILDWATER: Yes.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes, we'll take that on notice.

GRAEME HEAD: I can help you on the Fair Work question from before. The provisions that were quoted in respect of the maritime industrial dispute—those provisions apply to a State Minister who's accountable for workplace relations.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes, that's what I said.

GRAEME HEAD: Well, you asked me to—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: But my question to you was, was there advice provided to the Minister during that time on that section that could be used as that power?

GRAEME HEAD: Okay, I will clarify that.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I was very specific. But thank you very much, and it's very nice to be right on a legal question, because it's quite a coup. I wish the barristers were here, but you'll have to do.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, absolutely. We'll take on the barristers any time!

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you so much for your time today. I realise what an arduous process this is for all of you, but we very much appreciate it. We've got a job to do that needs to be done on behalf of our great democracy.

The CHAIR: Before I go to any Government questions, is there anything that was taken on notice that anybody wanted to put on now? No? There being no Government questions, I thank all of our witnesses for coming here today. The secretariat will be in contact in the near future regarding any questions taken on notice, as well as any supplementary questions that the Committee may have.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.